

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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de l'Ontario

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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

N° 213A

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25 November 2020

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Mercredi  
25 novembre 2020

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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# CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 25 November 2020 / Mercredi 25 novembre 2020

## ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

### 2020 Ontario budget

Mr. John Fraser .....	10761
Ms. Natalia Kusendova .....	10762
Ms. Suze Morrison .....	10762
Mr. Jim McDonell .....	10763
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell .....	10763
Mr. Aris Babikian .....	10763
Mr. Will Bouma .....	10764
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens .....	10766
Mr. Aris Babikian .....	10767
Mr. Percy Hatfield .....	10767
Ms. Natalia Kusendova .....	10767
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell .....	10767
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff .....	10768

### Special report, Auditor General

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls) .....	10768
--	-------

### 2020 Ontario budget

Ms. Marit Stiles .....	10768
Debate deemed adjourned .....	10770

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

### Addiction services

Mr. Gilles Bisson .....	10770
-------------------------	-------

### Organ donation

Mr. Deepak Anand .....	10771
------------------------	-------

### Long-term care

Mr. Wayne Gates .....	10771
-----------------------	-------

### Health care

Mr. Aris Babikian .....	10771
-------------------------	-------

### Gillian's Place

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens .....	10772
--------------------------------------	-------

### Adamson Barbecue

Mr. Randy Hillier .....	10772
-------------------------	-------

### Taylor Lindsay-Noel

Mr. Stan Cho .....	10772
--------------------	-------

### COVID-19 response

Mme France Gélinas .....	10772
--------------------------	-------

### Indigenous affairs

Mr. Toby Barrett .....	10773
------------------------	-------

### Heritage Hockey Sticks

Mr. Will Bouma .....	10773
----------------------	-------

## QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

### COVID-19 response

Ms. Sara Singh .....	10773
Hon. Paul Calandra .....	10773

### COVID-19 response

Mr. John Vanthof .....	10774
Hon. Paul Calandra .....	10774
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10775

### COVID-19 response

Mr. John Vanthof .....	10775
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10775
Hon. Paul Calandra .....	10775

### Affaires francophones

Mr. Jeremy Roberts .....	10775
L'hon. Caroline Mulroney .....	10776

### Long-term care

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong .....	10776
Hon. Merrilee Fullerton .....	10776

### COVID-19 response

Mr. John Fraser .....	10777
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10777

### Forest firefighting

Mr. Jeremy Roberts .....	10777
Hon. John Yakabuski .....	10778

### COVID-19 response

Ms. Catherine Fife .....	10778
Hon. Paul Calandra .....	10778

### COVID-19 response

Mr. Randy Hillier .....	10779
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10779

### Lake Simcoe

Mr. Jeremy Roberts .....	10779
Ms. Andrea Khanjin .....	10780

### COVID-19 response

Ms. Doly Begum .....	10780
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10780
Mr. Stan Cho .....	10781

### COVID-19 response / Réponse à la COVID-19

Mlle Amanda Simard .....	10781
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10781
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria .....	10782

### Tenant protection

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens .....	10782
Hon. Steve Clark .....	10782
Ms. Lindsey Park .....	10782

**Prescription drugs**

Mr. Jim Wilson .....	10782
Hon. Christine Elliott .....	10783

**COVID-19 response**

Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	10783
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria .....	10783

**DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS****Time allocation**

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) .....	10783
Motion agreed to .....	10784

**Estimates**

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy .....	10784
-------------------------------	-------

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /  
RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS****Standing Committee on Finance and Economic  
Affairs**

Mr. Jeremy Roberts.....	10784
Report adopted .....	10784

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private  
Bills**

Mr. Deepak Anand.....	10784
Report adopted .....	10784

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /  
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI****Payday Loans Accountability Act, 2020, Bill 234,  
Ms. Shaw / Loi de 2020 sur la responsabilisation du  
secteur des prêts sur salaire, projet de loi 234, Mme  
Shaw**

First reading agreed to.....	10784
Ms. Sandy Shaw.....	10784

**Cannabis Licence Amendment Act, 2020, Bill 235,  
Ms. Stiles / Loi de 2020 modifiant la Loi sur les  
licences liées au cannabis, projet de loi 235, Mme  
Stiles**

First reading agreed to.....	10785
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	10785

**MOTIONS****Private members' public business**

Hon. Paul Calandra .....	10785
Motion agreed to .....	10785

**PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS****Documents gouvernementaux**

Mme France Gélinas .....	10785
--------------------------	-------

**Community planning**

Mr. Aris Babikian.....	10785
------------------------	-------

**Optometry services**

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	10786
-------------------------	-------

**Optometry services**

Mr. Toby Barrett .....	10786
------------------------	-------

**Equal opportunity**

Mr. Jamie West .....	10786
----------------------	-------

**Optometry services**

Mlle Amanda Simard .....	10787
--------------------------	-------

**Long-term care**

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche .....	10787
----------------------------	-------

**Anti-vaping initiatives for youth**

Mme France Gélinas .....	10787
--------------------------	-------

**Injured workers**

Mr. Jamie West .....	10787
----------------------	-------

**Health care funding**

Mme France Gélinas .....	10788
--------------------------	-------

**Equal opportunity**

Mr. Jamie West .....	10788
----------------------	-------

**Soins de longue durée**

Mme France Gélinas .....	10788
--------------------------	-------

**ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR****2020 Ontario budget**

Ms. Marit Stiles.....	10789
Mr. Will Bouma .....	10789
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	10789
Mr. Will Bouma .....	10789
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	10790
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	10790
Mr. Mike Schreiner .....	10790
Mr. Will Bouma .....	10791
Mr. Wayne Gates .....	10791
Mr. Aris Babikian.....	10792
Mr. Toby Barrett .....	10792
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	10794
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	10794
Mr. Jeff Burch.....	10795
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	10795
Mr. Jamie West .....	10795
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky.....	10795
Mr. Stan Cho .....	10798
Mr. Wayne Gates .....	10798
Mr. Toby Barrett .....	10799
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	10799
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	10799

Mr. Aris Babikian .....	10800
Mr. Jeff Burch .....	10801
Ms. Christine Hogarth .....	10801
Mr. Wayne Gates .....	10802
Mr. Deepak Anand .....	10802
Mme France Gélinas .....	10802
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong .....	10802
Mme France Gélinas .....	10804

Ms. Andrea Khanjin .....	10805
Ms. Catherine Fife .....	10805
Ms. Andrea Khanjin .....	10806
Mr. Faisal Hassan .....	10806
Ms. Andrea Khanjin .....	10806
Mr. Billy Pang .....	10806
Hon. Paul Calandra .....	10808
Debate deemed adjourned .....	10808



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 25 November 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 25 novembre 2020

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2020 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 2020, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** I was here not that long ago last night, but I don't want to think back to last night, because I know that many people were here much later than I was. God love you, all of you, for staying so late last night on something that we really didn't need to be debating. It's not what we're talking about today, but at a time when we're in the middle of a pandemic, we're having an eight-hour debate on something that we shouldn't be having a debate on, that should have been taken care of much sooner than it was, and I'll leave it at that.

It's really interesting that one of the first things the finance minister said in his budget speech was, "It is better to be a week too early than a week too late." I think I'd be happy if this government was only a week late. What we were debating last night was something that should have been done six months ago—a panel should have been struck. That's what we do. That's the right thing to do. It's our responsibility in here to ensure those things that are important to Ontarians to protect Ontarians, like appointing a Chief Medical Officer of Health, are done, and we're prepared and we take the steps necessary, as we do each time, to get it done right.

It's also interesting that the finance minister used this colloquialism or whatever you want to call it about better to be a week early than a week late, when I look at long-term care—which is something that the government is saying that they're investing in here in this province: They're going to four hours of care. That's a great thing. But there's actually no money in the budget to achieve that.

Let's take a look at what's happened to long-term care. The budget is—well, we'd like to say it's a budget, but it's halfway through the year. Understandable, but here's what's happened since last March. Last March, this government took more than a month longer than British Columbia and Quebec to raise the wages of PSWs in long-term care, to stabilize their workforce at a critical time.

Why did it take us a month longer? Were we waiting for money from somebody else to do that, when actually Quebec and BC didn't do that? They moved, and it made a difference in their outcomes. Their outcomes would have been far worse.

Move ahead to this summer: Long-term-care homes are asking the government, the minister, for a plan for long-term care to stabilize the workforce, to get people to safety, because they know a second wave's coming, but they don't get a plan. One of the things they asked for is—first of all, it's wrong for us not to be transferring people who have COVID-19 from long-term care into hospital. It's wrong for us, because it's not fair to those people, but it's also wrong because we have to isolate people. We have to get people apart. That's the point of COVID-19: to stay apart. When people are in a four-bed ward room—and I have to say to the government, I'll congratulate them for not putting people back in, but not having a plan for getting some people out is really, I think, unconscionable.

There is capacity in the system. In Quebec, they're opening up hotels. And do you know what? Even here in Ontario, we built a field hospital in Burlington—a field hospital. But we can't make a plan for long-term care. And then the response—right now, they're starting to do some things, and we're three months into the second wave. There were opportunities to do things, and they haven't been done.

I don't understand why there's not a plan. I know that there's capacity in the system and that there are opportunities for us to have all hands on deck, as we did for acute care. We really did. I'll give that to the government as well: We took care of acute care really, really well. The problem is, long-term care, not so much. We can talk about the challenges that exist in long-term care and we can talk about how it should have been better. The reality is, right now we need to take action. It's a brush fire. If you simply don't put people back into four-bed ward rooms, that's not good enough. What's your plan to get them out?

In one home, they were putting up Plexiglas dividers. I don't think that's the best infection control practice. You need to get people apart. There are capacities in hotels. Our policy for transferring people to hospital—hospitals and long-term care are working together. It needs to be there. It needed to be there.

We're not a week early on that. We're not a week late. We're not weeks late. We're months late.

**0910**

**Interjection:** Fifteen years.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I hear what the member is saying there. That's not going to help someone's mom in long-

term care, who's in a four-bed ward room. You can keep saying that, and that's fine.

The reality is, there's the ability to make decisions that will protect people, and they are not happening quickly enough. Then, when they happen two or three months later, there's an expectation as we're taking this action—no, you need not to worry about being right or wrong. You need to say, “We need to get people out of four-bed ward rooms. How the heck are we going to do that?” I don't think a fireman goes to a house and says, “Should we do this? Let's think about what we're going to do.” No, what they do is say, “Let's take this action.” And if it doesn't work—because there is a risk that maybe what you're going to do is not going to work the way that you planned it—then you have another plan.

The government has done some things right. I'm willing and I think it's right to say they got acute care right. We tilted way too heavy that way, but we got it right.

But right now, the people who are most at risk—and we saw this in the first wave, and then the same people in the second wave are our seniors in long-term care.

I know that on the other side, you're going to come back and talk about the history of long-term care, which goes back a long way, and all of us share a duty in that—different degrees. I'm not going to debate that.

But the budget, when it says it's better to be a week early than a week late—is not what has happened in long-term care.

What I'd really like the government to do is to move right now in long-term care to find ways to get residents out of risky situations. Do what they're doing in Quebec. Look at the capacity in the system that exists right now in long-term care. I know there are beds in long-term-care homes that aren't being used right now. Single rooms, semi-private rooms are empty because of the transfer policy.

I anticipate questions from the members on the other side, what they're going to say, and you'll know what my response is.

What I'm really asking you to do this morning is to put pressure to get those things done, because they're not happening fast enough. That's why we're seeing in homes across Ontario—there are not as many homes as last time, but where it's happening, it's really happening. West End Villa in Ottawa, 20 people dead; Starwood, 25—those are not inevitable deaths; they're preventable.

When I think of all the things that are happening in our province right now, when I think of what we owe to the people, who, as members on all sides often say in this Legislature, did so much to bring us here, who sacrificed for their province, for their country, for their families—we owe it to them, and it's all of our collective responsibility.

So I wanted to use my time this morning to talk about that as it relates to the budget, and to ask the members on the other side—because you sit in a caucus and you work with your colleagues. We need faster action. I know it's possible. And I would just ask that the members opposite use their relationships, their power inside their caucus, their voice inside their caucus, to step up. You've been

stepping up in other ways; we all have. This one is really important. What happened in long-term care in the first wave, we can't turn away. We can't look the other way. We can't say that it's not as bad as it was last time and it's inevitable, because there are ways to prevent many things—many unfortunate deaths from happening.

I look forward to the questions and answers.

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

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** Good morning to all members. I have a great respect for the member from Ottawa South. We had some great discussions yesterday on palliative care in committee, and I actually asked him in committee what was one of his biggest regrets as the PA to the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and he did indicate in committee that, actually, long-term care was one of the regrets or one of the points of advocacy that he'd wished he worked on longer.

I couldn't agree more: It should have been better. Yes, Mr. Speaker, it should have been better, because we shouldn't have inherited a total mess when it comes to long-term care. In 15 years, under the Liberal government, only about 600 beds were built in 15 years. Mr. Speaker, recently in my city of Mississauga, we have announced an accelerated build project for around 600 beds—in my city alone.

My question to the member is: How long does it take to build a long-term-care bed, and why did your previous government not invest into building long-term care for us?

**Mr. John Fraser:** If you actually check the record from 2003 to 2018, there were about 14,000 new beds and 16,000 rebuilds, which you know because we've got this problem with Cs and Ds.

We invested in home care. The point of my debate this morning—and I know you understand this. And also, my regret was—it is more advocacy in long-term care, but specifically palliative care. Because there was a piece—I talked about compassionate care, which was ready to go, and which didn't move because it got caught in the transition. You didn't get it done fast enough. The problem in this place is not being able to do all the things that we want to do for people.

The challenge now is, we're not going to get those beds built in time to fix what's going on right now. There was a delay with this transition. There was stuff—

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** We need to take action now, like we did in hospitals. That's my point. I know you know that. I know you care very deeply about this, so I appreciate your question very much.

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

**Ms. Suze Morrison:** It's certainly interesting to be in the House this morning. I listened intently to the member from Ottawa South and his remarks accusing the current government of their absolute failings in long-term care, and government members retorting back at the 15 years of failure in long-term care by the previous Liberal government. Both of these things are true, but we have to be better than this. I don't care anymore that the Liberals ruined



long-term care, sat there and did nothing for 15 years. I don't care anymore that you have absolutely failed in your response to COVID-19—as I look at the government members. I care that nine people died in Fudger House in my riding since the beginning of COVID-19. I care that half of the residents at that 250-bed facility have tested positive for COVID since the beginning of this pandemic.

At some point, we have to rise above the political potshots that are going back and forth and take responsibility for your failures on both sides.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'm not going to go into this because of what she said, but we all have some responsibility, to varying degrees, about what we make priorities. But what I'm talking about is right now. What are we doing right now? How are we getting people who are in four-bed ward rooms in C homes to a safer place and not having them close together so that when COVID-19 gets in a home, the fire starts?

Homes have been asking since July, and I think we need to put pressure on the people who are making decisions to make sure that that gets done; that we get people to safety; that we make a bold move; that we take a chance. Because right now, we're just looking at it and waiting for it to catch fire.

0920

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

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I listened to the member opposite, and I realize he's right; there's a lot of blame to go around. But I think that what we're not talking about here—I heard him talk about how poorly we've done, and I guess I'd have to say the opposite. I saw stats the other night, and our long-term-care-home stats are much better than—I'm going to exclude the Atlantic bubble—everybody else in this country. BC doesn't report their numbers. Our stats are twice as good as Alberta's, Manitoba's, Saskatchewan's.

That's not something we should take pride in, but we come in here and there are no PSWs. You can say what you want, but we were short when this pandemic started, and there were a large number of them that had to retire or quit early or can't go to work because of health conditions. So now it's critical. It just goes on. You can't manufacture these people overnight. It takes a two-year course. We can't import them because we don't accept them. So I guess—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. Back to the member from Ottawa South for a response.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'm trying to be measured here, because it's about what we need to do right now. So I'm not going to go down this wormhole. As the member said, nobody wants to listen to that. I don't want to listen to that.

My point is, we need to do some things right now, and it's not happening. The people who take care of the people we care for most, the homes, are saying, "We need a plan," and there is not a plan. There is no action being taken to move people out. The only time that it happens is if two hospitals get together, like they have in Hamilton, and they

do the work necessary. They did that of their own volition. They need direction. That's the role of the minister and the role of the government, and you can do that. That's my point.

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

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for his remarks this morning. I think we're all in a sombre mood as we see the numbers skyrocket. In our local newspaper this morning, the headline was, "Senior Is the Second Casualty of COVID-19." When I read that, I said, what is wrong with this, that we don't call that person a person, that they're a senior?

Unfortunately, I've also heard comments from folks like, "Well, they were going to die anyway." I've actually heard that in coffee shops. To me, I said maybe that's the problem, because people who are in long-term care—not all are seniors, but maybe the underlying feeling is that their life really doesn't matter as much as others. I'm hoping that's not the case in this House.

I know that people are trying, but it's just not good enough, and we need to do better. I agree with the member about that. I would want him to comment, and I want to ask him, do you agree that perhaps when your government was in place—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you. Back to the member from Ottawa South.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I've already talked about the redevelopment and the development of new beds. Money was invested in home care. I'll go back to, it's not about that right now. We can debate that, and there are things that we did that I am particularly proud of, that were successful, and there are things that—and this government will feel the same way when they're done. We all feel that way as members.

There is a challenge of ageism. There is, and we have to be careful in here. I've cautioned the minister before on this. It's not good enough to say that the majority of homes aren't in outbreak, that the majority of homes don't have resident cases. The reality is, there are 20 homes in Ontario that have double-digit resident cases. I think what we need to lead with is, sadly, yesterday 12 seniors, residents, died in long-term care. We're working hard to help those families. Here's the situation, but there's also the news—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. Further questions? I recognize the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. You have 30 seconds.

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member from Ottawa South for his input and thoughtful ideas and input in this discussion. For Ontario to recover, we need a strong, sustained economic growth. We cannot expect our economy to just bounce back and the lost jobs to return—

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

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Okay. The question: Will the member opposite be supporting our government's investment of an additional \$181 million in employment services and training programs to connect workers—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. Back to the member.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I just want to say, at the end of this debate, I don't think anybody in here doesn't want things to be good in long-term care. That's my point. You have a job to do, we have a job to do, and—

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

Further debate?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** It's an honour to rise today. For the first time, I think, I'm speaking on the budget. I wanted to say thank you to the member from Ottawa South for his comments today and the fact that he's putting forward ideas on how we can work together. I appreciate that very much.

Secondly, I would like to wish the member from Sudbury a very happy birthday. We were here until midnight last night, and we actually got to wish him a happy birthday last night. There was a little bit of singing at the tail end of our discussions last evening.

Again, I really appreciate the tone that we're taking this morning, not because we're not seeing the eagle and the owl going back and forth, but because these are serious issues. I heard the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan saying that the mood is sombre in here today because of the pressing issues that the province faces. Indeed, this is the test of our time, this COVID. And so, I want everyone to continue to think also about what we're trying to do: Protect, support, and now, recover. I think we're still very much in the protect and support phase of COVID-19. We need to be there for businesses, for long-term-care homes. But let me just get started. So again, thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to rise.

The next phase of Ontario's action plan will make available every necessary resource to continue to protect people's health during the second wave of COVID-19 and beyond. Our action plan is, I believe, the province's first stab at a multi-year budget, and we're putting \$45 billion over the next three years to make available the necessary health resources to continue to protect people; deliver critical programs and tax measures to support individuals, families and job creators impacted by the virus; and then we need to lay the groundwork for a long-term, robust economic recovery for the province.

"Protect" is the first pillar of our plan because it represents our most fundamental responsibility as parliamentarians. The people of Ontario have done, and they are doing, their part by respecting and following public health advice. And we here in the Legislature are doing ours.

Our government has made unprecedented investments within the "protect" pillar of our budget. In total, to date, we have made \$15.2 billion available to support our front-line health care heroes and protect people from COVID-19. In March, the action plan provided an immediate \$3.3 billion for health care. In August, through the 2020-21 first quarter finances, the government announced an additional \$4.4 billion for health care, for a total of \$7.7 billion.

The initial response to COVID-19 focused on these key areas:

- maintaining public health measures;
- identifying, managing and preventing outbreaks;
- preparing for surges in COVID-19 cases;
- expanding digital health and virtual services;
- recruiting, retaining, training and supporting health care workers, families and caregivers, and supporting Ontario's hospitals;
- launching COVID Alert, a made-in-Ontario exposure notification app;
- investing to enable more physicians to conduct virtual care visits with their patients; and
- providing eligible front-line workers a temporary pandemic pay increase of \$4 an hour.

That is \$7.5 billion in new spending on health care that is building on an existing \$7.7 billion in supports to date.

### 0930

Within the health care sphere is protecting loved ones in long-term-care homes. Our government has provided a total of \$783 million in additional funding for the 2020-21 fiscal year for long-term-care homes, as follows: \$243 million in March for emergency capacity and virus containment and close to an additional \$549 million in new funding to protect residents, caregivers and staff from future surges of COVID-19. We are also investing \$1.75 billion to increase long-term-care capacity and access, including through the Accelerated Build Pilot Program.

Compassion and direct contact are vital for our loved ones in long-term-care homes. That is why we are increasing average daily direct care from a nurse or personal support worker per long-term-care resident to four hours a day—phased in over four years. This requires significant changes in the sector and collaboration with labour partners, care providers and training providers. Our government is also providing \$461 million in temporary wage increases for over 147,000 personal support workers and direct support workers.

Speaker, it is said that mental health is health, and that's why we're investing \$176 million in 2020-21 for the mental health and addictions Roadmap to Wellness. This includes opening the Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital site, investing \$2.5 billion more in the hospital sector in 2020-21 than in 2019-20. We are also creating capacity by investing more than \$18 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years. Our government is also hiring 98 more—nearly a 25% increase—occupational health and safety inspectors. Another key initiative is that we are investing \$30 million over two years for infection prevention and control in congregate care settings throughout Ontario.

In addition to the key priority to make Ontario's health system patient-centric, our government is providing \$2.4 million to support an additional 13 Ontario health teams across the province, including in my riding of Brantford—Brant. These teams are a new way of delivering care that brings together health care providers and organizations to work as one coordinated team to improve patient outcomes. This approach is allowing the province to

respond more quickly and effectively to COVID-19 and reduce hallway health care.

Through an Ontario health team, patients will experience easier transitions from one provider to another, including, for example, between hospitals, home care providers or long-term-care homes, with one patient story, one patient record and one care plan. As Ontario health teams mature, patients and families will also have access to 24/7 navigation and care coordination services. This includes enabling the further expansion of virtual care for patients through dedicated funding to maintain access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To add to Ontario's "protect" pillar, our government is creating a new provincial emergency volunteer unit to coordinate and activate in future pandemics, natural disasters and other emergencies. Through this pandemic, Ontarians have stepped up and shown that they want to help in their communities. We want to thank everyone who has answered the call for volunteers throughout COVID-19. Whether it was helping a senior pick up groceries or donating to local food banks, these contributions have made a difference. Thank you.

We have some of the brightest and most talented minds right here in the province, and it is important that we leverage this in times of crisis. That's why our government will be creating a new organization to oversee a provincial emergency volunteer unit to support these efforts. The group will be comprised of volunteers from diverse backgrounds, geographic locations and ages, and they will be called upon to help in times of emergency. By registering with our new organization, you're not prohibited from volunteering with other bodies, like the Red Cross; instead, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with all of our partners in the volunteering space. We look forward to talking with our sector partners later this fall to discuss how we can best collaborate to launch this initiative successfully. We want to support existing efforts and work together in times of crisis.

Moving on, Mr. Speaker, to "support": This is the second pillar of our plan. Since the beginning, we have promised to be there, to help those struggling the most. In Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, we are expanding that support. As COVID-19 continues to create challenges, we will continue to be there to support the people of Ontario. This starts with giving back to all the seniors who built this province. We've provided \$75 million in relief by doubling the guaranteed annual income system payment for 194,000 of our lowest-income seniors. We 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 also increased funding to the Seniors Active Living Centres Program by 22%, for a total of \$17 million.

COVID-19 has reminded us, all of us, that our homes are a special place where we should be safe, but for many seniors, Mr. Speaker, staying in their homes requires expensive improvements such as wheelchair ramps and stability bars to make them safe and accessible, which is

why we are proposing a new Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit for the 2021 tax year. This investment will help tens of thousands of seniors stay in the homes that 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. It means an Ontario senior or a family with a grandparent living in their home would receive up to \$2,500 back for a \$10,000 renovation to make their home safer.

Moving on to education: This September, all publicly funded elementary schools reopened province-wide with in-class instruction five days a week. Most secondary schools started this school year in an adapted model that includes a hybrid of in-person and remote learning. These approaches were designed to support keeping our students and staff and their families safe.

Our government has also adapted to the new realities of COVID-19, keeping students engaged and learning while at the same time taking appropriate health precautions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. This year, approximately 20% of students have chosen to stay at home doing online learning. Therefore, we have expanded the digital learning portal to provide access to curriculum and learning resources to parents, teachers and students. To date, we have already given parents \$378 million to help with the additional cost of technology for online learning, and we're putting in another \$380 million that we'll be giving out as we continue to help offset some of the extra expenses incurred with online learning.

Mr. Speaker, the province is providing students and teachers with new learning supports to help them during COVID-19 by investing \$7 million over three years. New online modular content for elementary grades will be introduced to cover the full curriculum and support flexibility between face-to-face and remote learning. These new elementary content modules will be developed through a phased approach, starting with four subjects: language, math, science and social studies.

With the anxiety of students returning to class, we have made \$1.3 billion available to school boards to help make the return to school safe and a welcoming experience. Some of the areas that we will be focusing on are:

- \$100 million to hire more teachers to keep class sizes small;

- \$90 million for personal protective equipment—or, as we call it, PPE—for staff and students;

- \$62.5 million to hire 625 school-focused nurses to provide rapid response supports to schools and boards and to facilitate public health measures;

- \$79 million to hire up to 1,300 additional dedicated custodians and to purchase cleaning supplies;

**0940**

- \$65.5 million for enhanced cleaning and safety measures for student transportation;

- \$42.5 million to support students with special needs and provide student mental health supports;

- \$50 million in one-time funding to support improved ventilation, air quality and heating, air flow and air-conditioning system effectiveness in schools;

—\$54 million to hire additional principals, vice-principals and administrative staffing supports to better deliver and oversee remote learning;

—\$100 million to be responsive to local school board reopening plan priorities supporting a broad range of activities, such as increasing the number of educators and custodians, additional busing supports and keeping class sizes small;

—\$15 million to purchase technology and approximately 30,000 devices for students;

—\$44.5 million toward the school-bus-driver retention strategy;

—up to \$496 million by allowing boards to unlock reserves and access up to 2% of their operating budget from their reserve funds. This funding can be applied to the local priorities of each board, based on immediate needs.

Post-secondary students received a 10% reduction in tuition for the 2019-20 school year, and we have frozen tuition fees for the 2020-21 school year for all publicly funded colleges and universities. OSAP loan repayments were temporarily suspended from March until the end of September to help post-secondary students.

To protect, support and recover Ontario's economy, a solid approach to business sector stabilization and growth is a large portion of our government's action plan.

To promote recovery for businesses throughout Ontario, the 2020 budget will reduce taxes, support job growth and make operations simpler and more affordable. Overall, our government is investing \$4.8 billion to help create conditions for economic growth.

First, Ontario's action plan will reduce taxes for businesses throughout the province. One way that we are doing this is by lowering high business education taxes, known as the BET, thus reducing business property taxes. At most, some businesses were charged at a rate of 1.25%. We're going to be dropping that to 0.88%, resulting in benefits for over 94% of Ontario businesses. This accumulates to about \$8.5 million in savings for businesses in Brantford-Brant alone. At the same time, we are allowing our municipalities to target property tax relief for small businesses, and the province is considering matching those municipal tax reductions.

Finally, we are proposing to provide relief to employers through the employer health tax exemption. Some employers pay as much as 1.95% of total payroll costs on the employer health tax. This proposal would make the health tax exemption that we introduced earlier this year permanent, allowing employers to be exempt from this portion of the payroll for up to \$1 million.

In addition to our commitment to reduce taxes on businesses, our government remains focused on supporting job growth in Ontario. We've realized that in order to provide relief we have to help businesses with fixed costs, rather than profits—for example, corporate tax relief—as many of Ontario's businesses are not making a profit this year.

One major component of this is our investment in skills and training. While we have seen job recovery following

the initial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment remains high. We are investing an additional \$100 million in Employment Ontario for 2020-21 for skills training programs. Through this program Ontarians will be able to access employment advice and training as well as skills upgrades.

We are also seeking to upgrade and modernize Ontario's skilled trades system to encourage participation and provide easier access to trades through a skilled trades strategy. These investments will help job seekers gain access to good jobs and any necessary training or supports. They will also allow employer to actively participate in training and mentorship for apprentices.

Additionally, the Ontario action plan will make business operations simpler and more affordable. The first step in this plan will be to lower electricity cost for employers. Businesses throughout Ontario have seen increases in electricity prices since 2008, primarily caused by the previous government's failed Green Energy Act that was supported by the opposition. Starting on January 1, 2021, the province will fund a portion of business electricity costs, resulting in average savings of 14% for medium-sized industrial and commercial businesses and 16% for larger business.

Speaker, we are committed to reducing unnecessary red tape requirements and the business costs associated with it for Ontario's businesses. Our proposed changes will help modernize existing regulations and help increase productivity and economic growth. We have achieved a total of \$331 million in annual savings for businesses throughout the province. Through Ontario's action plan, our government is continuing to support workers and employers throughout Ontario as we continue with the provincial recovery plan.

Speaker, I'm looking forward to the question and answer session to speak more about this. But I believe, in the middle of a pandemic, that it's imperative that government's focus is on protecting and supporting Ontarians. I would just like to say that it's been an honour to rise today to speak about the budget, and again, I look forward to questions and answers.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Good morning, Speaker, and good morning to my colleagues as well as the other members of the House. When the budget was revealed, I was hoping to see the government chip away at the dangerously understaffed long-term-care homes, and yet more staff won't come this year. In fact, they voted for four hours a day and then tell us to wait until 2025. It looks like nine months into a pandemic has not been enough time to move on fixing this issue—and then you applaud it. It is concerning that this budget does not address the staffing shortage gap. What's more horrifying, Speaker, in St. Catharines, is that the ministry has created a staffing nightmare for front-line workers in hospitals, because they are no longer covering paid sick days for the front-line heroes, who have to self-isolate due to COVID-19 in some circumstances.

Speaker, through you to the member opposite: Will you make sure that this government will actually fix long-term

care in St. Catharines and across this province at this point, and what are you going to do about it?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Thank you for the question. As the member knows, we have made significant investments in long-term care this year to help support. The member also knows that a problem can't be fixed immediately and that it needs to be fixed right. That's why I'm so pleased with the investments that we've made, not only to be able to construct more long-term-care homes, but the fact that we're putting those supports in place, supporting PSWs in order to pay them more now and to bring more available online quickly.

Also, one of the most important programs as far as I'm concerned is the funding of our community paramedicine programs that I've been very, very excited about, because those community paramedics will make it so that people can stay in their homes longer, while not removing them off the wait-list for long-term care, so that they don't end up there and they can age in place at home.

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

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you to my colleague for his presentation. Our government understands that the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a significant toll on the finances of many seniors. Can the member please share with the House what our government has done to support seniors through the ensuing economic crisis?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Speaker, through you, thank you to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt. I appreciate his continued passion for his constituents. That's an excellent question.

Speaker, "support" is the second pillar of our plan. Since the beginning, we have promised to be there to help those who are struggling most. In Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, we are expanding that support. As COVID-19 continues to create challenges, we will continue to be there to support the people of Ontario. That's why we're providing \$75 million in relief by doubling the guaranteed annual income support to 194,000 of our lowest-income seniors, and we're putting \$16 million into the Ontario Community Support Program to deliver 230,000 meals and other essentials to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Good morning, Speaker. My friend spoke a lot about the action plan; I'd like to ask about the inaction on price gouging when it comes to the insurance industry. I heard from a landscaper who clears snow and never had a claim filed against them—a \$4,000 increase in insurance.

I've heard from condo boards. In one association, the rates are doubling; the other one is tripling.

**0950**

The town of Lakeshore—I talked to the mayor there the other day, Tom Bain, on another matter; never a claim filed, the rate has gone up \$180,000. He told me about a nurse, a friend of his, who had a fender bender, filed a claim and was told her premium would go to \$9,000.

Price gouging is going on by the insurance companies in Ontario under the guise of the pandemic. The member is the parliamentary assistant to the Premier. I'd like to ask him: What is his and the Premier's plan to get into the price gouging going on hidden away by the pandemic?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I appreciate getting the question from my friend across the way. He's looking bright and chipper. He looks a lot better than I feel after last night's late night activities here in the House.

He's absolutely correct. This is completely inappropriate. This is a priority for our government, and that's why I've been so excited to see the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's private member's bill moving through, because the fact of the matter is I have a lot of friends who are in the snow removal business and they can't even get insurance because they're in that business and because there are so many lawsuits happening and everything else. So I'm really excited to see some of the changes that we're making to bring that in line.

Thank you very much for the question.

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

**Ms. Natalia Kusendova:** I was listening intently to my friend from Brantford–Brant. Our Premier often says that we need to put an iron ring of protection around our seniors who are the most vulnerable citizens right now, especially in light of COVID-19. That's why it's so important that we are investing \$1.75 billion as part of our investment to build 30,000 new beds, and since the onset of the pandemic, we have invested \$800 million to protect the most vulnerable citizens in long-term care.

Can the member please tell us why these investments are needed now more than ever?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I completely agree that the devastation that this disease causes amongst our most vulnerable—I heard those comments earlier too. I've had people express that to me that, "Well, they're just a bunch of old people," and, quite frankly, if I can say that in here, Mr. Speaker, I will say publicly to everyone in Ontario that that's disgusting. That's disgusting that we would value life so low.

In fact, I will say here in this House that one of the most inspiring parts of this COVID-19 pandemic is the steps we are all as a group willing to make, that as people of Ontario we are willing to take, to protect those who are most vulnerable. That's why we're making those significant investments: to protect our seniors, to build that iron ring.

I appreciate the question. That is something that's deeply personal for me.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Further questions? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. And thank you to the member from Brantford–Brant for his comments.

I'd like to emphasize the comment around protecting people. Protecting people means stopping this virus, frankly. We need to do everything we can to stop this virus, and one area that I was disappointed not to see in the budget is for paid sick leave, because there are people in

this province who cannot afford to take a day off. It's between taking the day off and not being able to feed their children. This government actually stripped away those emergency days that were going to be put into place—in your first budget, one of the first things you actually did as a government.

Can the member now—I would like to ask them: Don't you think that paid sick leave would help stop this virus?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** A great question. I am very pleased I was just told from a colleague here that, indeed, we are doing 10 days of paid sick leave from this past September until next September. Thank you for the question, and I'm glad to bring you that good news that that is happening.

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I wanted to just ask the member about the importance of investing in the tourism sector. Of course, recognizing right now we're trying to get people to rest at home, what will the impact be in the budget, do you think, of the introduction of a tax credit for those who are going to be visiting places like Niagara and, of course, beautiful Brantford–Brant?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I really appreciate that. I've had so many conversations with the Minister of Finance about these issues, and I remember we had a great presentation from the Ontario Home Builders' Association and OREA also—the realtors—talking about different options for how we can help get the economy to recover. What became so clear to the Ministry of Finance is that we need to support, to help bring back, to recover those industries that have most been affected by COVID-19, which is why we're providing the training supports for people who have been laid off because of COVID-19. But when we get through this, I am really looking forward to 2021, the Lord willing, being the absolute year of the staycation, where people will be able to get out and enjoy those cultural opportunities and be able to get out to enjoy the great outdoors across the province of Ontario and then have that back as a tax credit system. I think it's critical, it's so important and it's so innovative, the way that we are supporting those industries most affected by COVID-19. Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Point of order, Speaker,

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on a point of order.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** I wonder if we could have unanimous consent and have the members tell us more about their 10 days of sick leave that we haven't heard about before—if they could tell the House now.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The member is—

**Interjection:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I heard a no.

#### SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled:

a special report entitled COVID-19 Preparedness and Management, from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

#### 2020 ONTARIO BUDGET

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

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** It's a pleasure, as always, to rise to speak in this House on behalf of the great people of Davenport, who I'm honoured to represent.

Today we are discussing the budget bill that the government has tabled, a bill that I want to say was—I was going back over the speech that the Minister of Finance gave when the budget was introduced. He reminded us that back in March, Premier Ford made a very simple and what he called “non-negotiable” promise to the people of Ontario. He said that your government will “do whatever it takes” to get you through this. You know, Mr. Speaker, when we go through this bill—in detail, in particular—we find that it's actually not so, that what the Premier and the government have done in presenting this budget is waved a white flag in this battle against COVID-19, and I think that's how a lot of Ontarians feel today.

This government is telling people, actually, the opposite. They're saying, “You're on your own.” As we sit here and Ontario is on the brink of a health care and economic disaster, this budget doesn't take any new actions to make people in this province safer or healthier. In fact, in this budget, the government is telling seniors, as my colleagues have mentioned, those seniors living in dangerously understaffed long-term-care homes, that more staff aren't coming this year. They're on their own.

The government is telling the 30-plus kids packed into classrooms even though we know that schools are the source of over 4,000 infections—and I'm going to get more into those numbers later on in my comments. But they're on their own.

The public health units: All those folks on the front line who have been working so hard to keep our communities safe are getting no new money. Despite families being put at risk by the lack of contact tracing and testing, public health is still on their own, and so are the families that are trying to stay safe.

This budget tells businesses and workers that they're on their own. Workers aren't getting the paid sick days that they're going to need to stay home and stop the spread, and small businesses that have to board up this year won't be helped by a tax break when it comes too late.

There's no money in this budget to get moving on the need to guarantee the minimum of four hours of care per resident per day in this province. In fact, the budget cuts long-term-care funding compared to what the government had planned to spend in 2020-21. In the March fiscal plan, long-term care was budgeted at \$4.63 billion. This new budget lowers that to \$4.53 billion.

This budget doesn't even give hospitals the funding they need to cover their deficits, and the Premier, as we know, is sitting on contingency reserve money, billions of

which came from the federal government to help stop the second wave, and the government is choosing to chase the crisis instead of preventing it.

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Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment—I'm going talk more about some of the other areas—but I do want to take a moment as the official opposition education critic to talk specifically about education funding. As I've said in this House many times since the budget was introduced, there are no new dollars here for education. In fact, arguably, if you take into account the rising cost of living, the cost of goods and services, this is actually a cut in education funding in this budget.

I want to go back to a number that we've used here a number of times, the \$9.3 billion that the government had kind of squirrelled away. I want to explain a little bit of that here today. We know that this government is sitting on \$9.3 billion—unspent and unallocated dollars—that should have been used to prepare for or help people during the second wave, which is now upon us. In fact, we know this because the Financial Accountability Office's Economic and Budget Outlook back in October showed that very specifically: \$9.3 billion in unallocated cash.

We know that this has been part of a very disturbing pattern of this government. During the summer, we had the government promise to spend over \$1 billion on a safe return to school. But when the supplementary estimates were tabled on September 17, none of these spending promises were included, even though the school year had already started. The budget for the education ministry was still only 0.4% higher than what the government had spent in the previous fiscal year—in the middle of a pandemic. It makes no sense.

I want to say that, again, this \$9.3-billion figure comes from the FAO, and they have not yet published an updated report showing how many billions in COVID cash still remain unallocated, but we're expecting to get one soon. The truth is, the government is not very transparent about their spending plans, and we really shouldn't trust them, I think it's fair to say.

If we look back at, for example, the autism spending at this time in the 2019-20 budget, you will recall that the government promised to increase autism spending to \$600 million. But this budget promise was not reflected in the spring estimates. The promised spending increase was only finally included in the supplementary estimates published in December. And then earlier this year, we learned more disturbing facts, as we all recall, about that claimed autism spending—again, that the government froze \$62 million while families were sitting languishing on waiting lists.

Anyway, getting back to education. The fact is, if you turn to page 15 of the budget, the government members like to point to this figure: \$2.6 billion in remaining balances. This is what the government would call a projected balance of the various contingency funds after all the budget's announced spending promises. I want to point something out to you, and I know it's a little dry, but it's important that Ontarians understand that when the

government throws around numbers like this, it's really not based in any kind of reality thus far. These are just aspirational numbers. We're going to have to wait, again, for the Financial Accountability Office report to find out how much of this is actually being reflected in formal allocation and what the government is actually going to spend.

I find it very interesting that this government, despite all of this, has not yet allocated any of these dollars to, say, school boards. In fact, when you look at, for example, what they have spent: allocating \$2 billion to the Ministry of Transportation for transit, but only \$666 million of this has been allocated to specific transit agencies. The government says they're going to allocate the remaining \$1.3 billion in the new year, and there will be conditions attached. Is it possible that there could be similar conditions attached to the remaining Safe Return to Class Fund dollars that have yet to be allocated to school boards? Is it possible that some or even all of this allocated money will actually never be allocated to school boards or municipalities or agencies that need it?

I think what's really clear, Mr. Speaker, is that—and I know the government gets a bit defensive and testy about these things, but they're sitting on a mountain of cash. Even if the government finally does allocate all of those funds that are discussed in this budget, it's going to be too little, too late. This is a question that I've been asking the Minister of Education here for weeks and weeks: Why, if you know it's needed now, aren't you moving heaven and earth to provide the support that our students and staff need now?

I was on a round table discussion last night with folks in York region, and it was really fascinating. There was a teacher, there was a student, there was a biostatistician as well who joined us and a number of parents from York region. I want to talk a little bit about some of the things that we discussed last night. One of the things that we talked about with the biostatistician was the numbers, because the Minister of Education stands here pretty much daily and claims that 99% or so of our schools remain COVID-free. This is creative math, Mr. Speaker.

The truth is that right now—let's start with York region. Fifty per cent of all schools in York region have had cases of COVID-19. The number across the province is about 47%. In Brampton, 48% of schools have had at least one active case. In Toronto, it's about 35% in the public school system and 40% of Catholic schools. We know that the risk is greater in some regions than others. We see that reflected in the nature of the lockdown that is under way right now. But what's really concerning to many out there is that the minister continues to use these—I'm going to say misleading—statistics and percentages in this House and keeps repeating this over and over and over again, when the facts really don't play out. In fact, the numbers are so much higher, and that is the experience of so many parents and families and students and staff in our education system, and it's very insulting to them to hear the minister misrepresent what is happening in our schools today.

I have asked the minister many times here, and the Premier, why, again, they aren't doing everything that they could possibly do in this moment, why they couldn't be increasing the testing that needs to happen in our communities, but especially in our schools, why we aren't doing the contact tracing.

I want to share that when we were talking to the biostatisticians last night, one of the things that the biostatisticians that were on the call made a point of was that, even if we have about 4,000 cases in our schools right now, students and staff, we are only catching—and this is a pretty conservative estimate—about one in four of the cases that are out there. If you do the math, then you're looking at probably closer to 16,000 cases currently, but again, we don't know, because when a child is sent home from a class, a class is closed down because there are a number of cases and they go home, they're not required to be tested, and there's no tracing happening. Again, we're not really sharing with Ontarians a true picture of what's happening in schools right now.

Why does it matter? It matters because we are trying to stop the spread of this infection. Until we do that, we will be going through this cycle of lockdowns and closures. That will continue, and that's why so many Ontarians across this province have made such significant sacrifices: because we know what's at stake. What is astounding to me and to the parents that I speak to every day is that the government wouldn't be doing everything possible, wouldn't be taking every single opportunity to curb the spread of infection throughout our province, including schools. I think if you look at the plans that this government has rolled out—very delayed—you will find that the efforts that have been made when it comes to schools have been limited.

**1010**

I know we talk about it all the time and it has become—maybe the government members opposite just close their ears now because they're so used to hearing us say this. One of the critical elements that has contributed to curbing the pandemic spread in many other jurisdictions has been reducing class sizes in schools, has been capping the number of students in schools who are in a class. The reason this matters is very simple: It's because they are spaced out, and the more space that they have between them, the less likely it is that they're going to be able to spread the infection. That is where this government has failed Ontario students. That's why we continue to raise that, and why it's so astonishing that to this day our classes continue to be reorganized.

I look at the members sitting here with me today in the NDP official opposition and I know we've all received many, many calls from frustrated parents who have gone to their principals, who have gone to their superintendents, who have gone to their trustees, who have gone to the government, and said, "My child still doesn't have a teacher," "My child hasn't had the same teacher for more than a week all school year," "My kindergartener started out in a class of 20 and is now in a class of 29 or 30." Everybody is thinking, "How could we possibly be in this

situation? It goes against everything we know will help to curb the pandemic."

I've had many parents say to me over and over again, including last night, "We keep calling the Minister of Education, we keep calling the Premier, we're calling our Conservative MPPs, and it's not doing any good." I said, "Just keep doing it." We know they're hearing the same things we are. My hope is that at some point one of them is going to get the backbone to actually start standing up for the children in their communities who deserve better than this.

Last night, we heard from a high school student—and I always feel that often what's missing in a lot of the conversations, certainly in the government's planning for this pandemic, and overall, is that voice of students, is the experience of students. It's so critical right now, and it's what the government isn't listening to.

The government, I want to also point out—and again, I'm disappointed, in this budget, that there's no discussion of what we're going to learn here, of what evaluation is happening, in every respect. But I'm going to talk specifically about schools.

I asked the Minister of Education and the deputy minister in estimates committee if they could point me to any evaluation of what the experience is right now, of what we're learning, and any kind of meaningful collaboration that's happening with students and teachers and other education workers and boards on the front line. The answer was silence, nothing. There is no evaluation happening. We're not learning.

I want to share with you what Palwashah said last night at this round table. I was really moved by her comments. I can't possibly summarize them all here, but one thing she said to me very clearly was that students feel like they're at the bottom of the chain. Students feel left out. They are not listened to. Nobody is asking them how this is working for them. We see the reports that are coming out that talk about the rise in suicidal ideation. We see the statistics coming out in terms of the rise of depression and anxiety. What we know, as parents—I'm a parent of two teenagers—is that it's always there. Anxiety, depression are already there—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you. I apologize to the member, but it is now 10:15. When this bill is debated again, there will be an opportunity for you to complete your debate, as well as the questions and responses.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### ADDICTION SERVICES

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** In all of our communities across Ontario, drugs are becoming more and more of a problem, especially opioids. We are seeing a fast rise in usage of opioids in our communities. We are seeing more deaths



now than we had seen even a year ago. What's going on in this pandemic I think is adding to all of this, and people are struggling to figure out how to respond to this really, really serious problem that we have in our community. In Timmins, we've lost far too many people to the use of opioids, and everybody is struggling to figure out what to do.

I want to give a shout-out to an organization that has sort of come out of the grassroots. It's an organization called No More. They've been out there trying to bring attention to the issue of opioids and how we need to pull people together and not try to divide them apart when it comes to being able to respond to what is this problem.

There is hope. The city of Timmins—we've managed to pull together all of our service providers, and we're doing a better job today than we did six months ago of being able to respond to the crisis by making sure that we have more safe beds, by making sure that we have more people on the streets in order to deal with the homeless and those who are affected by opioids and other types of drugs.

No More is an organization that we should encourage, because their simple concept is that we need to work together. We cannot divide each other if we're going to be able to conquer what's going on in our communities.

#### ORGAN DONATION

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** As per Ontario's Trillium Gift of Life Network, each organ donation can save up to eight lives and enhance up to 75 more through tissue donation.

Thanks to Amar Karma, a not-for-profit organization from Mississauga–Malton that has been working tirelessly to raise awareness on organ donation for over a decade. Unfortunately, there are still over 1,600 Ontarians on the wait-list for organ transplants, and every three days, someone on that list dies of a preventable death.

With a heavy heart, I remind members of a recent tragedy. On November 7, Dante Sebastian Andreatta from Brampton, an innocent 12-year-old boy, was hit by a stray bullet and died in a hospital four days later. Dante lost his life, but Dante created a legacy that will live on forever. Through organ donation, Dante, at the tender age of 12 years, has gone on to save nine lives, who will live their lives to the fullest.

Dante's heroic legacy and generosity should be a message to the 65% of Ontarians that have not registered their consent for organ donation. In Mississauga alone, the registration is only 22%. I urge everyone to please register your consent at [beadonor.ca](http://beadonor.ca). Your deed will live on.

With less people going to ServiceOntario, Ontario numbers are further down. Please take two minutes. Spend those two minutes and you can help others; you can save lives. Let's spread the word and save lives.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I rise today to speak on one of the most pressing issues in our province: the crisis in long-term care.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a total of 2,150 deaths of residents in long-term care, as well as eight dedicated, hard-working staff. It's the tragic reality of how broken our system is in Ontario.

Right here in Niagara, we've seen tragedy in long-term care under COVID-19. Recently, there have been outbreaks at Gilmore Lodge, Millennium Trail Manor, Meadows of Dorchester and Bella Senior Care.

Right now, Meadows of Dorchester has been dealing with an outbreak and are facing even more positive cases. We've seen a total of 25 COVID-19 cases between residents and staff in this home.

Before they were taken over by Niagara Health, we had heard of horrible conditions in Millennium Trail Manor. The home was understaffed, and the staff were forced to reuse PPE that hadn't been properly cleaned. People died as a result of corporate and government mismanagement.

People die because of neglect like this. We've seen this happen too many times in Niagara since March. We can't continue to let this happen. At the end of the day, seniors are being neglected and we're not doing enough. Seniors

**1020**

There are things that we can do right now to make this situation better: Mandate four hours of hands-on care, provide the funding to support it and hire the staff necessary for this. Move away from for-profit care providers and provide a framework for caregivers and visitation in our care homes.

Sixty-eight seniors have died in Niagara. We can't wait any longer. We need to protect our seniors now—our parents, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to remind the members that members' statements are to be 90 seconds. I try to provide a bit of leniency if need be, but we can't go too far over that, obviously.

The next member's statement?

#### HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. It was a great pleasure to join my Scarborough colleagues last Friday, November 20, to make a major announcement to improve the health care system in Scarborough.

The Scarborough Health Network received \$11.8 million to create 45 new beds and eight additional critical care beds in order to help alleviate hospital capacity pressure and reduce wait times. In light of the recent news of the spread of the pandemic, this was welcome news to both the residents and front-line health care providers of Scarborough.

The staff and front-line care providers have been doing an outstanding job in trying to control the spread of the pandemic under very challenging conditions. They have been the true heroes of the pandemic in Scarborough and have gone beyond the call of duty by supporting our most vulnerable in long-term-care facilities, as well as other seniors' communities.

This investment will help reduce surgical backlogs and improve access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This brings the total investment to \$351 million for more than 2,250 new beds at 57 hospitals and alternate health facilities across the province, beds that will add more capacity for hospitals, help with occupancy pressure and support the continuation of surgeries and procedures.

#### GILLIAN'S PLACE

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Sixteen days of activism against gender-based violence starts today. The UN calls it a fight against the Shadow Pandemic: violence against women during COVID-19.

Headline after headline highlights the increase in domestic violence during this pandemic. In St. Catharines, we have Gillian's Place at the vanguard of the fight, an incredible women's shelter. The individual stories from Gillian's Place are empowering. So many women do not know what they would do without access to counsel and their support, from helping young mothers who are expecting a new baby, to developing skills in cooking and shopping, or learning how to have a healthy relationship in the future. In fact, this year, without the government's funding, they opened up 10 transitional homes across Niagara.

I want to celebrate what they have done. It would be a missed opportunity if I didn't point out that it is harder right now for women and the work this organization is doing during this pandemic. Women are disproportionately affected by the pandemic in St. Catharines, so remember your sisters, remember your mother, your neighbours, your colleagues right now more than ever. There are women in your life struggling, isolating and at risk. Continue to remember them and reach out to them. Continue to support great organizations like Gillian's Place and the great work they are doing during the shadow pandemic.

Join me today. Text "courage" to 41010.

#### ADAMSON BARBECUE

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** I want to recognize and applaud an individual today for his courage, convictions and resolve. Yesterday, Adam Skelly opened his restaurant, Adamson Barbecue, and is testing the government's unlawful orders. I have no doubt—indeed, I'm certain—that these unlawful orders will be struck down by the courts. I encourage all restaurants, all businesses and all people to do the same and to stand with Adam Skelly.

In recognition, I believe the following poem by Charles Mackay is appropriate:

You have no enemies, you say?  
 Alas! my friend, the boast is poor;  
 He who has mingled in the fray  
 Of duty, that the brave endure,  
 Must have made foes! If you have none,  
 Small is the work that you have done.  
 You've hit no traitor on the hip,  
 You've dashed no cup from perjured lip,

You've never turned the wrong to right,  
 You've been a coward in the fight.

I will be sharing Mr. Skelly's spirit as well tomorrow. I will be testing the laws once again on the front lawn of the Legislature and invite everyone to join me at our No More Lockdowns "pots and pans" rally.

#### TAYLOR LINDSAY-NOEL

**Mr. Stan Cho:** It's my privilege to rise today to recognize the passion, strength and resilience of a remarkable young entrepreneur in my community of Willowdale named Taylor Lindsay-Noel.

At only 14 years old, Speaker, Taylor was an elite gymnast on track to represent Canada at the 2012 Olympics Games before a tragic neck injury during training left her paralyzed from the neck down. Taylor's promising career as a gymnast is over, but with her heroic determination and with the support of her family, Taylor didn't let her injury define her.

In 2018, as a new Ryerson University graduate, Taylor founded a home-based organic loose leaf tea company called Cup of Té. Taylor taught herself how to run a business and with only her laptop, Google, a handful of YouTube videos and her entrepreneurial spirit, she launched her store online.

Last month, Taylor yet again received life-changing news: This time, because her once fledgling tea company had been chosen to receive a massive global boost by being included on the list of Oprah Winfrey's Favorite Things in the upcoming December issue of O magazine, just in time for the holidays, no less.

From the tragic end of her gymnastics career to her extraordinary new-found success in business, Taylor's story is one of grit and resolve. As we all face the challenges of this pandemic, Taylor's story should inspire us all, remind us that hard work, passion, perseverance and the support of friends and family is paramount and that good things come from even the biggest of tragedies.

Taylor, you're an inspiration. Go get 'em out there. I can't wait to see what you do next.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** This morning, the Auditor General tabled her report on the preparedness and management of the COVID-19 response.

My comments this morning are not to blame—we cannot change the past, but we can influence the future to do better.

Some of the things we learned is that Ontario is not using the command-and-control model, which is what our emergency system is based on. Instead, all of the decisions regarding COVID are made by the Premier, his chief of staff and cabinet. We also know that much of the advice that has been given by public health was not followed.

For example, to extend COVID-19 testing to any individual with no symptoms and no known exposure was

not recommended by public health, yet was put in in Ontario and was not stopped till September. Requiring visitors to long-term-care homes to be tested for COVID-19 every two weeks and prior to visiting—there is no public health recommendation to do this. Public health says it gives people a false sense of security.

The same thing with the introduction of the new provincial colour-coded response framework—this is not based on public health advice.

Speaker, it is important for our Chief Medical Officer of Health to be an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly—the sooner, the better.

### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** The McKenzie Meadows occupation in Caledonia led by area protestors and outside activists has been under way for more than 123 days, preventing construction of a housing development project in Haldimand county. There have been significant impacts to residents, businesses and critical infrastructure.

The home builder, Foxgate Homes, has been granted a permanent injunction against the protestors. Haldimand county has an injunction against protestors blocking municipal roads, and CN Rail has an injunction against the protestors blocking the rail line. Despite these injunctions, the construction site is still occupied, municipal roads have been dug up, the CN Rail line has been disrupted, a hydro station is compromised and heavy construction equipment is stolen.

These actions have also put our Ontario Provincial Police in a difficult position. As of November 18, 38 arrests have been made and 177 charges laid, with minimal use of force.

1030

However, police and provincial and local officials cannot continue to manage the situation indefinitely in the absence of federal leadership. This is incredibly frustrating. It's been going on now for 14 and a half years with respect to the Douglas Creek Estates subdivision.

The Caledonia blockades are part of a national insurrection. Ontario has asked the federal government to intervene to bring this conflict to a peaceful resolution for all parties.

### HERITAGE HOCKEY STICKS

**Mr. Will Bouma:** I'm going to try to speak fast. I rise today to talk about something that's very special and truly Canadian. Heritage Hockey Sticks has been making hockey sticks for elite and amateur athletes for more than 100 years here in Ontario. Just last week, it was announced that they are moving to the hometown of Canada's most famous hockey player, to the great city of Brantford, in my riding of Brantford—Brant.

The company traces its roots in Waterloo region back to the 1880s. It's a complex family tree, filled with amalgamations, name changes and different owners, such as the Seagram family, Cooper and Nike Bauer. Production

at the current Sheffield Street facility in Cambridge dates back to 1905.

Heritage Hockey Sticks is now the exclusive supplier of wood hockey sticks for the Canadian Tire Corp. The new, 62,000-square-foot Brantford location is twice the size of the existing plant and allows for a production increase of about 300%.

Heritage Hockey Sticks owner Graeme Roustan anticipates his workforce will grow to 100 people, thanks to the new commitment from Canadian Tire. The company has outlived its domestic competitors. It is the only mass producer of wood, ABS, foam-core and hybrid composite sticks in Canada and the United States.

According to the owner, the city of Brantford offered a welcoming business environment as well as a closer connection to Canadian hockey lineage, as it is the birthplace of number 99, Wayne Gretzky, and the home to his father and ambassador of the game, Walter Gretzky.

Congratulations to Heritage Hockey Sticks.

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Sara Singh:** My first question is to the Premier. The Auditor General's report on the government's COVID-19 response paints a picture of a confused and bloated decision-making process, with the Premier in the middle and experts on public health left out in the cold. Among her findings, the Auditor General says, "Ontario's command structure evolved to become overly cumbersome, and it was not dominated by public health expertise."

Why did the Premier tell people on a daily basis that Ontario's response was being led by public health advice when, in fact, it was not?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** While we appreciate, obviously, the report of the Auditor General, Mr. Speaker, you'll know that all aspects of the battle against COVID-19 have been in coordination with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and public health officials across the province. I would suggest that's why we have had such an impressive result in the province of Ontario. If the Auditor General has pointed out areas in which the government can improve, and recommendations for future governments who might face a similar pandemic, of course we'll take look at that.

Obviously, this is something that no government has faced in many, many generations. It was a whole-of-government approach that we put in place to deal with this, and that approach obviously included the advice and support of medical officials across the province.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** The Premier has gone on for months saying that he follows the advice of the Chief Medical

Officer of Health. But the Auditor General has proven this to be false. In fact, she goes on to say: “The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other public health officials did not lead Ontario’s response to COVID-19.”

The auditor notes that in provinces like British Columbia, the chief medical officer takes the lead. Why has the Premier sidelined Ontario’s chief medical officer and other public health experts and told the public the complete opposite?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the Chief Medical Officer of Health has been helping guide Ontario’s response to COVID-19 right from the beginning. In fact, not only through wave 1 but as we prepared for the second wave, the chief medical officer’s advice helped ensure that a safe restart for our schools was in place. He helped ensure that our second wave action plan was in place, a very comprehensive plan that has helped—whether it was on testing or on contact tracing, the Chief Medical Officer of Health has been the lead of that.

Of course we worked with other medical officers of health in all of the regions, in the different public health regions across the province. They have been instrumental in helping us battle COVID-19; they will continue to be instrumental in doing that. The Chief Medical Officer of Health, of course, is one of the co-chairs of one of the command tables, and he was there often. He was at the select committee just last week. He will continue to be very important, and I would encourage the opposition to do the right thing and help us extend his appointment right through to September.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Speaker, through you to the government House leader, I’d actually encourage the government House leader to read the Auditor General’s report, because today’s report confirms what families already knew: The Ford government has ignored public health experts. Like the Liberals before them, they ignored years of reports and urgent recommendations from the SARS commission, they delayed implementing critical steps to stop the spread and they refused to take proactive measures to fight back against COVID-19. The Auditor General says very clearly, “we saw delays and conflicts and confusion in decision-making.”

Why did the government create so much chaos instead of accepting the advice from public health experts that could have prevented COVID-19 infections and deaths in the province of Ontario?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, the results speak for themselves with respect to Ontario’s response to COVID-19. It was a whole-of-government approach to COVID-19. This is something that no jurisdiction has faced in generations. We took the lessons from SARS, we took the lessons from H1N1 and we acted very quickly when the first wave hit. In fact, we were one of the first jurisdictions to close down schools, thanks to the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the quick work of the Minister of Education. We were one of the first jurisdictions to initiate a lockdown. We were one of the first jurisdictions to institute a state of emergency. We did all

of that by bringing together, as I said, a whole-of government approach to tackling this, working with medical officers of health in the regions.

I am sure that there are instances where the government could have moved quicker—I’m not going to say that there wasn’t—but we have certainly learned a lot, and, in responding to a pandemic that nobody has seen in well over 100 years, I think the people of Ontario have done a great job.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. John Vanthof:** My question is to the Premier. For months, the Premier has insisted that all decisions about handling the pandemic were led by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, but the Auditor General was very clear in her findings today: “The Chief Medical Officer of Health and other public health officials did not lead Ontario’s response to COVID-19.”

If the Chief Medical Officer of Health did not lead the response, who did?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, Mr. Speaker, as I’ve said already on a number of occasions, the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health was instrumental in helping us attack not only the first wave of COVID-19 but in also helping us prepare for the second wave. It was on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, in co-operation with medical officers of health across the province, that we put in place a plan to safely reopen our schools and that we increased testing from 4,000 a day up to 50,000 tests a day. It is on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health that we have been able to flatten the curve in the first wave—in fact, leading the country. We brought in a state of emergency before any other jurisdiction in the country. We’ve done that by working with the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Again, it’s a whole-of-government approach that we took to this by working with our officials.

I note that the members opposite certainly don’t believe that the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health is valued. They stand daily in this place and ask us to reduce the recommendations from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We’ll follow that advice and we’ll continue to follow that advice.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The Auditor General is very clear: Not only did the Chief Medical Officer of Health not lead Ontario’s response to COVID-19, many at the government’s command table were actually unclear on what his role was.

In her report, the auditor calls on the government to “immediately assess the role and strength of the Chief Medical Officer of Health to lead Ontario’s response in addressing subsequent waves of COVID-19.”

Will the government pull the motion to extend the term of the chief medical officer and actually follow the Auditor General’s recommendations?

1040

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** No, we will not pull that motion. We have the absolute confidence in Dr. Williams. Dr. Williams has been providing us with advice and recommendations since the beginning of this pandemic and was actually in charge of the table. He didn't chair the table because that was an administrative job. We needed Dr. Williams to be able to participate in what was happening at the committee. Dr. Williams has throughout been in charge of the response from a health perspective and provided recommendations to our government which we have followed.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The auditor has been clear that the Chief Medical Officer of Health has not taken a leadership role in Ontario's COVID response and he has not been allowed to use the power of his office to take actions that could have saved lives. She has called on the government to assess the role and the strength of the Chief Medical Officer of Health to lead Ontario's response. But instead of doing that, the government suddenly decided this week to rubber-stamp an extension of his term. Why is the government ignoring the recommendations of Ontario's Auditor General?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, we respect the Auditor General. Her report contains many recommendations and insights that will be helpful to us in dealing with COVID-19. However, there are also some factual inaccuracies contained in the Auditor General's report which we brought to her attention and which have been discussed. I have discussed them with her myself. We have agreed to disagree that there are some issues, particularly with respect to the role of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the role that he has played in this pandemic. We continue to rely on Dr. Williams's recommendations and advice. He has been a leader from the health perspective in this pandemic from day one. We continue to rely on him, and we'll continue to do so.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'd like to start my question with a quote from Doug Ford from September 25, 2018: "Unlike the Liberals, we respect"—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We refer to other members by their ministerial title or their riding name.

Place your question.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** To the Premier: Earlier this week, the Ford government suddenly, without any notice, announced plans to extend the term of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and had MPPs sitting here until midnight, literally in the dead of the night, in an attempt to force it through before today's report. They knew this report was coming from the auditor today. Were they attempting to rubber-stamp an extension before the rest of

Ontario, before the people of Ontario could see the findings in today's report from Ontario's Auditor General?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

To respond for the government, the Minister of Health.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Absolutely not. Dr. Williams—we have the absolute confidence in him. Dr. Williams has 30 years of public health experience, both as the Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario as well as the local medical officer of health in Thunder Bay for many years—30 years. He has the knowledge and experience. To have someone else come in, as a new person, as the Chief Medical Officer of Health in the middle of a pandemic would be irresponsible, and we are not irresponsible. We take this very seriously. We are making decisions in the best interests of the health and well-being of the people of Ontario.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** For months, the Premier has insisted that his COVID-19 response has been informed by public health experts and that every measure was proposed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. The Premier says he's a perfect dance partner—but perhaps only because the Premier always gets to lead.

Will the Premier agree to put Dr. Williams in front of an all-party committee to review his appointment as the Chief Medical Officer of Health?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** In fact, last night, this chamber did seek unanimous consent to have the Chief Medical Officer of Health appear before a select committee of Parliament, and that was turned down by the members opposite, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we also tried to put a motion forward to extend and provide more opportunities for the opposition to speak, not once, not twice, but on 10 separate occasions. They turned it down.

We then went further and asked for unanimous consent to return this House today at 1 o'clock for further discussions with respect to the Chief Medical Officer of Health. They turned it down, Mr. Speaker. So again, it is the same thing with the NDP: Say one thing, but do another.

#### AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

**M. Jeremy Roberts:** Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Affaires francophones. Ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean a une communauté franco-ontarienne diversifiée et dynamique. Récemment, j'ai eu la chance d'annoncer l'ouverture d'une nouvelle école française dans la communauté de Leslie Park dans ma circonscription—des bonnes nouvelles pour les Franco-Ontariens et les Franco-Ontariennes à Ottawa durant la pandémie.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous nommer des gestes concrets qui ont été mises en place pour soutenir la communauté francophone depuis la pandémie de la COVID-19?

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Je remercie mon collègue pour sa question. Je suis fière des nombreuses mesures prises par notre gouvernement pour soutenir les Franco-Ontariens au travers de cette crise.

Dans le cadre du budget 2020, nous avons annoncé un investissement de 2 millions de dollars sur deux ans dans un fonds de secours pour les organismes francophones sans but lucratif suite à la COVID-19. Nous avons aussi créé un groupe de travail avec l'AFO afin de soutenir les organismes franco-ontariens. Cela s'ajoute à un investissement de 500 000 \$ dans la création d'un réseau économique francophone et dans une campagne de promotion de produits et de services franco-ontariens. Cet investissement répond directement aux besoins exprimés par la communauté francophone. Nous avons également annoncé les récipiendaires du PAFO, un investissement d'un million de dollars dans les organismes desservant la communauté francophone.

Monsieur le Président, nous sommes à l'écoute de la communauté francophone pour comprendre leurs besoins face à la pandémie de la COVID-19.

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

**M. Jeremy Roberts:** Je remercie la ministre pour tout son travail au soutien de la communauté francophone. Mon bureau travaille en collaboration avec l'AFO, depuis mon élection, sur de nombreux projets importants, notamment la Maison de la francophonie dans ma circonscription. J'étais fier de célébrer l'ouverture de cette merveilleuse installation avec l'adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires francophones juste avant le début de la pandémie.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous parler plus en détail de son nouveau groupe de travail avec l'AFO?

**L'hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Je remercie encore une fois mon collègue pour sa question. Ce nouveau groupe de travail, unissant le ministère des Affaires francophones et l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, vise à maximiser l'aide aux organismes à travers les différents programmes gouvernementaux, dont plusieurs qui répondent directement au besoin de la communauté.

En effet, nous avons mis en place plusieurs recommandations du conseil ministériel sur la relance économique post COVID-19 lors du budget pour répondre aux besoins et aux aspirations des francophones : 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 avec les métiers spécialisés; et un financement d'urgence en arts et en cultures de 25 millions de dollars.

Je suis très heureuse de pouvoir travailler avec l'AFO afin d'accompagner les organismes francophones et de leur offrir notre soutien lors de cette période difficile.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Premier. In her report today, the Auditor General cites example after example of the Ford government delaying

urgent action it needed to save lives. Staff in long-term care were working without personal protective equipment for nearly a month after the medical officers first requested it. Staff in long-term care worked in multiple facilities for over a month because the chief medical officer refused to issue an order to for-profit homes—as the auditor notes, provinces that acted earlier saved hundreds, even thousands, of lives—and failed to act on the lessons that should have been learned from SARS.

Will the Premier now admit that those failures cost lives in long-term care?

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

1050

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We're in a 100-year global pandemic that is affecting the entire world. We must not lose context of that: global competition for PPE, global competition for supplies and a government that was moving swiftly and decisively from the beginning, taking the best evidence and the expert advice of not only the Chief Medical Officer of Health, but all the science and medical advice and public health care advice that there was, culminating in decisions made through the Chief Medical Officer of Health for long-term care.

PPE supplies were sent to our homes on an as-needed basis. There was no home that went without. Now, we have a much better situation with our own manufacturing here in Ontario in wave 2, and that is because of the determination and united front of so many people, hundreds of people, working together, not only on the front line but behind the scenes, making this happen and never giving up, being determined to get it done, and we have.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Families are worried about loved ones in long-term care. Families, loved ones, are worried about their loved ones in long-term care, and they aren't just worried that the government failed to learn the lessons from SARS and countless previous reports; they're terrified because it's been clear the Premier has learned very little. They have failed—their decisions have caused 2,000 seniors to die in long-term care, and it's being repeated again. Why is the Premier still refusing to admit that the government has failed seniors in long-term care?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

The Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Once again, my heart goes out to absolutely everyone who is impacted by this, and particularly to the residents and families and staff affected in long-term care. As the Minister of Long-Term Care, there is nothing more important to me and to our government than our most vulnerable citizens in Ontario, and we will continue to work with everyone who's willing to be a coalition of the willing: to do the right thing, to get

the supplies to our long-term-care homes, as we have been doing.

This is in the context of a global pandemic where the science is evolving. We have been using the precautionary principle all along to the best of everyone's ability, taking the expert advice of our Chief Medical Officer of Health and using every measure and every tool. I will insist on that as we move forward and as I have done, as our government continues to put the priority in long-term care, the dollars behind it. You've heard me mention over \$1 billion. We will continue to advance, rebuild and repair long-term care, so badly neglected—

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

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Premier. For months now, we've been asking for your command table to appear before the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. People across Ontario have been asking for the same kind of transparency, with no response. I think I know why. The Auditor General confirmed that the command table ballooned to 500 people. We couldn't fit them in this room. I don't know if we could get them in the galleries, which is absolutely incredible.

The Auditor General also found that public health advice was diminished and decisions were not dominated by public health expertise. Every day, the Premier stands up and says, "I am taking the advice of the docs. I'm taking the advice of the experts." He's "listening to the docs." Well, it's very clear, at least from the Auditor General's report, that that hasn't been happening.

Speaker, through to you to the Premier: Why does the Premier continue to say that he's taking public health advice, the advice of experts, when clearly that's not happening?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I would say to the member opposite: Because we have been taking the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the others at the command table.

I think it's really important to note that the Auditor General did comment on the fact that there were, at some point, 500 people on the call. However, the 500 people were not participating in the call. Five hundred people were on the call to obtain information. They were from various ministries. It's very important when you're dealing with a pandemic such as we are that you have a cross-government approach. There are 13 or 14 ministries involved: Health, of course, is the primary, the Ministry of Long-Term Care, the Ministry of the Solicitor General, Education, others. It goes on and on. It's important for us to know what is happening in other ministries, to get it out of the silos, to be able to have a coordinated response.

But throughout, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the public health measures table, Public Health Ontario

were the key people at the command table who were providing and discussing the advice and recommendations that they were going to give to government, which we have accepted.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** Speaker, the Premier is always saying, "The buck stops here"—and clearly, the same thing is happening today, because it's not stopping with the Premier. He's not responding to this.

What the Auditor General said is that the structures led to delays and confusion. What we've been saying in this House is, delayed decision-making, like not stopping workers from working in more than one home, like not raising their wages, like not having a plan for school, like not having a plan to move seniors out of long-term care when we've had months—because the decisions aren't being made, and people on those calls are saying they don't know who's making the decision.

So I just want to know, Ontarians just want to know, we all want to know: How are you going to fix it?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Decisions were being made and were made quickly from the beginning of this pandemic. Ontario was the first province that designated the coronavirus as a disease reportable to public health, so that the local public health units could then be prepared to test, trace and do the contact isolation and management. That happened. Ontario declared a state of emergency just after Quebec. Ontario moved into action. So despite some of the statements that were made by the Auditor General, even though we didn't create the public health command table until February, actions were still being taken and continued to happen in a very quick response.

We had to create a lab system which didn't exist as a coordinated entity, unlike what was happening in some other jurisdictions. We needed to create a lab system, and we did that in record time. We also created a system to increase our testing from 4,000 a day to 70,000 a day.

I think the results speak for themselves. Right now, Ontario has the lowest per capita numbers of COVID-19 of any jurisdiction in North America, except for the Atlantic bubble and the territories. That speaks to success, not delay.

### FOREST FIREFIGHTING

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Just a few weeks ago, the ministry announced that forest fire season had officially come to an end here in Ontario.

Back at the onset of this pandemic, there were legitimate concerns being raised that COVID-19 would make it harder for our provincial crews to fight forest fires. As we know, COVID-19 has placed an enormous burden on people across the province. They're worried about getting through this pandemic. They're worried about their health. They're worried about their businesses. They're worried about their livelihoods. The last thing people need to

worry about is having a forest fire rip through their community.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House what the government did this year to ensure that Ontario was adequately prepared for forest fire season in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** I want to thank the member from Ottawa West–Nepean for that excellent question.

There's no question that the COVID-19 outbreak presented a new set of challenges for firefighters and communities threatened by fire. Everyone in this House can appreciate the added level of risk of fighting fires during a global pandemic.

This year, funding for emergency firefighting was increased by \$30.2 million at the start of the year to help support fire response activities further into the season. This increase also helped to ensure the ministry was able to put adequate safety measures in place to protect our fire rangers from COVID-19. We also placed an even stronger focus on early detection and on combatting detected fires with full force, in order to keep them small. Also, we implemented a restricted fire zone across Ontario's legislated fire region from April 3 to May 16, to reduce the risk of preventable human-caused fires.

Speaker, we took an approach that would keep northern and remote communities safe, and that's exactly what we were able to achieve.

1100

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

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** I would like to thank the minister, through you, Speaker, for his answer. It is great to see that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is continuing to take the issue of forest fires seriously, and that it stepped up to the plate to make sure that Ontarians were kept safe from forest fires over this last season.

Speaker, I want to note that that this year's forest fire season was more intense than the 2019 season but lower than Ontario's 10-year average. However, forest fires and the conditions that cause them are very unpredictable, as I'm sure the minister very well knows. We can't sit back and rest and just expect that next year's forest fire season will be similar to this year's.

Through you, Speaker, can the minister please tell the House what his ministry is doing to ensure that the province is prepared for future fire seasons where we may not be so lucky when it comes to numbers and size of forest fires?

**Hon. John Yakabuski:** Thank you again to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean. As he mentioned, the 2020 fire season was below Ontario's 10-year average in both the number of fires and the total hectares burned. This fire season started slowly due to lingering snow cover and above-normal precipitation in the spring. In the summer months, for the most part, Ontario did not experience many long hot or dry periods that would produce extreme fire hazards.

Speaker, I want to thank the incredible work that Ontario's fire rangers did this year. During the last year,

some of these fearless front-line workers were also deployed to help fight wildfires in Australia, Quebec and Oregon.

At the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, we are committed to adapting to whatever the fire season may look like each and every year. We have a mitigation program in place to minimize the devastation caused by wildfires. We do this by working with municipal, Indigenous and industrial partners to develop info on the risks of living in fire-prone environments and assisting communities in the development of community wildfire protection plans. We're working with our partners to protect the people of Ontario.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. Speaker, yesterday the Premier admitted that his new rules for businesses aren't fair but that it didn't matter because he wasn't really going to enforce them anyway.

The Premier keeps standing up in his press conferences and telling us that his heart breaks for businesses and families struggling, but at some point, something else is going to break, and that's the people's willingness to put up with this government's continued mixed messages and constantly changing rules. One day he's calling people "yahoos" and telling them he's hitting the roof, and the next that his hands are tied and there is nothing he can do.

So the question is: Can the Premier clarify once and for all what rules he expects businesses to follow and which ones he is fine with them ignoring or breaking? Or should they just follow the government's lead and make things up and hope for the best?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I think you see the inconsistency of what we're hearing. The Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario has come with recommendations for Toronto and Peel, and the members opposite—just in this question and last night—suggested that we ignore the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and do what they want.

We're listening to the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We're putting the people of the province of Ontario first, and as the Minister of Health just said, that is why we have some of the best results in all of North America.

These are difficult, challenging decisions that we're having to make. Nobody likes to have to make these decisions. But we're doing it because it is in the best interest of the people of the province of Ontario, because the sooner we flatten this curve, the sooner we will return to a strong, vibrant economy.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** It's actually the Auditor General who has said that, Mr. Speaker. We believe the Auditor General.

But lets re-track here: If you're a big corporation that's got extra cash to hire the Premier's friends and PC Party



insiders, the rules don't apply. If you're openly breaking the rules but you run a barbecue restaurant in the Premier's backyard, you can do whatever you want. But if you're a small mom-and-pop shop just barely hanging on, you're out of luck; you're on your own. And you wonder why people are so frustrated. But after reading the auditor's report this morning and realizing that the Premier had no idea what he was doing in any part of this pandemic, I guess it makes a bit more sense.

Speaker, through you to anyone over there who is willing to step up and finally provide some leadership: Does this government just not have a clue of what you are doing, or do you just not care?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats.

Government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, Mr. Speaker, a strange question, given that the rules that are in place today in Peel and in Toronto are the same rules that were in place, through the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, in March, which they approved of; in April, which they approved of; in May, which they approved of; in June, which they approved of; throughout half of July, which they approved of. Now, all of a sudden, they want us to set aside the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and do what they say.

The only inconsistency here is from the members opposite. We have places in this province, in particular Peel region, with a high positivity rate. We're going to focus on getting that rate down and protecting the people of Peel region, protecting the people of the city of Toronto.

When they had the opportunity to stand in their place and debate this last night, they chose on 11 separate occasions to say no, Mr. Speaker. When we said we would bring this Legislature back early today, they said no. The only people who are irresponsible are the NDP.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** My question is for the Premier. Let's review the facts rather than the fiction of COVID. COVID is from the family of coronaviruses, the same family as the common cold, and shares about 80% of the same characteristics. The majority of people have immunities to COVID. That is why so few people have symptoms and are infectious. The young and the healthy are not at risk, and asymptomatic transmission is now known to be a falsehood. The PCR test is faulty according to the government's own experts. Lockdowns are ineffective, as stated by the WHO and many other doctors throughout the world. And as CTV reported last week, 98% of all deaths in Canada occurred in long-term care. As your long-term-care minister has already publicly stated, it's much like a bad flu season.

Speaker, the Premier's daily theatrics are looking a lot like a cheap soap opera selling drama and fear.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The question has been placed. The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health to reply.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** What I would like to say to the member opposite, through you, Speaker, is, you must be joking. You must be joking. Over 3,500 people in Ontario have died from COVID. We are doing everything in our power to protect the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. We have had to take the steps that we've had to take. Nobody wants to take these steps. We recognize that there have been serious difficulties for many as a result of this, but if we don't take action, there are going to be many, many more people that are going to die. We don't want that, and I'm sure no one else here wants that. We have to take the actions that we're taking to save lives.

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

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Again to the Premier: I believe the first vaccine the people of Ontario need is an injection of facts and truth about COVID. The truth is that 98% of all deaths in Canada have occurred in long-term care. The truth is, 99.5% of infected people will fully recover. The truth is, the number of cases is not a measurement of risk or infection. The truth is, in the name of helping, we're harming both the healthy and the vulnerable. The truth is, we're passing on a legacy of extraordinary debt to our children and grandchildren. Speaker, the truth is that the fear being created by our Premier with these daily theatrics is doing far more harm than the virus ever could.

Speaker, can the Premier please tell the people of Ontario what evidence is he waiting for and what will ever convince him that his policies are far more dangerous than the virus?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Well, I would say again, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, that the actual facts are not as you state them. The actual facts are that people have died—3,500 people have died. The suggestion you've made is that if people are in long-term care and they die, somehow it doesn't matter. We think it does matter. People are people. We respect our seniors. We need to protect them. They are the most vulnerable people in our society. It is our responsibility and our duty and our honour to protect them because of what they've done for our country.

1110

We need to take the steps that we're taking. We recognize that there are difficulties for people economically. We are providing economic supports. But you can't have an economy that's going to function if you don't have healthy people. That is our primary responsibility: to protect the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. That's always been the case and always will be the case.

#### LAKE SIMCOE

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** My question is for the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. Since the 1960s, the natural landscape and threats such as excessive nutrients and pollutants, invasive species and climate change have put significant stress on the ecological health of Lake Simcoe. This has resulted in poor water quality, degraded habitats and a collapse of the cold water

fisheries. After significant concern and calls for the former government to finally take action to improve and protect the health of the Lake Simcoe watershed, a Lake Simcoe Protection Act was introduced and in the following year, in 2009, the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan was released.

The restoration and protection of Lake Simcoe and the Great Lakes have been included in this government's made-in-Ontario plan. Given that it has been 10 years since the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan was announced, can the minister tell the House what improvements have been made in Lake Simcoe over the past decade?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply for the government, the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean for that question. Due to the collective efforts of our government and its many partners, we are seeing progress toward protection and restoration efforts that are so important to the natural areas and features in the Lake Simcoe watershed.

This summer, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks released a 10-year report on Lake Simcoe to detail the progress that Ontario has made on this vulnerable body of water. Some key improvements highlighted in the report are the improved dissolved oxygen in the deep waters that help the fish population, the creation and restoration of 120 hectares of wetland, and the restoration of 15 kilometres of degraded shoreline.

We've made great progress so far, and I look forward to building upon these efforts with great partners like our youth for Lake Simcoe and Zoe and her team, who continue to help us protect and restore Lake Simcoe.

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

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** I know that this is an important priority for my friend the MPP for Barrie–Innisfil.

Achieving the objectives of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan in the long term requires continued commitment from all partners and levels of government. Recent research shows that due to concerted efforts of government and other partners, phosphorous loads from sewage treatment plants in the watershed have been reduced by approximately 50% since 2009. In the lake, total spring and ice-free phosphorous concentration has dropped significantly from 1980 to 2018.

These are promising proof points of progress, but restoring Lake Simcoe will take longer than 10 years to complete. It's important that the government conduct ongoing scientific research and monitoring. It is also critical that the plan adapts over time so that it continually addresses emerging threats.

Can the minister please inform the House about what the government is doing to support future improvement efforts in Lake Simcoe?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** We have a solid commitment among all my provincial colleagues along Lake Simcoe, and our government has continued its commitment to protecting Ontario's water resources and addressing the most significant environmental challenges facing Lake Simcoe. That is why we are engaging in public

consultation with stakeholders on a review of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. We'll continue to invest in ongoing research and monitoring, and in education about Lake Simcoe.

Most recently, we announced action on Lake Simcoe by providing \$581,000 in provincial funding for four new partner-led projects that are key in making sure that we restore and protect Lake Simcoe and its watershed. This is in addition to the already 15 partner-led projects that are under way in the watershed that have received over \$375,000 in funding from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

We'll continue to ensure that each project we support results in the best outcomes for Lake Simcoe and its watershed, and we look forward to learning more about the federal government's funding commitments to support ongoing improvements.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Scarborough families are struggling right now. They're not only experiencing abnormally high COVID-19 cases, they're also slipping further into poverty and unemployment. Some Scarborough ridings—and actually some of them border my riding—as well as some of the government members' ridings, have positivity rates of 15%, some of the highest in the province, combined with low testing capacity and an overwhelmed hospital system, but, still, this government is refusing to act. After years of being overlooked and underfunded by Liberals, this Conservative government has brought us to a breaking point.

When will the government commit to providing the people of Scarborough with the resources, including enough testing and contact tracers, they deserve, so people are not falling through the cracks?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member very much for the question. We certainly recognize there are parts of the city of Toronto that are considered hot spots, where there are serious concerns, there are high positivity rates and people are living in apartments where there are maybe several generations of family there.

I think this is a situation that really calls for all three levels of government to take action. We have had several discussions—I have with Mayor Tory—recognizing that parts of Etobicoke and parts of Scarborough are very hard-hit areas. He has requested some assistance from the federal government with respect to quarantine accommodation, which I certainly would agree with and which we will both ask the federal government to assist in providing that, so that if someone is diagnosed with COVID they can move away from their family members and be isolated themselves until they're well.

But there's also work that we need to do on the provincial level, which I'll be pleased to speak about in my supplemental.

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

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I do appreciate the response and I do appreciate the intention, but we need action right now. The government is sitting on \$9.3 billion in unallocated pandemic support money, and yet here we are. I know yesterday we heard the government members talk about how that's saved for a rainy day, but it's pouring. I don't know what kind of storm we're heading towards, but we need to act right now to stop the spread from getting further into this community.

Where is the money going, the \$9.3 billion that's unallocated? It's not coming to our communities. My office is getting calls every day from across Scarborough—not just Scarborough Southwest—about workplaces with COVID-19 cases, about having to go to work sick, lack of PPE, not enough testing, about families losing the businesses they have worked so hard to build, about having to stand in line at food banks—just check out some of the lines at our food banks—losing their shifts due to lockdown, and now facing the risk of eviction. I could go on, Mr. Speaker.

My question is, what will it take for the government to see that with each day that this government refuses to act, people of Scarborough, many of whom are racialized, many of whom are working precarious jobs, are at the risk of losing their livelihoods?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond? The member for Willowdale.

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I'd like to direct that member's attention to page 173 of the budget. About two thirds of the way down the page she will see three draw downs on the standard contingency, on the health contingency as well as the people and jobs fund. If we go to page 187, at the bottom of the page we will see the remaining contingency is \$2.6 billion, not \$9.3 billion as that member asserts.

Where has the money gone was another question she asked. Well, Speaker, when our front-line health officials said they need more masks, we were able to provide 600 million of them. When our front-line health officials said, "We need more gloves," we provided 900 million of them. When the commercial rent relief program came upon us, we were able to respond with \$241 million in direct supports.

This government has moved through in a prudent and adaptive manner through this uncertain and changing situation that is COVID-19. We will not apologize for treating taxpayer money with respect throughout this difficult time.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE RÉPONSE À LA COVID-19

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Ma question au premier ministre : The Premier is allowing big box stores to remain open during the Toronto and Peel region lockdowns because they'll limit the numbers in their stores. Small business owners can do that—they've proven it to us, but, no, the Premier is forcing them to close while allowing big

box stores to remain open and sell the very items that small business owners make their living from.

The Premier said he spoke to the CEO of Walmart Canada and concluded that it would be a "logistical nightmare" for big box stores to close off aisles with non-essential items. Yes, it would be quite the nightmare for them to spend an evening of reorganizing to continue to rake in millions in profit. Do you know what the real nightmare is, Mr. Speaker? The hell that small business owners are going through right now, and the complete and continued failure of this government to support them when they need it most.

**1120**

Why can't small businesses be allowed to operate with very strict limits the same way big box stores have been allowed to? Where's the logic in this?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member for the question. The logic here is the fact that with the big box stores, they are selling essential goods and services that people need to live through the course of the pandemic. Many of them have pharmacies; many of them have grocery sections. That is why they're staying on. It's difficult in a pandemic to make these decisions, but that is the reason why they're staying open: so people can have access to the goods and services that they need in order to be able to live through this pandemic.

As for the smaller stores, I know this is difficult for many small businesses. However, even though they can't remain open, they are still able to receive orders online or by telephone. People can still pick up from them, and we encourage people to do that. We encourage people to shop local, to shop with their local small businesses, to support your local restaurants, do takeout orders.

We need to help each other get through this pandemic, and that is the way that we can show our help to the small businesses, to the restaurants and others that have to be closed during this period of time for the safety of the people—

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

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Les Ontariens sont prêts à faire leur part pour limiter la propagation de la COVID-19, mais la logique erronée et incohérente du gouvernement met la patience des gens à l'épreuve.

Si les magasins à grande surface sont autorisés à ouvrir en vertu du principe qu'ils peuvent limiter la capacité, pourquoi le gouvernement ne peut-il pas faire confiance aux petites entreprises—nos petites entreprises—pour qu'elles fassent de même?

Alors au premier ministre : que dites-vous aux petites entreprises que vous avez forcées de fermer, qui vendent les mêmes articles que les magasins à grande surface et qui savent aussi bien comment limiter leur capacité et suivre les protocoles et procédures en place? Comment justifiez-vous ce favoritisme en faveur des grands magasins au détriment de nos petites entreprises, nos Ontariens, qui vivent le pur enfer à cause de votre gouvernement?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** As I've said many times before, there is no sugar-coating it: This is a very difficult time for small businesses in particular. But I think it's irresponsible for the member opposite to cast out on the advice of public health officials. Every decision this government has made—these are some of the toughest decisions when it comes down to closing businesses, but it's based off the best public health advice that we are receiving.

In my community, I have positivity rates of 20%. So I urge the members opposite not to politicize this. This is support that we are bringing forward to small businesses: \$600 million. We doubled the relief programs: 90% rent relief for those impacted by these restrictions. But these guidelines have been supported by public health and recommended to us by public health officials.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** My question is to the Premier. Last week, I had a 70-year-old grandmother, a residential school survivor, Melita O'Soup in St. Catharines, evicted from her home. This is because the Landlord and Tenant Board failed her. Before the eviction hearing, Melita's family's lawyer could not successfully fax a stay-of-eviction order to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and no one would pick up the phone, despite dozens of attempts. Eventually, the family had to Xpresspost it.

The Landlord and Tenant Board eventually responded with an approved stay of eviction two days before the sheriff arrived, an order stamped with a request date that was wrong by weeks. The worst part: The Landlord and Tenant Board never sent the order to the sheriff, so she was evicted anyway.

Will the Premier stand up today and tell the residents in Niagara and St. Catharines how he will fix this mess so that residents like Melita are not left homeless during a global pandemic?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to reply.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I want to thank the honourable member for the question. I want her to know that we've been working very diligently with all of our municipal partners to try to keep people housed during the pandemic. As members of this House will know, the Attorney General moved very quickly early on in the pandemic. He's been working diligently with Tribunals Ontario regarding issues around the backlog at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

But in the interim, Speaker, we've had exceptional cooperation with our 47 service managers and our two Indigenous program administrators. Many of them have been bolstering their rent bank and have been helping those most vulnerable.

While I don't know all the details of this situation, I will tell the member that we will review what has happened to

her constituent. We will make the residential enforcement unit available and make them aware of the situation. I thank her for bringing it forward today.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I think it might be a little too late. This story is tragic, but this is not news to you. Last month, legal clinics across this province sent you a report about these issues with the Landlord and Tenant Board during COVID-19.

I hear in St. Catharines of tenants and landlords having to wait on the phone for four hours, problems with accessing their virtual hearings, fax machines that do not work, paperwork that was lost or landed in junk mail or filed late, like in the case of Ms. O'Soup. We are lucky in St. Catharines to have the passionate, hard-working Niagara legal clinic, but they cannot fix this chaos that the Landlord and Tenant Board does. You can.

You refuse to provide a rent subsidy for tenants and landlords during this pandemic, but, even worse, we have a process that limits access to justice. Mr. Premier, what are you doing for tenants in the second wave of the pandemic when the Landlord and Tenant Board is struggling to function and creating a crisis of evictions in Niagara and in St. Catharines?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll remind the members to make their comments through the Chair.

The response: the member for Durham, the parliamentary assistant.

**Ms. Lindsey Park:** I appreciate the chance to speak on such an important priority for our government. Throughout the COVID-19 emergency and recovery, our government has been focused on keeping Ontarians safe and addressing the impacts of COVID-19 on tenants and landlords.

The Landlord and Tenant Board began expanding operations in August to resume hearing cases brought by tenants and landlords while continuing to prioritize the health and safety of Ontarians. Speaker, we want the LTB to be able to draw on its full operating strength as it manages these unprecedented challenges, a big backlog, while acting on the guidance of public health experts to keep Ontarians safe.

As a result of the work we've done to urgently appoint new adjudicators, the LTB can count on a roster of adjudicators larger than its usual complement; more than twice its normal capacity. As services gradually resume, this full complement of adjudicators will strengthen the—

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

The next question.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Since I last raised this issue in this House, Ontario has lost another young boy to cystic fibrosis, a death the CF community believes was totally avoidable if he had been given access to the life-saving medication Trikafta.

After months of delay over uncertainties regarding pricing policies, Health Canada has now finally granted priority review status to Trikafta. Beth Vanstone, who the minister knows, informs me that the federal Minister of Health has committed to working with the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the provinces to expedite the drug approval process and the pan-Canadian pricing process for Trikafta and other Vertex CF drugs.

My question to the Minister of Health is, can she tell Ms. Vanstone and her daughter Madi what Ontario is doing to expedite these processes?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member for your question. I know this is a matter of particular interest and concern to you, as it is to me as well. This is good news from Vertex. Vertex has indicated that they are moving forward, of course, with this request to Health Canada for a priority review. They've indicated they're planning to move forward with future cystic fibrosis medications in Canada. Vertex has also confirmed that Health Canada has granted priority review and that they have 60 days to submit their file to Health Canada.

I don't believe the submission has been made as yet, although it's expected to be made very soon. As soon as that's done and as soon as it's approved by Health Canada, we will do everything that we can in Ontario to move forward, because this is great news for people with cystic fibrosis and we want to make sure that this medication can be available to them as quickly as possible.

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

**Mr. Jim Wilson:** I take the minister on her word, as an honourable member and a fantastic human being, that she'll do everything she can. But when you look at this, for the years we've been talking about Orkambi, Kalydeco and now Trikafta, all Vertex cystic fibrosis drugs, the frustration is unbelievable in the CF community.

As you know, in my riding, I have two little boys: one boy is on a trial of Kalydeco, and he's doing well; his little brother, not doing so well with cystic fibrosis because he doesn't have access to these life-saving drugs because of the cost. So the frustration is huge.

A 12-year-old boy just died. If you look at the thousands of emails on the Internet with the cystic fibrosis community, they truly believe that Trikafta would have saved this young boy.

I again plead, on behalf of these patients, to do everything you can. You're going to be the largest purchaser of these drugs in Canada, so you've got influence. Please continue to do everything you can. To date, the process hasn't been working. Please do everything you can to improve it on behalf of these patients.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** You're absolutely right: This is a matter of frustration to people across the province of Ontario. Probably each and every one of us as members has constituents who either have cystic fibrosis themselves, or have children who do. This is a very important matter for me. The ADM in the Ministry of Health provides me with updates on a regular basis, because I am

as anxious as anyone to provide these medications. I know they are life-saving, all three of them, but particularly Trikafta seems to have particular potential.

So I can assure the member, and assure the members of this House, that we will do everything that we can to move this forward as quickly as possible, as soon as it's been reviewed and approved by Health Canada.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** My question is to the Premier. I'm getting many calls and emails from small business owners and employees in my riding of York South–Weston who are very concerned about the government's recent announcement regarding the COVID-19 lockdown, and why they must close their doors to the public but big box stores remain open. These businesses barely survived in the first wave, and now, just before the holiday season, they cannot keep their doors open for customers. These main street businesses and their workers in our community deserve direct support and consideration.

With \$9.3 billion earmarked for pandemic relief from the federal government, why is this government sitting on this money and selectively not spending on small businesses and workers who desperately need this time?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the Associate Minister for Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

**Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria:** We recognize that the economic and financial burden imposed upon our small businesses across this pandemic has been significant. That is why, last week, we doubled the funding available to these small businesses to \$600 million. Businesses that have been impacted by these restrictions can apply immediately online through a single portal—a very easy application.

On top of that, Mr. Speaker, we have provided direct supports through programs like Digital Main Street that help businesses: a \$57-million investment, the largest investment by any government to help businesses go digital. We have put forward the main street PPE grant: \$60 million of investment to help small businesses cover the cost of PPE. On top of that, those businesses can also be eligible for 90% rent relief in those areas of restrictions.

These are difficult times for our businesses, but we are always going to be here to support them.

## DEFERRED VOTES

### TIME ALLOCATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 98, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 213, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation.

The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1134 to 1204.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The vote has been held on government notice of motion number 98 relating to the allocation of time on Bill 213, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 44; the nays are 24.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

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

*The House recessed from 1206 to 1500.*

#### ESTIMATES

**Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy:** Mr. Speaker, I have a message from the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by her own hand.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2021, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 215, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to the economic recovery of Ontario and to make other amendments / Projet de loi 215, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la reprise économique de l'Ontario et apportant d'autres modifications.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum):** Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr20, An Act respecting Hot Docs;

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive 1040062 Ontario Incorporated;

Bill Pr32, An Act to revive Skypride Travel & Tours Ltd.;

Bill Pr33, An Act to revive 704176 Ontario Limited.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### PAYDAY LOANS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

##### SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DU SECTEUR DES PRÊTS SUR SALAIRE

Ms. Shaw moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 234, An Act to amend the Payday Loans Act, 2008 to increase accountability of lenders and protections for borrowers / Projet de loi 234, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2008 concernant les prêts sur salaire afin d'accroître la responsabilisation des prêteurs et la protection des emprunteurs.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member like to briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Sandy Shaw:** This is an important bill to ensure enhanced protection for people who are using payday loans. It's important now, especially during COVID-19, when people are really struggling with their finances. We want to ensure that these borrowers are protected.

The bill amends the Payday Loans Act, 2008, as follows:

A limit is established on the annual interest that may be prescribed in the regulations with respect to the cost of borrowing under a payday loan agreement.

The borrowers' bill of rights is established. It sets out principles which shall be taken into consideration in interpreting the act.

Lenders are required to provide a copy of the borrowers' bill of rights to borrowers before entering into a payday loan agreement. If the lender fails to do so, the borrower can rescind the payday loan agreement.

Finally, the payday loans task force is established. The bill sets out the task force's mandate and composition. The task force is required to make recommendations to the ministry periodically.

CANNABIS LICENCE AMENDMENT  
ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI SUR LES LICENCES  
LIÉES AU CANNABIS

Ms. Stiles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 235, An Act to amend the Cannabis Licence Act, 2018 / Projet de loi 235, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2018 sur les licences liées au cannabis.

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

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member care to explain her bill?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Today, I'm pleased to table the Cannabis Licence Amendment Act. We have all seen how the COVID-19 pandemic has devastated our small local businesses. A lack of adequate government support and a broken rent relief system have forced businesses in my community and across the province out of their storefronts altogether. Those evictions coincided with the lifting of restrictions on new cannabis licences, and a flood of new cannabis retail stores have filled the empty storefronts, raising concerns about the diversity of our local main streets.

This bill seeks to align the licensing process for new cannabis retail licences with that used for new liquor licences, and gives more weight to municipal voices in considering where and how many licences should be awarded in a given area, in line with their own planning and community priorities.

## MOTIONS

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting private members' public business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that a change be made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 45 and Mr. Coteau assumes ballot item number 76, and that notice for ballot item number 45 and ballot item number 47 be waived.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra has moved that a change be made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 45 and that Mr. Coteau assumes ballot item number 76, and that notice for ballot item number 45 and ballot item number 47 be waived.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Motions? Once again, the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Speaker, I seek unanimous consent that the following standing order be added for the duration of the 42nd Parliament:

“(9)(f.1) No later than 12 noon on any Tuesday, the government House leader may indicate in the House, or may deposit written notice with the Clerk of the Assembly, that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and in such case the afternoon routine on the Wednesday of that week shall commence at 1 p.m.”

1510

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion that the following standing order be added for the duration of the 42nd Parliament:

“(9)(f.1) No later than 12 noon on any Tuesday, the government House leader may indicate in the House, or may deposit written notice with the Clerk of the Assembly, that a temporary change in the weekly meeting schedule of the House is required, and in such case the afternoon routine on the Wednesday of that week shall commence at 1 p.m.”

Agreed? I heard a no.

## PETITIONS

### DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J'aimerais remercier M. Marcel Charbonneau de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions : « Accents ... sur les cartes de santé de l'Ontario. »

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

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

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils pétitionnent l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit : « qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario, » et ce, « avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

Merci, monsieur le Président. J'appuie cette pétition.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the 165 Scarborough–Agincourt residents who signed this petition. The petition reads:

“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 at a close proximity to:

“—Yahu Community Association of Canada ... 63 Silver Star Boulevard, units E2 and E3;

“—Music of May ... 63 Silver Star Boulevard, unit D3;

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

“—Scarborough Chinese Alliance Church ... 139 Silver Star Boulevard;

“—Scarborough Community Alliance Church ... 135 Silver Star Boulevard;

“—Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church ... 3223 Kennedy Road;

“—Sylvan Learning Centre ... 3320 Midland Avenue, units 201-203;

“—Brainchild Education Centre ... 3320 Midland Avenue, units 205 and 218;

“—Light and Love Home in Toronto ... 3320 Midland Avenue, units 215-216 and 223-225;

“—Scholars 101 Education Centre ... 3320 Midland Avenue, unit 120;

“—Positive Tutorial School ... 3300 Midland Avenue, unit 211;

“—Iron Tutor ... 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 will endorse this petition and I will affix my signature.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** This is a petition called “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care by \$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it to the table.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** This is titled “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care by \$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

I affix my signature.

#### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

**Mr. Jamie West:** This is a petition from the Ontario Federation of Labour. It is called “Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People.

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000 and Labour Relations Act, 1995 create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

“Whereas the” Premier’s “government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women’s equality in the workforce and beyond;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to, at the very least:

“—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work,



and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act;

“—reverse changes to daycare regulations that allow more children per caregiver;

“—reverse the retroactive cuts to funding for the Ontario College of Midwives;

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

“—restore the round table on violence against women; and

“—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner’s office.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and give it to the Clerk.

### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** This petition was sent to me by multiple constituents from my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has underfunded optometric eye care for 30 years; and ...

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

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

### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition is titled “Time to Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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

**1520**

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

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

“To amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

### ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Meena Singh from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They 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 of Ontario 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.

### INJURED WORKERS

**Mr. Jamie West:** This petition is “Workers’ Comp is a Right.” It’s a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I want thank Will Noiles for bringing this to my attention.

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

I agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and get it to the Clerks.

### HEALTH CARE FUNDING

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Kelly Dougan from Hanmer in my riding for the petition. It reads as follows:

“Neurological Movement Disorder Clinic in Sudbury.

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has a high rate of neurological movement disorders; and

“Whereas specialized neurological movement disorder clinics provide essential health care services to those living with diseases such as Parkinson’s, Huntington’s, dystonia, Tourette’s and others; and

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately set up a neurological movement disorder clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of movement disorders, 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.

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

**Mr. Jamie West:** It’s a petition again from the Ontario Federation of Labour. I want to thank Max Lafontaine from CUPE 4705 in Sudbury for collecting the signatures.

“Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Don’t Take Away Social and Economic Rights for Women and Marginalized People.

“Whereas Bill 47 erased many of the legislative gains achieved through Bill 148, the fairer labour laws and working conditions that had a particularly positive impact on women and marginalized people;

“Whereas statistics show that women, particularly women of colour, are most likely to be employed in precarious work, and the Bill 47 amendments to the Employment Standards Act ... and Labour Relations Act ... create conditions that lead to a growth in precarious employment while also eliminating protections for millions of Ontario workers;

“Whereas Bill 66 further erodes women’s and marginalized people’s social and economic rights; and

“Whereas the” Conservative “government continues to remove, cancel or freeze funding for other supports, programs and regulations that would increase women’s equality in the workforce and beyond;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to, at the very least:

“—reinstate paid sick days, the scheduled increase to a \$15 minimum wage, legislation to increase pay transparency, regulations that support equal pay for equal work, and all other worker protections gained under the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act;

“—reverse changes to daycare regulations that allow more children per caregiver;

“—reverse the retroactive cuts to funding for the Ontario College of Midwives;

“—reinstate funding increases to sexual assault centres;

“—restore the round table on violence against women; and

“—restore the child and youth advocate commissioner’s office.”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature and give it to the Clerk.

### SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier M<sup>me</sup> Carole Ménard de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

« Temps pour les soins.

« Alors que des soins de qualité pour les 78 000 résidents des maisons de SLD est une priorité pour les familles de l’Ontario; et

« Alors que le gouvernement provincial ne fournit pas un financement adéquat pour assurer un niveau de soins et de personnels dans les foyers de SLD afin de répondre à l’augmentation de l’acuité des résidents et du nombre croissant de résidents ayant des comportements complexes; et

« Alors que plusieurs enquêtes du coroner de l’Ontario sur les décès dans les maisons de SLD ont recommandé une augmentation des soins pour les résidents » et résidentes « et des niveaux du personnel. Les études des normes minimales de soins recommandent 4,1 heures de soins directs par jour;

Ils demandent à « l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de modifier la Loi sur les foyers de SLD (2007) pour un minimum de quatre heures par résident » et résidente « par jour, ajusté pour le niveau d’acuité et la répartition des cas. »

J’appuie cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer et la donner aux greffiers.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### 2020 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 25, 2020, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** When we last debated this motion, I understand the member for Davenport had the floor and still has time on the clock.

I'm pleased to recognize the member for Davenport.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I want to use the final moments that I have here in speaking to this budget bill to speak about related spending issues that were raised this morning in the Auditor General's report.

I watched the Premier at his press conference today, stomping his feet and punching at the air, irate because his government has been critiqued again. He doesn't like anybody questioning him. He doesn't like being challenged. We have seen that. I would say that this has been his greatest failing and his government's greatest failing. Instead of talking about the auditor's report and the lessons there and saying, "Yes, we can do better," they refuse to accept any advice.

Let me tell you, people want them to listen. They want this government to make changes, to make improvements, to learn from mistakes. You would think we owe that, at the very least, to the thousands who have died, no? But instead, this government has, we learned, paid a big US firm \$1.6 million to create a mess of a structure, and then, if that wasn't enough, paid them an additional \$3.6 million to direct the dreadful school reopening non-plan. For those who might not be clear on this, the company they hired was McKinsey. This is not a subject matter expert. They are, in fact, a positioning expert, and that tells you everything you need to know about what's up here—because the truth is, this government knows. They could have had the best advice in the world for free, from teachers, child and youth workers, guidance counsellors, professors of education, epidemiologists, public health nurses, students. Everybody was champing at the bit to provide advice.

Their number one piece of advice? Cap class sizes to 15. But this government didn't like it. They didn't like it, so they went out and they paid fancy consultants. It shows just how poorly they understand this sector. They paid these folks just to tell them, basically, how to spin a plan that was never going to work. What an outrageous failure of governance.

1530

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll now invite questions to the member for Davenport related to her presentation. Questions?

**Mr. Will Bouma:** It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to debate the member from Davenport.

I've just been curious—it's not so much a budgetary matter, but she brought it up—about what scientific evidence the opposition has to continue to hammer on this number of 15 students per class. Why not one student per class? Why not 30 students per class? What makes 15 the magic number? I'm just curious about why that's the best place to be, if she could answer that.

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I thank the member for Brantford—Brant for his question.

You could ask any of the experts out there who have all been proposing a cap size of 15. If they wanted to make it

10, we wouldn't oppose that; 10 would be okay. But 15 is basically about half of a class. That's why we've landed on that. In fact, that's what school boards like the Toronto District School Board did with regard to secondary students, because they recognized that that would provide enough space in an average-size classroom. So it's quite scientific. It's about measuring space between students and ensuring that there is enough space to properly distance in the middle of a pandemic.

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

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** I am honoured to rise again for the decent and hard-working people of York South—Weston.

The member from Davenport eloquently talked about the important issues, that the government says that we do consult—and we know that the neglect that has went for so long, the last 15 years, and the last two and a half years now.

We know that the Auditor General has commented about the government not following the recommendations and about the failure of not putting resources needed in terms of capping the class sizes—also, supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities, small businesses.

Would you be able to comment on this failure on the part of the government and on what the Auditor General has commented, and on what we need to do to support communities like mine and yours?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I'd like to thank the member from York South—Weston. I'd also like to congratulate him on his nomination, this past weekend, to be our candidate again in York South—Weston. Congratulations. It's very exciting.

The Auditor General's report goes into quite a lot of detail, but one of the things that really jumped out at me was the fact that we saw the previous Liberal government—and now this government—fail completely to implement the SARS recommendations. Years ago, in the middle of SARS, I was actually a health policy researcher following those SARS recommendations. It is astonishing to me—not surprising, really, though, because we knew they weren't doing what they needed to do—that, and also the gutting of public health by both Liberal and Conservative governments.

The other thing would probably be the failure to reform long-term care and the continued support of for-profit long-term-care corporations by both Liberal and Conservative governments—a major failure, as pointed out by the Auditor General.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** Mr. Speaker, through you the member from Davenport again: I appreciate her response to the last question, but we did use expert advice and studies when we came up with our safe reopening plan. I have not seen those expert studies and advice that say that 15 students is proper.

My next question is with regard to online learning. A year ago, that member was asking our Minister of Education every single day about the horrors of online education. Today, I get regular phone calls from teachers saying that we need to close schools and do everything

online. I was wondering where that member was at exactly on—is online horrible or the only path forward through COVID-19?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** Since the member from Brantford—Brant refuted that there is scientific evidence calling for a 15-student cap—I’ve got to tell you, you should check out the SickKids study where they actually put children in classrooms and looked at the distancing and eventually said, “Actually, we can’t possibly do it like this. We don’t have enough space if we have 25 children or 28 children. It has to be 15.” So I just want to start there.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of online learning, what we have now, what we’ve had since March, is what we have come to call remote emergency distance learning. If the member opposite would care to speak to any of the thousands of teachers and students who have communicated with my office, he would know that there is, in fact, enormous disappointment, that there’s stress and pressure and anxiety among students and among staff and among parents, and that the inequities in our education system—which were the very concerns we used in having mandatory online learning, which is what this government wants to do forever—put greater pressure on students and create greater inequities.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** There’s a great consensus that budgets are actually moral documents. They speak to the priorities and the areas of focus that government should have. Now we know from the Auditor General’s report that the CMOH was unwilling or unable to make swift decisions on orders in long-term care, including restricting staff to one location and ordering the wearing of masks.

What does the member for Davenport think about this disconnect, when you see how little funding is actually going into long-term care? What does that say about the kind of budget this government has crafted in a pandemic, when we know the most vulnerable and marginalized seniors were in long-term-care facilities?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I want to thank the member for Waterloo for her question. I really appreciated that—budgets as moral documents.

There is indeed a disconnect here. Where you see it, I think, is in the failure of this government to live up to the commitments they’ve set, what they’ve said, their words. For example: talking about four hours of dedicated resident care per patient and their failure to reflect that commitment in this budget anywhere—or the money that we know now, from the Auditor General, they’ve spent paying McKinsey for advice, which we know was really advice on politics, on spin, on how to sell something, as opposed to actually delivering real supports for real people at a time of crisis in our communities.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** During COVID-19, we have seen the need for more revenue than ever before, without taxing our residents, so that we can have more revenue and we can spend more on the residents.

Time and time again, we have heard from employers considering Ontario as a place to locate or expand their business, who decided to go somewhere else because our province’s electricity costs were just too high.

Will the member opposite speak about the comprehensive plan our government has to reduce the job-killing electricity prices. And what would be the message to those companies?

**Ms. Marit Stiles:** I thank the member for Mississauga—Malton for his question.

I want to start by saying that when you talk about businesses and investment here, I feel it’s really hard for me to accept that kind of question in this moment when we have our small businesses—in my community, the doors are shutting. The “for lease” signs are going up. What was really disappointing to me in this bill was that there was nothing much there for them.

This tax cut that you talked about—not this one, but in the budget—is not going to do the businesses in my community any good, because they’re all going to be gone. What we’ve been missing is that direct relief for businesses right now. I think that for many Ontarians, and for small businesses in particular, they were looking for that from this government and are disappointed.

I would hope that the government will step up and provide more and listen to some of the ideas that we’ve presented in our Save Main Street plan.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Unfortunately, there’s not enough time for a question and response, so we’re going to move right along into further debate.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** It’s an honour to rise to speak to the government’s budget motion.

Speaker, there’s an old saying, “penny-wise and pound foolish.” That sums up the government’s response to the pandemic over the summer and this budget.

**1540**

The Auditor General has confirmed that the government’s response to COVID-19 has been dysfunctional, resulting in delays, conflict and confusion. Part of the problem is the government’s failure to make investments over the summer to proactively get ahead of the virus and contain the second wave. This government simply did not do enough to prepare us for the second wave. They did not make the investments in expanded testing, lab capacity and contact tracing. They did not make the investments necessary to hire the staff we need in long-term care to provide our loved ones with a minimum standard of care and to protect them from the second wave. And they did not make the investments in our classrooms to reduce class sizes to 15, as public health officials recommended, to make our schools safer. We are paying the consequences now.

Speaker, being penny-wise and pound foolish over the summer is costing us as we play catch-up. It’s putting stress on the health care system. It’s requiring us to bring in more economic restrictions, placing stress on small businesses, our economy and ultimately, the province’s finances.

This budget fails to allocate the funds needed to address the public health emergency we're facing, and it will only then make the economic crisis worse. That is the very definition of being penny-wise and pound foolish.

First of all, I'd like to highlight the unfunded promise to bring in a four-hour minimum standard of care for our elders. I was pleased when I heard the Premier say, after many of us have been advocating this for decades, that it would be something the government would deliver on. But then to open the budget and see that it was not funded in the budget was a huge disappointment, not only to all members of this House, but more importantly to our elders. They cannot wait four years to deliver on this promise. They need it now.

The second thing is mental health. So many Ontarians are telling me of the stress of this pandemic and the fact that we had a mental health crisis pre-pandemic; it's only getting worse during the pandemic. Mental health advocates are saying, if the government could at least deliver on their promise of \$3.8 billion over 10 years, which would be \$380 million a year—but they're \$200 million short of even delivering on that promise.

Non-profits in this province fill in so many of the gaps that government doesn't deliver on or that our communities need. One in five non-profits say they are likely not to survive this pandemic, and that is exactly why the Ontario Nonprofit Network came forward with, I think, a very modest request of a \$680-million stabilization fund for the non-profit sector.

Education funding is flatlined in this budget. We already know that our education system is under stress. Not enabling it to keep up with inflation will actually put more stress on our schools and our children as they deal with this pandemic.

Speaker, I'm going to do something that a lot of opposition members won't do, or don't often do, and I'm going to compliment the government on one thing in this budget. For a decade now, I have been calling for an increase in the exemption for the employer health tax to a million dollars to provide cash flow relief for small businesses. But the bottom line is, if businesses don't get direct support to survive this pandemic, that promise is not going to do them any good, because they're not going to be in business any longer; they're not going to have a payroll. And so, while we appreciate the fact that the government has now doubled the \$600 million of direct support for businesses, that is not enough. Small businesses need to know how they can access that money, and they need to know how they can access it now. As a matter of fact, they needed to know how to access it two months ago, when the Premier first promised it. If businesses are going to survive this pandemic, they need direct support.

I want to talk a bit about the fact that we need to lay the foundations for an economic recovery. Of course, we have to focus on the public health emergency, but we need to recover from this pandemic by addressing the climate crisis that is barreling down on us like a runaway freight train, and the best way to do it—and we heard it over and over again at committee over the summer—is through a

building retrofit program to help homeowners save money by saving energy, to help businesses save money by saving energy, and to create thousands of jobs in the construction and trades sector.

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

**Mr. Will Bouma:** It's so great to rise and have a discussion with my friend from Guelph. I didn't want to go into his comments today, but rather some comments that he had the other day regarding the budget.

The other day, I was talking to my friend James. James has greenhouses. He wants to build more greenhouses so that he can expand and provide for the food needs of the province of Ontario. There's a low spot in his field that has water in it maybe one week of the year. The Grand River Conservation Authority—he had to do a fish study in order to do that. There's no opportunity under current guidelines for him to appeal to anything other than the board of the Grand River Conservation Authority. We're changing that to the LPAT.

I was wondering if the member could please say before this House whether he thinks it's a good idea that we redo our conservation authorities so they can serve the people of Ontario better?

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I appreciate the member opposite giving me an opportunity to talk about the financially irresponsible and disastrous decision the government is making to gut conservation authorities, which have been saving us billions of dollars over the years in flood protection and control.

I want to educate the member opposite really briefly. The fact that—

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** You don't have enough time.

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I know. I'm going to try to find some time. Actually, there is an appeals process to the Ministry of Natural Resources through the Mining and Lands Tribunal. But as a matter of fact, less than half a per cent of conservation authority decisions are actually appealed to the Mining and Lands Tribunal, which to me says conservation authorities are probably doing a pretty darned good job.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** Some 2,150 seniors have died from COVID-19 in long-term-care facilities and retirement homes. Eight workers have died—short-staffed PSWs in long-term-care facilities. And 85% of all deaths in long-term care occurred in for-profit homes.

My question to you, sir, is, do you think the amount of money in this budget will put an iron ring around long-term care?

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

The answer is no, unfortunately, and our elders deserve better. Our loved ones deserve better. The front-line staff who work in our long-term-care homes deserve better. They deserve a funded promise. They deserve the money needed to hire the staff to be able to deliver on a promise of four hours of care, minimum, for long-term-care residents. Unfortunately, that is not in the budget.

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

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you to my colleague for his passionate presentation.

As outlined in Ontario's 2020 budget, our government is taking steps to protect people from this deadly virus by increasing our health investment to \$15.2 billion.

Will the member opposite be supporting this unprecedented investment in public health?

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

If the budget had funded some of the things that I've outlined, such as the supports we need in long-term care, absolutely—but unfortunately, this budget is penny-wise and pound foolish. It doesn't provide the adequate investments we need to address the public health crisis we're facing.

**1550**

As a matter of fact, after reading the Auditor General's report this morning, it is clear that the decision-making structure that the government has is dysfunctional. It's leading to delays, it's leading to confusion, and it's hurting the ability of this province to address the public health crisis that we face. To be quite frank with all the members, to know that the Chief Medical Officer of Health is about three rungs down on the ladder of decision-making authority in this province when it comes to addressing this virus is not acceptable.

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I'm very pleased to address the budget motion before us today. I'd like to focus on taxes, and I'd like to focus on the assistance to small business, which was mentioned quite recently during questions this afternoon.

There is no question: Things are very challenging right now, to say the least, especially if you're running a farm or if you're running a small business; down my way, in particular, if you're running a small business in Caledonia, where three of the main roads are blockaded coming into town.

Through this budget plan, in my view, this government has done a great job. It's a budget that has come in much later in the year. The next budget will be in late March, as we understand. The goal of this budget is to reduce some of these roadblocks, the duplication—the triplication, if you will—in doing business, and through that, to boost employment, create jobs and boost business. In my view—and we've all observed what's going on, certainly, since last spring when a budget normally would be brought down—we're doing just about everything you can think of to try to get people and their various enterprises through all of this. This government's budgetary policy legislation before us this afternoon is a natural progression from those efforts, and we'll see the same next March, barring any changes in the outside world.

If passed, this legislation, this budget motion, removes the kind of blockades I'm referring to and provides assistance to help get customers in the door, in spite of the

lockdowns that we see in this city, for example; to get them in the door safe from the virus and, through that measure, to get businesses up and running so they can create the kinds of jobs and opportunities that we would normally see in the province of Ontario. Barring that, getting customers in the door, our government is there to help with tax cuts and with direct-assistance tax credits.

I know in my riding—half my riding is underwater; I'm on the shores of Lake Erie—our marine tourism industry was hit very hard over the early summer, and there was some assistance in loans and other kinds of help available. We kept in touch with all of the marinas and the people involved in that kind of business, and they welcomed that kind of government assistance. But as soon as things were lightened up at the beginning of the summer, in came the customers and, by default, these businesses started making money. That's all they needed. They needed customers. Of course, they welcomed the assistance from the taxpayer, but the bottom line was, those kinds of businesses—as with any business, really—rely on monetary inputs from the customer.

In spite of all this, what we've all been going through, since June Ontario has seen an increase of 838,000 net jobs. As of September, employment has now reached close to 96% of what it was last February. Projections for the GDP, the gross domestic product, are a 6.5% increase over the course of this year—and projections for next year, 2021, a 4.9% increase.

A budget, as we know, is a planning document. It's based on economic and fiscal realities, but it's also designed to whatever extent we could influence future developments and through that provide a bit of hope, provide a bit of empowerment, for those involved in government and involved in our economy.

Hence, with the budget, developed in the midst of a world health crisis—on November 5, our finance minister, Rod Phillips, tabled the 2021 budget. It's a budget, and—we've heard this before—it's a three-legged stool, essentially, to protect people's health, to support their jobs and their economy and, perhaps most importantly in any budgetary planning document, to set the stage for what's down the road, what's around the corner, with respect to the anticipated recovery.

Budgets are about dollars, by and large. Total spending this year is very significant: \$187 billion this year. I've got to repeat that: \$187 billion is being spent this year. I think it was Jimmy Carter, years ago, who attempted to implement zero-based budgeting in the United States. The question would be, if you go back to ground zero, if you take the ledger right down to the beginning, what would you do with \$187 billion? That's really no small change.

There are downsides. We're running a deficit this year. We're in the hole \$38.5 billion. We're running a lot of this on borrowed money, Speaker, as you would know. And does anybody here know what the debt is? People should pay attention to this. Our debt sits at \$343 billion. Who do we pass that onto? We pay interest on debts. Also, debts have to be repaid, by the way. The interest that we're paying this year on the debt is \$12.5 billion. Subtract that

from our cherished spending on, in particular, the big ones, health and education. And I'll just repeat: Debts have to be paid off. That's how debts work. I've always understood that to be non-negotiable. In these times of interest rates very close to zero, I guess our generation and other generations get to cruise along, sitting at a debt of \$343 billion.

More specifically, some of the issues at hand: The response to this infectious disease, the coronavirus, to date this year has come in at well over \$15 billion. In 2020-21—that would be this fiscal year—we're making available another \$4 billion, and in 2022-23, a further \$2 billion with respect to fighting this highly contagious virus, the pandemic that we find ourselves in.

As far as taxes, our government has been acting immediately to reduce taxes for job creators and level the playing field.

I will say, I've always considered myself a fiscal conservative. I've never met anybody—I have a background in economics. I guess this goes back a few years. I call myself a fiscal conservative. I've never met anyone who describes themselves as a “fiscal liberal.” I don't know whether they're ashamed to say that or it's just not a term. It's not in the lexicon. People don't talk about being fiscal liberals even though their actions may prove otherwise.

Why am I a fiscal conservative? I think it's something I learned a number of years ago, in this House, actually, when we were in power in the late 1990s. We had come in with an election platform, if you will, that tax cuts create jobs. And they did create jobs. We proved that. The numbers were there.

**1600**

As far as small business, we're lowering the high provincial business property tax rates to 0.88%. This would apply to something like 200,000 properties—about 94% of the business properties in the province. Savings would come in at \$450 million in 2021. So there's a 30% reduction right there in what our employers would need to pay.

We're going a step further to make additional support available for the employers most affected by the coronavirus. Again, I'm leading up to another tax cut. The government is responding to a request from some of our local governments—I know this certainly came from Mayor John Tory in Toronto—by proposing to provide municipalities with the ability to cut property tax for small businesses, and there's a provincial commitment to consider matching these reductions. That would provide small businesses with as much as \$385 million in total municipal and provincial property tax relief by 2022-23. Again, that's contingent on the area or the municipality going along with this.

Another tax cut: The province is also ending a tax on jobs for an additional 30,000 employers by proposing to make permanent the employer health tax exemption—the EHT exemption. Again, that provides tax reductions—we're sitting at about \$490,000 right now—up to \$1 million in tax reduction. This will save private sector

employers about \$360 million in 2021-22. That's money that gets invested elsewhere. It gets invested in hiring more people, in economic growth. So about 90% of employers would pay no EHT with this tax relief.

This budget is really part and parcel of our move over the past over two years now to do everything we can to cut the unnecessary bureaucratic rules, the regulations, the red tape, the forms you have to fill out, the i's you have to dot and the t's that you have to cross—and there's an economic measure on that, as well. The red tape reductions—and I know there's another bill that we've just been going through in the Legislature, under Minister Sarkaria—essentially amount to tax cuts. If you add them all up, it's something like \$339 million for business.

Electricity: This has been a bone to pick for years and years. We've known this ever since the gigantic industrial wind turbines went up across my riding, particularly in Haldimand county, particularly when the solar farms were developed. The 2020 budget outlines a plan to reduce the burden on employers of these high-cost contracts with non-hydro renewable energy producers, which will be wound down once and for all. Starting on January 1, 2021, a portion of the cost of these contracts—again, entered into under the previous government—will be funded by the taxpayer, not the ratepayer. The cost relief, again, will help create jobs. Medium-size and larger industrial and commercial employers will save about 14% to 16%, respectively, on average, on their 2021 bills. The goal is to go from one of the least competitive electricity jurisdictions in the world to at least be competitive with some of our neighbouring jurisdictions—say, in the Great Lakes area.

The point to make is, we need to be clearer and track for people and businesses options—a recipe, if you will—for small business to reply. Cutting red tape, cutting taxes, providing those kinds of incentives, those grants, clearing away the duplication, the triplication—I don't even know what the word is for when you have to fill out a form four times—quadra something? Maybe could someone help me on that? Anybody study Latin or one of the Latin languages? Anyway, the redundancies: It's a killer. It's a job killer. It kills time, not only of the people who have to fill out the forms, but for the government workers who have to read these forms. It impedes growth and it impedes prosperity. Again, everything we can do to cut red tape—and we've got that figure of savings of \$339 million a year.

We've got to make it easier for those that create the jobs to create the jobs. Small business, in particular, has been hit. There's one program that we now hear a lot more about to strengthen small business. In October, our government announced Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan. It's a plan that includes \$60 million in one-time grants of up to \$1,000 for eligible main street small businesses—this would be retail, food, accommodation, other sectors where they employ 10 people or less—to help offset the unexpected costs of PPE, the personal protective equipment.

Ontario Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network links 47 small business enterprise centres across the province where they can get tailor-made advice and information on all of the various government programs, from all levels of government, on where the help's available.

Another program, Digital Main Street, referred to digital main street squads to help small business grow online by providing one-on-one help with digital assessments, developing a website, advertising on social media, e-commerce.

Another program, Ontario small business recovery webpage, provides single-window access to small business supports.

The plan: For example, with the Main Street Recovery Act, we're introducing regulatory and legislative changes. If it's passed, it will remove hurdles faced by small businesses and allow them to pursue the new opportunities that are out there. There are some examples here: committing to explore options to permanently allow licensed restaurants and bars to include alcohol with food as part of takeout or delivery before the existing regulation expires; permanently allowing 24/7 deliveries to businesses that include retail, restaurants, other distribution facilities, for example; supporting the distribution of local food and food products by increasing the range of products available at our Ontario Food Terminal, which you can see just down here, when you drive on the Gardiner Expressway.

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** That's my riding.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** And here's somebody that may have that in their riding, come to think of it.

And supporting Ontario's taxi and limousine industry by increasing fines for the illegal operators.

I will just make mention of the Digital Main Street program. In June of this year, we announced \$57 million to help close to 23,000 Ontario businesses create and enhance their online presence, and generate jobs for something like 1,400 students.

There's Ontario's action plan, responding to COVID. This was last March. The government announced five months of interest and penalty relief for Ontario businesses that missed tax payments, or whose payments were late or incomplete or that missed filing the ever-present deadlines under something like 10 provincially administered tax programs. This measure complemented the penalty and interest relief that the federal government was also giving businesses that had to make corporate income tax payments.

On the issue of commercial rent, Speaker, we partnered with the federal government to deliver rent support to small business tenants and their landlords through what was referred to as the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program for small business. Between April and September of this year, Ontario alone committed a little over \$241 million to this program to help small business; something like \$900 million in support is available. For starters, that helped roughly 64,000 small business tenants employing approximately 617,000 people. We passed the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act—I just mention a lot of these things that have been done: the assistance to the hospitality business, some of our changes with respect to freezing the beer tax, for example, again, all part and parcel and leading into what is before us today, which is Ontario's provincial budget for this year.

1610

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The member from Haldimand–Norfolk was talking about how he's so proud that he's a fiscal Conservative. If you look at where the money has not been spent in this province, I would call that fiscally irresponsible. For instance, the Ministry of Health ignored warnings about the lack of testing capacity dating back to 2017, to respond to COVID-19. Budget requests to modernize and prepare for testing were rejected in 2017, 2018, 2019, and then 12% of the jobs were actually cut in Public Health. That actually cost us our ability as a province to respond to COVID-19.

Had the government actually invested and taken a preventative perspective on dealing with crises, health emergencies—these delays in testing impacted transmission rates. Had you spent the money, had you been fiscally responsible, we may not be in a lockdown today. Your fiscal irresponsibility actually cost us two jurisdictions to be in lockdown.

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Yes, thank you for raising that. My speech wasn't about health. However, I will repeat, I think for the third time: This year, we spent \$187 billion. That's in the context of really staring down the barrel of a \$343-billion debt.

Now, with respect to Public Health, I know I am within the Haldimand–Norfolk public health region. I think it was this spring, there was what was described as some kind of a restructuring. This was just before the COVID issue really hit. There were opportunities at that time to change how we do public health, but the bottom line, at least one, but I think several public health nurses were laid off. I fought that. I opposed that. I got into a bit of a confrontation with the mayor of the local municipality, and I see the Ontario Nurses' Association is continuing to pick that up with a vengeance.

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

**Mr. Lorne Coe:** Thank you to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for his presentation. He's been a long-time advocate for broadband in rural areas of the province of Ontario, and this budget addresses that: \$680 million; add that to our earlier investment of \$1 billion for improving broadband in homes, in businesses, in farms across Ontario. Will the member from Haldimand–Norfolk speak about the effect of that in his particular riding, but adjoining ridings as well?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I really appreciate that question. I'm kind of feeling my neck a little bit that maybe I didn't necessarily talk about the impact of this budget in rural Ontario and for agriculture and agri-business.

I have a farm. I'm out in the sticks. For the last six or seven months, I've done more Zoom calls than you could shake a stick at, and the only way I can do those calls—I can't sit in my office. I can't sit in my living room. I have to sit at the bottom of my stairs by the front door. If I have to pick up my iPhone, sometimes I have to walk outside because I've rigged up a system in my shop—I can get



broadband in my shop to transmit the signal somehow to my house. That's what I am dealing with.

I know in eastern Ontario, one of our members has offices where he has trouble getting broadband.

Try and run a farm now without broadband. How do you seal deals? How do you establish a contract? How do you order parts? It's very difficult to get parts now, with the delays with what's going on. How can you run any business now, essentially, even out in the country, without broadband, let alone make sure your kids are getting educated virtually?

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

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk for his presentation. Just a question about the Auditor General's reporting, because one of the things that was put into this budget is a change to conservation authorities. In my neck of the woods, we had a huge problem with the conservation authority when it was run by a group of conflicted municipal politicians, and the OPP was involved and the Ombudsman. It was a real mess. The Auditor General made a series of recommendations, and one of them was that they put citizen appointees onto the conservation authority, people who had an interest and a knowledge of conservation. That helped with the transparency of the organization.

This government has removed those citizen appointees in the budget, and we're afraid that all of the improvements that have been made in the community to the conservation authority are now being taken away. Are you in favour of those changes, of taking citizen appointees off of conservation authorities? And why would something like that be stuck into this budget in the middle of a pandemic?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** I just started getting calls about this last night. I think it has been raised several times in question period. The Honourable Jeff Yurek has been responding to some of that.

I will mention that in my riding, a bit of a far-flung riding, I can spend an hour and a half driving to a meeting, and I get down to your neck of the woods, up around Canborough—I think the upper reaches of the Niagara River are in my riding under the Niagara conservation authority. I know they've done some excellent work with duck hunting habitat in that neck of the woods. Of course, the mighty Grand runs through my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk. Thirdly, we have the Long Point Region Conservation Authority, which stretches right down, actually, in through the riding of the Minister of the Environment.

I haven't been hearing problems from these conservation authorities, but where this is coming from, I'm not sure. We've had citizen appointees and elected appointees, and maybe it's a democratic principle where everybody making decisions there would be democratically elected, but there is kind of an exemption to that rule. As I understand, there will be an agricultural representative, whether they're elected or not, on these boards if they want one.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** It's not a secret: We all know that COVID-19 has hit hard. We understand that as public health measures have been taken, COVID-19 public health measures have further devastated Ontario's small business community.

I know the member has been a big advocate for the small business community. He has his own farm. I want to ask the member: Can the member please inform the House what our government is doing to support this hard-hit Ontario small business community?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Again, the devastation of this infectious disease continues on business and, of course, on their customers, on their bottom line. These measures are necessary.

I think of the city of Toronto. I've been commuting weekly into the city of Toronto for 33 years now. I used to work in Toronto before I was elected. I've always lived downtown—actually, I've always lived probably within half a mile or a mile of this Legislative Assembly. To see downtown Toronto, it's a ghost town right now. It truly shocks me. I'm concerned about my riding, but having worked in Toronto for 33 years—which may kind of go counter to my redneck image, but I know a little bit about Toronto. How are these businesses getting by, these towers that are vacant? And then how do you redirect the billions of dollars elsewhere?

1620

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** In very limited time: The member complimented the Conservative government on doing everything they can to help get people through these events. Businesses need money today. Most of what's in the budget is tax relief later. It's basically like standing on the shore and telling a drowning man that, "If you make it here, we will give you a towel." What are you doing for small businesses that helps them today?

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** Of course, it's indirect with that list of tax cuts that I walked through for small business, and we have to provide hope. We have to get small business through this winter. So many of them barely made it through the last few months. Just to cut to the chase: \$300 million tied in with our federal partner to assist with so many of the fixed costs.

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

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** It's my pleasure to rise to represent my constituents of Windsor West, to talk about Bill 229, which is the Conservative government's pandemic budget bill.

I'm going to start with two quotes, two things that I heard from the Auditor General today, and I want everyone in the House to reflect on what she said. The first thing I wrote down that she said was, "Risk can become a reality." The second thing that I wrote down that she said is, "Invest when things are good, because things can turn bad quickly." Speaker, I think that during this global

pandemic we have seen just how true her words are. When I look at the budget bill that was tabled in this House, I can't help but notice what isn't in the bill and how that is directly tied to the words of the Auditor General this morning, about how risk can become reality and how you need to invest when things are good because they can go bad very quickly.

What I see reflected in this budget is certainly not investment that this Conservative government has made into long-term care prior to the global pandemic, to COVID-19. It certainly doesn't reflect investments that the Liberals put into many areas during their 15 years. But I want to also point out, because this Conservative government likes to stand up and blame it all on the Liberals—and it's fair enough to cast blame on the Liberals; they had 15 years—but this Conservative government has been a majority government for two and a half years now. At some point, you need to stand up and be accountable.

Which, I should point out, I'm sure many of you saw the Premier's 1 o'clock press conference today where he did everything but take responsibility. I think many of us heard what sounded like maybe a not-so-veiled threat towards the Auditor General, saying that he was going to take care of it because she spoke out about the mishandling by this government when it comes to the pandemic. I certainly hope that's not what the Premier meant. We certainly should not be lobbing threats against anybody, but especially not an independent officer of the Legislature whose job it is to hold any government to account.

Speaker, I want to talk about an issue that I raised yesterday—so I'm going to start with that—in question period, which is the education sector. It's the fact that those of us on this side, in the NDP official opposition—that experts, that front-line education workers, that parents and students had been calling on this government to ensure that every safety net was in place to ensure that students could go to school safely, that the front-line education workers could go to school and provide that education safely, and by extension keep families safe and keep our communities safe from COVID-19.

I think that what we're seeing across the province—although the government likes to deflect and deny; the Minister of Education does that on a daily basis—what we're seeing are alarming rates of students and education workers, and by extension their families and their communities, testing positive for COVID-19. They're getting sick. The reason for that is because the government didn't listen to this side of the House. That's not new to us; I don't think that's new to anybody in this House. But they also didn't listen to the experts. They didn't listen to the front-line workers. They didn't listen to the students and their families. They didn't listen to Public Health and the need to ensure that students were able to physically distance in the classrooms to ensure that there was proper air circulation in the classrooms. So instead of doing what so many across the province have said, which is reducing class sizes to ensure that there are no more than 15 students in a classroom so that they can physically distance, be safer and reduce the chance of transmitting COVID-19 or

themselves contracting COVID-19, this government said, "No, no. We know better than everybody else. It's okay. We're going to just keep pushing the kids in"—so that there are classrooms of 25, 28 or 30 kids.

What we've seen in Windsor, Speaker, is 10 schools have COVID-19 outbreaks. Two schools are completely shut down. The one I talked about yesterday is Begley elementary school where there are 39 cases of COVID-19, and two probable cases which could possibly be confirmed today or the next day.

It was interesting—just to show the disconnect and the unwillingness to listen by the government, and specifically the Minister of Education—yesterday in my question, I talked about Begley elementary school and the makeup of the population in and around that school. I talked about how many of those families are low income, they are racialized and they are new to Canada. I talked about what a huge negative impact this government's COVID-19 education plan has had on those families.

So, there are 39 cases, two probable cases, but the entire school is shut down and there was close to 500 people who had to be tested for COVID-19 just from this one school. And when I asked the Minister of Education the question about equity and access to education, I pointed out that many of these families that are low-income families can't afford to miss work to stay home and do home schooling. They simply can't afford it. They could lose their housing. They won't be able to eat. There are numerous things that could happen because they can't go to work. But I also talked about how difficult it may be for some of them to access online learning. Because of their income level, they might not be able to afford the technology needed in order to be able to do online learning. Because they are new to Canada, there may be language barriers to their child doing online learning, and for that parent to be able to help facilitate that.

Immediately, the Minister of Education gets up and says, "We did exactly what we needed to do. We immediately, very quickly, moved those kids to online learning." Interestingly enough, he said, "Online learning from home, where it's safe." So my question, then, to the Minister of Education is, if online learning at home is safe, is that an admission that your plan for in-school learning isn't safe? Is that what that was, an admission? And if so, then fix it. Invest what you need to make the school safe.

Again, I mention the barriers for these students and their families when it comes to online learning and the minister's response was to immediately say, "Well, we did great. We immediately sent them home and got them in online learning." That's a complete disconnect, Speaker—a complete disconnect—from what is going on around the province.

I know it's not just in my riding; it's happening in every riding. It's happening in ridings represented by government members as well. They just choose to stick to the talking points and deny the fact that there is a problem. The plan is not working.

The Minister of Education likes to talk, and I've heard the Premier and others do it too, about their investment in

the education system. The reality is, Speaker, in this budget, it makes available \$1.3 billion in 2020-21 for the education sector. But what they're not telling you is that most of that is from school reserves. The purpose of school reserves—which, in some boards, is very, very limited—is for when things like the roof starts to leak, so they have the funding to fix the school roof; for when a boiler goes, so that the kids who are in school aren't sitting there wearing their coats—and that's happening across the province everywhere; it was happening under the Liberals and it's happening under the Conservatives now—where the kids aren't having to sit there, all bundled up in class, trying to learn when they're freezing. The boards take money from the reserves to fix the boiler or fix broken pavement so that somebody doesn't trip and fall and get hurt and then sue the school board.

**1630**

That's not the government's money. School boards have had to deal with very, very tight budgets, table balanced budgets, most of the time cutting from somewhere, usually from special education. They use that money for when things like the roof, the boilers or something like that goes.

This government should be stepping up and giving them the extra funding they need to ensure that we can do 15 children in a class maximum, to have that safe distancing. It's not happening. A lot of that money came from the federal government. That's not generosity on behalf of the provincial government, which is sitting on \$9.3 billion in COVID relief funding and not spending it. That's not generosity on behalf of the provincial government. That was money that the federal government gave them to spend on things like this, not to put in their pockets and save it for a rainy day, whenever that might happen, because there's been a lot of stormy days in the last eight or nine months.

I'm just keeping an eye on the time, so I'm going to move on from education, although I do want to point out, when we're talking about education, that school outbreaks, people having to stay home to home-school their children and stuff disproportionately affects women. The fact that this government has not invested in child care, not-for-profit, publicly owned, publicly run child care—that's not in the budget. That disproportionately affects women.

I'm going to move on to health care and what is not in this budget. Speaker, I'll go back again to what the Auditor General said this morning, that risk can become a reality. And it did; it has. And she said to invest even when things are good because things can turn bad quickly, and we've seen that. We've seen that in long-term care; we've seen that in retirement homes; we've seen that in our health care sector.

I want to share a quote. It was a member from the Conservative side who was actually adding in a quote from another Conservative member. The member for Durham, on Wednesday, November 18 of this year, said, "These are all measures to support the generation that has gone before us and built up our communities. These measures in budget 2020 will support our seniors now and into the

future. As the member for Oakville North–Burlington said yesterday, our seniors 'deserve our recognition, our respect and our thanks.'"

Speaker, point to me where in this bill there is anything that recognizes, respects or thanks the seniors who are living in long-term care. Over 2,000 loved ones have died in long-term care because of the mismanagement and the lack of investment in the right places by this government. There is nothing in here, nothing to support four hours of direct, hands-on care per day for the residents in long-term care. The government stood up and said that that's what they were going to do, but they really are just empty promises. It's hollow, because there is no funding in this budget to make that happen.

They've set a target for 2025 to have more PSWs in long-term care. Speaker, I have been here six years, seven years. I remember listening to the Conservative members when they were the official opposition going after the Liberal government, talking about how we needed more front-line workers. So it's not like they didn't know it was a problem, but in two and a half years, they have not addressed the staffing crisis in long-term care.

In fact, Speaker, I refer back to the comments from the member for Durham: There is actually in this budget a cut to long-term-care funding. In the March fiscal plan, the plan spending for 2021 in long-term care was budgeted at \$4.63 billion. Eight months later, in the middle of a pandemic, where thousands of people have died in long-term care, this government has cut the funding to \$4.53 billion, and they passed Bill 218, which completely takes away responsibility from the big for-profit long-term-care homes when it comes to COVID-19 deaths in their homes. They gave them a walk. They gave them a free pass. Go right past jail, and they're going to collect more than \$200 on their way. They've also taken away their own responsibility. So now, the people who have had loved ones who have died in long-term-care homes are being stripped of their right to justice, to hold the government and these for-profit long-term-care operators to account for their mismanagement.

We have heard stories. Every one on us on this side has heard the stories. I'm sure the government side has too; I've been copied on some of the emails where we're hearing from family members of a loved one in long-term care, where we're hearing from the desperate front-line workers who are run off their feet, those front-line heroes that the Premier likes to talk about but does nothing to actually support. We're hearing the stories about how people are bedridden because there aren't enough workers to go to help lift someone out of bed. We're hearing about how they are going for days without showering, without eating, without medication, because there aren't enough front-line workers. And their response on the other side of the House is to hire—what are they called?—aides. So instead of hiring more trained PSWs, more RNs, more RPNs and nurse practitioners—

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Attendants.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Sorry; they've now said they're going to allow attendants, which is a slap in the face to the

front-line workers who are there and the ones who have left because they are not treated fairly, they are not paid fairly. This government doesn't think they deserve paid sick days. It's a slap in the face for all of those workers, but it's also a slap in the face for every single family who has been told that their loved one who is in long-term care cannot have meaningful, consistent access to their family members. But it's okay for us to send in volunteers, or it's okay for us to say, "Well, we're going to hire some aides to go in and do those things that the family members could do." There are numerous studies, and numerous experts have come forward talking about the damage that is done when you deny a resident in any congregate care setting access to their family members. This government will say they fixed it. They haven't, and I know that they're getting the same emails I am.

There's nothing in this budget that supports people in long-term care, but it sure as heck supports their friends who are on the boards, like Mike Harris and many other Conservatives.

Speaker, I only have just less than three minutes left, so I also want to talk about—I talked about people living in congregate care. I'm going to talk about adults with developmental disabilities, some of whom are currently in hospital, in psychiatric intensive care units, because there is no supportive housing for them. Some of them have been in hospital for over two years. That is not where they should be.

What you should be shocked to find out is that there are chemical restraints being used; there are physical restraints being used. That is shameful. These individuals deserve to live in our communities, in safe, supportive housing, and the workers who do support them in the group homes deserve decent pay. They deserve paid sick days. They deserve respect. But that hasn't happened for them either. There's an over-25-year wait-list for supportive housing in this province. For the individuals who were told they could have group homes and move out of hospital, they've just been told by this government, "Tough luck; we don't have the money for you anymore."

The last group that I'm going to talk about, with only a minute and a half left, are the people who are receiving ODSP and OW. There is absolutely no rate increase to social assistance in this budget. There is no continuation of the pandemic top-up benefit, which was just a meagre \$100 for Ontario Works and \$200 for ODSP recipients. This government decided that these people, who are living in deep, deep poverty, don't deserve a meagre \$100 or \$200 a month. We have said it should be \$300 a month and it should be automatic; you should not be making these people beg for that extra support so that they can keep a roof over their head and put food on the table.

1640

Daily Bread Food Bank reports that only one third of ODSP recipients even knew about the top-up. The pandemic is still going on. It hasn't stopped. To put it in perspective, for people on Ontario Works, their benefit is about \$733 a month, and for people on ODSP it's \$1,169, just to put that in perspective—and this government doesn't think that they deserve that top-up.

Speaker, this government went and decided to spend \$1.5 million on 17 fraud investigators to try to kick people off of ODSP, people with disabilities. They're going to kick them off, even though the Auditor General and the deputy minister had said that there are very few cases of fraud. The government feels that they can spend \$1.5 million on 17 investigators at \$1,635 a week, but someone on ODSP, someone with a disability, gets \$1,169 a month. But we can pay these people \$1,635 to find a reason to cut people with disabilities off of their benefit? That is shameful, Speaker, and I think it speaks volumes—volumes—to the character of this government.

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

**Mr. Stan Cho:** I appreciate the debate from the member opposite. The member says we're sitting on \$9.3 billion of a slush fund, so my question is, how do we square this? Because on page 187 of the budget, at the bottom, it says that the total remaining balance of the contingency fund is \$2.6 billion. If you look at page 173, there are three drawdowns on the contingency: standard, health, and people with jobs. If you look throughout the other pages, in the line expenditures, you'll see where those contingency funds were spent.

My question to the member is, how do we explain, on page 187, where it says that there is \$2.6 billion left? I remind you, there are four months to go in the fiscal year. How do we explain that it says \$2.6 billion, not \$9.3 billion?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I never called it a slush fund. What I called it was the COVID relief fund. It was money that was supposed to go to supporting efforts to eliminate COVID-19, to deal with businesses that are closing, to help people with disabilities who rely on ODSP, to get those individuals with developmental disabilities who are currently housed in hospitals and psychiatric intensive care units out and into safe and supportive housing, to go to front-line workers who go to work every single day to try and keep our seniors safe, to try and keep all of us safe, our health care workers, our grocery store workers. That's where that money was supposed to go, and it hasn't, Speaker. It hasn't.

Instead, according to the Auditor General's report today, \$4.8 million of it went to a consultant to tell this government what they want to hear, instead of going to the very people it was supposed to go to, to help support them.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I just want to talk, because the member raised schools. There are 270 cases in schools: 223 are students, 47 are staff members, and 703 schools in the province of Ontario have reported cases. That's 15% of the schools in Ontario. We have four schools completely closed in the province of Ontario. That's one more than yesterday. So my question to the member is: Do you think this budget should have included funding to cap school class sizes at 15, and why?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I appreciate the question from the member for Niagara Falls. Absolutely, some of that \$9.3 billion should have gone into schools. It's not just us

saying it. We didn't just magically come up with a number. We didn't just suddenly create that this would be a good idea. This is experts. SickKids have come forward and said that the best plan forward is to reduce class sizes: 15 kids in a class. The front-line workers, the education workers, have said that the best way to provide that physical distancing—the science, as my colleague from Davenport had pointed out. SickKids came in to measure to make sure, and came up with the right amount of kids in the classroom to keep them safe.

It's very clear to everyone in this province except for this Conservative government that their current plan is not working, and more money and more resources should have been afforded to the education sector to ensure that our kids and our grandkids and the workers could go into classrooms, have equitable learning and do it in a safe manner.

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

**Mr. Toby Barrett:** The member's presentation with this budget debate, certainly talking about front-line workers and front-line workers in the health care field—this is a budget that spent \$15 billion in addition this year on health care, and that's \$15 billion and counting; there's another four months left in the fiscal year.

Will the member be supporting that kind of investment in health care and in front-line workers? There's over \$1 billion that's gone into personal protective equipment, for example, for, as you mentioned, PSWs and nurses and the assistants you see in long-term-care homes—the people who get the food out the door, deliver the food, cook the food. Would you support that in this budget when the vote comes up?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** What I can say to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk is that I'm hearing it and my colleagues are hearing it on a daily basis from those very front-line workers who still do not have PPE. We have long-term-care and retirement homes where the staff are being told to reuse PPE that has not been cleaned, and that's why we have outbreaks. Niagara, for instance; you can talk to the member from Niagara Falls about that. We are hearing this on a daily basis.

When you start from behind, as the Auditor General had said, “Invest when things are good, because things can turn bad quickly.” This Conservative government hasn't been investing when things are good, so we're already way behind and trying to catch up. They shouldn't be applauding or patting themselves on the back for the small steps that they've taken, because we are so far behind already. We're so far behind already that we haven't caught up to where we need to be in order to support those front-line workers. Many of them didn't get the pandemic pay top-up.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** The member from Windsor West talked at length about how we've treated our seniors. We learned in the AG report that mandatory testing for essential family visitors was actually not the best public

health advice that we should have been following. In fact, it wasn't a value-for-money investment because it actually did not mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.

I know she feels strongly about the “not just a visitor” legislation, which would actually open our homes in a safe manner so that seniors have their families with them—so many seniors died alone in this province because they couldn't access a test or they were waiting on a test. It's really quite heartbreaking.

Can you speak to the importance of investing in testing, but actually having policies that meet the needs of Ontarians?

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** That was a very important question from the member from Waterloo. It's right in the AG's report. She says that expert advice and best practices were not always followed, and one of the things she points out is the requirement for visitors to long-term-care homes to be tested for COVID-19 prior to visiting, despite not being recommended by the testing strategy expert panel.

What we have seen, not only from the government's guidance, is that it really needs to be in legislation because these homes are interpreting it as they see fit, or they don't actually understand the guidance, so it's piecemeal. People in different homes are being denied access to their caregivers. Some homes will allow in-person visits; some will not.

What I think it speaks volumes to is the fact that this government is not listening to health experts, they're not listening to the families, they're not listening to the fact that these people—because they are people. We keep forgetting they're not numbers, they're people. People living in long-term care need to have that access to their family members in a consistent manner.

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

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I was listening intently to the member opposite, and I ask the question: We made money available to hire more teachers—they like to use the 15-student-per-class basis, but there are no more teachers. We made money available—the contingency fund. It's a rainy-day fund, and if this is not a rainy day, I'm not sure what is.

They were hiring parents to go in and supervise in schools, so we tried to negotiate with the teachers' unions to allow them to hire retired teachers, and they wouldn't allow that change. The only way we'll get that change this month—with all of the complaining the unions have done about the class sizes, you would think they would co-operate with the government to allow more teachers to be resourced. It was only at the fear of it getting public, I guess, in the press, that they backed off—but that's the co-operation.

1650

So I guess we're saying that if you don't have the resources, if you don't have the personal support workers that are trained, where are you supposed to get them? They take years to put in place.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I'd like to point out to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry that it was

actually the Harris Conservative government that closed schools, en masse, which resulted in a huge loss of teachers. So, again, I go back to: We already started behind. We already started behind and we're trying to play catch-up, and, Speaker, the reality is—

*Interjection.*

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** If he was listening, the reality is, the experts have said that, currently—well, they say that all of the time, but especially during a pandemic—there should be smaller class sizes to allow for physical distancing in these classrooms. That isn't part of what the Conservatives are doing. It's not part of their plan. We're seeing classrooms with 20, 25, 28 kids in them. So, yes, we need teachers, but we also need the government to listen to the experts and provide the support and the tools—the money, the resources we need—to ensure that these class sizes are at 15 maximum to allow for physical distancing.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the member from London West on a point of order.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning ballot item 38, standing in the name of Mr. Tabuns.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The member is seeking unanimous consent. I heard a no. Thank you.

Further debate?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** I rise today to speak and support the budget motion, Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover. It is a plan that provides as much certainty as possible in an uncertain time, ensuring that we are always there to support those who need it the most. The plan continues to support our front-line health care workers. It includes support for those who have been hardest hit by COVID-19 and it provides relief for families, workers, businesses and communities while laying the groundwork for our future economic recovery.

The first phase of our response to the global pandemic was, ultimately, \$30 billion, including \$7.7 billion for front-line health care workers, \$11 billion in direct support for people and jobs and \$11.3 billion in relief measures for individuals and businesses to improve their cash flow.

Our plan has three pillars: protect, support and recover. First, we are taking a step to protect people from this deadly virus by increasing our health investment to \$15.2 billion. Second, the government is building on our earlier relief to provide a total of \$13.5 billion in direct support for families, workers and employees, in addition to \$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. Mr. Speaker, this next phase of Ontario's action plan brings our total COVID-19 response to \$45 billion over three years.

Mr. Speaker, "protect" is the first pillar of the plan. It represents our most fundamental responsibility. In total, we are spending \$8.3 billion this year to support our front-line health care heroes and protect people from COVID-19. This includes 141 hospitals and health care facilities

and 626 long-term-care homes since the beginning of the pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, COVID-19 has added extraordinary costs to hospital budgets. The additional \$572 million is to ensure Ontario's 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 than they did last year.

Since March, working with our hospital partners, we have added an additional 3,100 hospital beds to ensure our communities are ready for any scenario. I am pleased to say that our three hospitals in Scarborough have received over \$17 million in the last two months alone. Since March, we have purchased \$1.1 billion worth of 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.

Ontario is also protecting our most vulnerable. The budget allocated \$30 million to support group homes, women's shelters, children's aid societies and other organizations with continued infection prevention and control.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have made close to \$800 million available to protect our loved ones in long-term care. Our government is investing \$1.75 billion to build more beds and upgrade existing ones, part of an investment that will create 30,000 new beds. Scarborough residents will benefit from the investment. As of today, 472 long-term-care beds will be created to relieve the demands on beds in Scarborough.

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. Ontario is the first province in Canada to take this important step.

"Support" is the second pillar of our plan. Since the beginning, we have promised to be there to help those struggling the most. Today, we're expanding that support. This starts with giving back to all the seniors who have built this province. We provided \$75 million in relief by doubling the Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for 194,000 of our lowest-income seniors. We 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 will extend this program into 2021 so deliveries continue to their homes during the winter months.

But for many seniors, staying in their home requires expensive improvements, such as wheelchair ramps and stability bars, to make them safe and accessible. Therefore, we are proposing a new Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit for the 2021 tax year. This investment will help tens of thousands of seniors stay in the homes they love. It means an Ontario senior, or a family with a grandparent living in their home, would receive \$2,500 back for a \$10,000 renovation to make their home safer.

**1700**

Parents also need support. As part of our commitment to keep students safe, we made available \$1.3 billion to

support the safe reopening of the schools, the most robust and comprehensive plan in the entire country. We are also investing in new programs to help kids learn online as well as creating a digital learning portal so that parents and students can easily access the curriculum.

Our government continues to look to the future, which is why we are 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 schools in Ontario. One of those schools in my riding, David Lewis school, will receive \$5.7 million.

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 \$370 million provided to parents during the first wave of COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, all of us know small business owners struggling with COVID-19. When I visit my favourite Scarborough–Agincourt restaurants, such as Hunter’s Family Restaurant and Remezzo Italian Bistro, I see the anxiety in the eyes of the owners and the staff. These pillars of our communities employ our neighbours, our families and our friends. COVID-19 has hit them hard, but in Ontario, they have responded with resolve and with resiliency. Their efforts have been nothing short of heroic. To help these businesses, we have made \$300 million available to assist businesses with fixed costs, including property taxes and energy bills. That money will begin to flow this month.

In addition, we provided \$60 million for one-time grants of up to \$1,000 for PPE for small businesses. We also invested \$57 million with the federal government in the Digital Main Street program to help 23,000 businesses build their online response. Likewise, we are exploring ways to permanently allow the sale of alcohol to be part of food takeout and delivery orders.

In addition, we partnered with the federal government to support 64,000 small businesses with \$960 million to assist with the rent for the first six months of the pandemic. We expressed concerns about how the program was structured, and the federal government has listened. They are modifying that program so that tenants can have direct access to the fund.

“Recover” is the third pillar of our plan. For Ontario to recover, we need strong, sustained economic growth. We need to start working on recovery now with a plan to train workers, a plan to address job-killing electricity prices and regulations, a plan to reduce taxes on jobs and a plan to connect every home, business and farm in Ontario to broadband.

The creation of 16,000 licensed child care spaces is another means to help the recovery process. We have also provided families the CARE tax credit to help cover the cost of child care. Families can receive 75% of their child care expenses, or up to \$6,000 per child under seven.

Mr. Speaker, now is the time to invest in retraining our workers so they are ready to contribute to the recovery of our province. The government is investing an additional \$181 million in employment services and training programs to connect workers in the industries most affected

with industries facing skills shortages. This includes \$100 million through Employment Ontario for skills training.

Our government is also acting to reduce and eliminate taxes on jobs. Back in March, we doubled the employer health tax exemption to \$1 million, so we are proposing to make this exemption increase permanently. That means an additional 30,000 Ontario small and medium-sized employers will no longer pay this tax.

The unfair property tax is another burden on our businesses. We are proposing to empower municipalities with a new tool to provide a property tax reduction for small businesses. Ontario will match these municipal property tax reductions to further reduce taxes on jobs.

Taken together, consider the impact of these measures for businesses in our local communities. If the municipality decides on a 30% discount, the owner would receive \$5,000 in municipal tax relief and \$4,000 from the province, or \$9,000 in total. Combined with the \$1,500 in our business property tax reduction, a small business would receive a total of \$10,500 in property tax savings in 2021. As any businesses or business owner will tell you, that could be the difference between being able to grow your business or closing up shop.

Mr. Speaker, when historians look back at this moment, they will see that this generation was as strong as any. They will see the greatness of our people’s character. I am confident that we will come out of this trial much stronger

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Time for questions and responses.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** A question to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt—thank you for his presentation. How do you implement four hours of care, which the government likes to talk about, when there’s no money attached to it in the budget? Secondly, with the changes in Bill 218 removing the liability and responsibility from for-profit homes for their actions, don’t you think those two things together are a recipe for disaster in the long-term-care industry?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you for the question. I think the member opposite will agree with me that this pandemic was unprecedented in the history of mankind. No country in the world was prepared to face this pandemic, and we’re still trying to cope with it. It’s not only Ontario, it’s not only Canada; it’s all over the world. Probably over 190 countries, close to 200 countries are struggling with it.

1710

So it will take time. The commitment is there. We made the commitment and we will try to keep our commitment so that we will not face this situation once again down the road, regardless of which party is in government.

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

**Ms. Christine Hogarth:** I know the member and myself—our communities are going through a lockdown right now, and our heart goes out to our small businesses, and they know that. We do have your back and, unfortunately, we’re in a really tough spot, and I really encourage all our small businesses to look at some of the supports that are available. Please stay safe and stay closed when

you're asked to stay closed and watch out for our most vulnerable citizens, because we all need to do this together.

This is a really important question to the citizens and the businesses in Toronto and Peel. Member, can you please share with us some of the supports that are there for our small business owners?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you for the question. We have worked with our partners in the federal government to make \$300 million available to assist businesses with fixed costs, including property taxes and energy bills. We have provided \$60 million for one-time grants of up to \$1,000 for PPE for small businesses. We have invested \$57 million with the federal government in the Digital Main Street program to help close to 23,000 businesses build their online presence. We partnered with the federal government to support 64,000 small businesses with \$960 million to assist with the rent for the first six months.

As you see, Mr. Speaker, this government initiated so many programs to help small businesses. I used to be a small—

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I want to say to my colleague over there, you had eight months to get ready for a second wave in long-term care, and what's happening? Every day, people are dying—every day. Last night, there were 11; 2,150 seniors have died from COVID-19 in long-term-care facilities and retirement homes. Eight workers have died. We're short PSWs in long-term-care staffing, which you could have corrected over the last eight months and chose not to. Eight-five per cent of the deaths that have happened in this country were in long-term-care facilities in for-profit homes.

My question to you—I better not forget that we have to thank the Canadian military for what they did to show what was going on in long-term-care facilities: cockroaches, rotten food, seniors dying in their beds. Is that what you're telling me, that you're taking care of our seniors, our grandparents, our moms, our dads, our aunts and uncles?

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Question.

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** So my question to you—before the Speaker asks me what my question is—do you think the amount of money in this budget will put an iron ring around long-term care?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Mr. Speaker, no one takes joy in what's happening with long-term-care facilities. It is a tragedy; it is unfortunate. But this whole situation didn't occur a month ago, two months ago, three months ago. It happened over a long time, and we don't have the magic wand under the circumstances of COVID-19, where there are so many issues to tackle, to address this issue overnight. But our commitment is there.

My mother is a senior; she's 85 years old. Do I want my mother to face the same situation? Of course not. My conscience doesn't allow it. We will be there to correct the situation and to support our seniors.

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

**Mr. Deepak Anand:** I want to commend the member when he was talking about his mother, and I want to say that I lost my father last year. I know the value of our seniors. I know the value of our parents. Our government understands the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant toll on the finances of many seniors.

I want to ask the member: Can the member please share with the House what our government has done to support our parents, our seniors through this enduring economic crisis?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Our government provided \$75 million in relief by doubling the Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System payment for 194,000 seniors and low-income elderly. We 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 also increased funding to the Seniors Active Living Centres Program by 22%, for a total of \$17 million.

COVID-19 has reminded all of us that our homes are a special place where we should be safe. That's why we also are providing support to seniors who are living with their family: a tax credit of up to \$2,500—

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It was interesting listening to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. He talked about the 3,200 new hospital beds that are being funded in the budget. I wanted to bring to his attention that a lot of those beds will not be operated by not-for-profit hospitals with the clinical knowledge and skills of hospital workers, but are being contracted out to for-profit, private, community-based companies. There's an example in Ottawa where the government is paying a for-profit, private company \$14 million to operate hospital beds. Does the member think it's a good idea to privatize hospital beds?

**Mr. Aris Babikian:** Thank you to the member for the question. At least I can speak from my own experience. I mentioned in my speech that 472 long-term-care beds will be built in Scarborough. These are beds in community organizations. It is with various charitable, non-profit organizations: the Hellenic Home for the Aged, the Yee Hong Centre, Carefirst. So as you see, this money has been allocated to non-profit, charitable organizations, and I have so many of them in my riding and in Scarborough. They are waiting for their turn to get the funding, and they will get it. So it is not accurate to say that all the money is allocated to for-profit organizations.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Unfortunately, there isn't enough time for continuing with the questions and response. But there is time for further debate, and I recognize the member from London–Fanshawe.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** I just want to say at the beginning of my debate that I'm sharing my time with the member from Nickel Belt.



We're elected here to bring the voices of the people that we represent into this Legislature. We're in the middle of a pandemic, where many of us sometimes face symptoms and it's necessary for us to be home. In this case, we have a member from Davenport that had a private member's bill come today. He's sick and it was unavoidable. It was unforeseen. His bill is about—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Danforth.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:**—Danforth—and it's about enacting the Climate Crisis Health Action Plan Act, 2020. It's an Ontario climate crisis strategy for the public sector, and he wants a select committee to study the climate crisis on public health. It's a fiscal issue, right? If we can make sure that people are healthy, that saves the public health care system dollars. This is a fiscally good bill. But the member is ill so he couldn't be before us, and so we asked for some consideration—

*Interjection.*

1720

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil on a point of order.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you, Speaker. I know you're a stickler for rules, and I just wanted to bring to attention that the member is talking about the absence of a member from the House.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I understand the situation, and I will now return to the member from London–Fanshawe for continuing on her debate.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** It's unfortunate when one of us gets ill. We don't want to come here and spread or contaminate any of our other colleagues, who we hold in high regard on all sides of the House. So we asked the government House leader team to accommodate the situation, and asked the co-sponsor of the bill, from Parkdale–High Park, to introduce it.

This would be a fiscally—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil on yet another point of order.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I hate to raise a secondary point of order, but it might not have been clear. Again, it seems to be that the member is referring to the absence of someone in the House who is no longer here, and we're not supposed to be referring to members who are absent from the House.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Referring to someone who is not present, someone who is absent, is a point of order.

I will now return to the member from London–Fanshawe.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Barring that, Speaker, we're asking that the government accommodate and ask for the co-sponsor of this bill to present the bill. That's what we're asking, and it was declined.

It's unfortunate, because I know there are many, many people in Ontario and many, many people in Toronto–Danforth and in Parkdale–High Park who they reached out to—stakeholders, environmental groups. They want to hear about this bill. It was scheduled for today, and it's a

fiscally responsible way to help public health. It's a public health issue, and we're here about COVID-19 issues, and of course, this would help. So having the House leader decline that when this was scheduled—it was scheduled for today.

All we're asking is for the member for Parkdale–High Park to be the one to move the bill. It's unfortunate that they've taken that stance and not allowed this bill to be presented today, even as speakers in this Legislature—my colleagues—are all ready to speak to this bill. They've reached out to their constituents on how important it is. So it's disappointing that we have a scheduled time to speak to this bill—it's fiscally responsible, it's about public health, and we would just ask for some accommodation for the co-sponsor—

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me.

I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil on yet another point of order.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** It's a different one this time, but I have to cite relevance. Since we are talking about the relevance of what the member is talking about, I know the member she's referring to was offered the ballot date of December 10 to bring forward their private member's bill, so they have two ballot days to be able to debate their private—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** That—

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Not a point of order.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Okay, excuse me.

*Interjections.*

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

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My apologies.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you. That's fine. I'll accept your apology.

**Miss Monique Taylor:** Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** You are discussing something that had been brought up before and was declined, a unanimous consent. I'm not so certain what the relevance of what you're asking and/or that the point you're making is to what we are debating right now. So, again, I would just caution you to get to the point.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Yes, I think the point is, we're talking about the budget motion; this is fiscally related to the budget of this Legislature. It's just disappointing that we do have leadership on that side that wouldn't just accommodate. It must be constantly, "Use the stick." I have to say, it is disappointing, not only to, I think, this whole Legislature but to each member. When they have a scheduled time to speak to a bill, it's so important that we all work together to get that accomplished, as leaders in our communities.

With that, Speaker, I will pass it on to the member from Nickel Belt.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Continuing in a similar vein—maybe a different vein—it's going to be the member from the Nickel Belt.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** It is always a pleasure to talk about the budget motion.

We all know that to come to work right now, to be allowed into the Legislative Assembly, we are asked three questions. We're asked if we have any symptoms, we're asked if we've been in contact, and we're asked if we have travelled. If a member tells the truth—he is not allowed to be here with us today because he told the truth when he answered the three questions. What will happen next time is that if you know that you're not going to be accommodated by your colleagues in the Legislative Assembly—we are all human beings, and when you make it impossible for a human being to tell the truth, I will let you guess what will happen. We're all human beings. Mr. Tabuns told the truth, did not pass the COVID-19—and could not be allowed in—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Point of order: I recognize the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville on a point of order.

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I think the member is discussing yet again a member who is not present here. Also, this budget motion—I'm not sure what relevance it has to the member not being here—constantly referencing the member not being here.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Point made. Again, let's just bring it back to the motion on the budget. I think the point has been made prior, too. I've already addressed it with the member from London–Fanshawe.

So I would ask that now your comments be directed to the motion that is before us.

**M<sup>me</sup> France G elinas:** Very good, Speaker.

I want to talk about a little-known part of the budget—for some people who like to know exactly, it is schedule 12 in the budget. It is subsections (3) and (4), and it talks about something that we haven't talked about very much, because it's weird that it was put into a budget bill—but this is where it is. It has to do with movie classification.

You will know, Speaker, that our public health has been pushing for a long time to show the members of this House the body of evidence that supports that when you show smoking in movies rated for kids, it has an impact on how many of them pick up smoking, become addicted to nicotine and become smokers for life. The body of evidence is there. It is robust. We know that when there is smoking in a movie, the movie shouldn't be rated PG; it should be rated 18—so that kids don't get to see those movies. Ontario changed the movie classification system in the budget bill—a weird place, but this is where it is, so this is my chance to talk to it.

Rather than mandating that if you have certain things like nudity, sexual activity or adult themes; if you have graphic depictions of violence, including bloodletting, torture, mutilation or criminal activity; if there's coarse language, sexual references or slurs; and if there's a depiction of the use of an illegal substance or the illegal or harmful use of alcohol or tobacco products or cannabis—

it will now be left to the discretion of the people showing the movie as to whether or not there will be warnings, as to whether or not it will be deemed to be rated 18.

I have no faith whatsoever in the tobacco industry. Let's face it, the movie industry is searching for cash all the time. You have the big tobacco industry that is looking for a new generation of kids to get addicted to their products so they will keep buying tobacco for the rest of their lives. And now, we have in this bill, for the purpose of paragraph 1 of subsection 1, an example of information respecting the film and its contents that may be relevant to a person who may intend to view the film, including what I've just read to you.

Public health worked with many, many youth groups so that we ban smoking in movies that target kids. I will give the example of *Joker*—everybody will remember that movie. In California, in every place that has movie classifications, they rated it 18. Why? Because, well, if you've seen the movie, they smoke. Everybody in there smokes all the time. Imperial Tobacco had maybe a few things to do with this, because you can see their product placement throughout the movies—but who am I? I haven't seen the contract or anything like this, and I'm in the House, so I know that Imperial won't come against me. But I know that if I was outside, Imperial would come against me because I'm not their favourite friend. Sorry.

**1730**

That being said, now it is left up to whoever shows the movie. This is 2020. We pick up movies all over the place—on our phone when we're waiting. When I used to take a flight—I don't anymore—I used to watch a movie on my phone; on your tablet with your kids; on Netflix, on Crave etc.

Movie classification—none of this will exist anymore. It will be up to the people, the Netflixer, the Craver, the—I don't know how you call those people—to decide whether or not they are going to put any classifications on their movies, whether they're going to let the viewer know what they can expect to see in their movies. This is a huge step backward when we're talking about public health. Nothing good will come of this, but yet, it is in the bill.

Remember the petitions that were presented? The body of evidence is there.

It would be easy to do film classification. Other provinces are doing it. Why is Ontario leaving it to Netflix and Crave and everybody else to decide if we're going to be warned about nudity, about sexual activities, about graphic depictions of violence, about coarse language, about sexual references, about illegal substances, about tobacco smoke in the movies? I don't know why we did that, but I guarantee you, more kids will pick up smoking because of it. More people will die of tobacco use. Tobacco is the only legal product that kills one in two of its users. Yet we're passing a clause in a budget bill about COVID-19 about film classification that will allow that to happen. I'm not happy.

I want to talk a little bit about the pandemic and how it affects our budget. The first thing I want to talk about is the structure of the pandemic response. The structure of

the pandemic response is that good people from public health, including our Chief Medical Officer of Health, sit at the emergency management planning sub-table; those good people give advice to the public safety command table; the good people of the public safety command table give advice to the central coordination table, who give advice to the Premier, his chief of staff and cabinet, who make decisions. There is nothing wrong with a government making decisions, but there is a lot wrong when the advice that is given by public health is four tables removed from the decision-making. And yet, the decisions that are shared are often framed in a way that would lead us to believe that they were made by public health.

The second thing I want to talk about is some of the decisions that were made that cost the taxpayers a lot of money. The first one was the decision to expand COVID-19 testing to any individual with no symptoms and no known exposure to COVID-19, despite the limited value and against public health expert advice. Public health told the government, gave them the advice, but the government decided to not listen to that advice—actually, they decided to not listen to that advice until September 24. On September 24, they changed this, but at the same time, they allowed asymptomatic individuals with no known exposure to COVID-19 to continue to be tested at Shoppers Drug Mart and in big pharmacies, where we will pay more for those pharmacies to do those tests for people who public health says should not be tested.

The next one is to require visitors to long-term-care homes to be tested for COVID-19 prior to visiting, despite it not being recommended by the testing strategy expert panel. Why did they not recommend this? It's because it gives a false sense of security. Your test is only as good as the moment you have it done. Four days, two days, 14 days later, you may very well have had exposure to COVID-19, you may very well have symptoms, but you have this little paper that says you can still go into a long-term-care home, although you have symptoms, although you've been in contact with people, and that costs us a lot of money. Most of that testing right now is being done at Shoppers Drug Mart for \$42 a test, when our hospitals get a fraction of this to do the same work.

Then, there's the new provincial colour-coded COVID-19 response framework which is not based on Public Health Ontario's advice, and our good people in public health have a hard time understanding the logic of it all.

I have way more to say and not that much time.

We know that not every Ontarian was at equal risk for contracting the virus and being sick. Public health has asked for race-based data to be collected. There was a half-assed proposal from the government to do this. It is not being done in a systemic way, it is not being supported, and it is not being done, yet we hear the government say, "We make decisions based on good data." If you don't collect race-based data, then how can you make good decisions for the people who are Black, Indigenous and the people of colour of Ontario?

The next part I want to talk about is something I've asked the Minister of Health about a number of times in

the House, which is how long it takes to get a test. The response I got was that 90% of the tests are done within 24 hours, while this report shows us that in Toronto it was 5.75 days, in Peel it was 4.5 days, in York it was four days, in Ottawa it was 3.25 days, and in all other public health units it was 2.75 days—Ontario never had a 24-hour. I don't know where this "90% of tests are done within 24 hours" came from. It is in Hansard in the House many times, because it's a question that I've asked many times. We now have the data that comes from Public Health Ontario. It was the Ontario health table that had this data. It was analyzed, and we never did meet the 24 hours from the time the test is done to the time you get your result.

There are many parts of this that talk about the privatization of our health care system. I've talked about the 3,200 beds that are being added. You'll remember Mike Harris cut 6,000 beds. We're now bringing back 3,200. But the Conservatives have found a way to give those beds to the private sector. Nothing good will come of that.

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

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I want to ask the member opposite if the New Democratic Party is finally not going to side with the Liberals when it comes to job-killing energy prices and finally show how they felt about the terrible Green Energy Act that the Liberals introduced, that they supported, and whether or not they can reroute history and now be on the side of all the taxpaying Ontarians to help lower electricity rates in this province—by finally getting rid of job-killing electricity rates throughout this province and supporting the manufacturing sector that will create jobs in our local communities, that will help fund local charity organizations, and fund many film industries that the honourable member opposite was talking about.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I stood proudly with everybody else in Nickel Belt to keep hydro public, and I will continue to push to keep hydro public. Hydro is a public  
1740

But I can tell you one thing: Where I come from, we have many, many rivers that produce a ton of electricity, and all that we see are those great big transmission towers to bring that electricity down south. We could have access to electricity very cheaply in northern Ontario. Let businesses come to where the cheap electricity is. Let them come to Nickel Belt, and you will see that we have access to clean, renewable, cheap electricity that could help many, many industries that are energy-dependent do well. But if the hydro is private, they're not interested.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I know the member from Nickel Belt cares deeply about the health care files. She's the lead for our party and holds the government to account on a regular basis. Today's Auditor General's report revealed very shocking stats, especially around lab capacity. Because of lab capacity failures, an estimated hundred thousand Ontarians who had COVID-19 were not tested.

Ontario took longer than other jurisdictions to develop the necessary lab capacity. Ontario still hasn't met the 50,000 lab capacity for either the initial date of July or the second date of September.

I wanted to give her a chance to speak about the gap in commitment from this government in the budget bill, and also perhaps talk about how important it is to stay home when you're sick, as a public health policy.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I started my talk about somebody who decided to stay home because that was good public health policy, and he's now living with the consequences of that through his work, not being able to do his work. This is a question that arises for thousands of people every day: Do you do what public health tells you to do? Which is, if you have symptoms, if you're sick, if you've been close to somebody who has been diagnosed with the virus, you stay home. But it's really difficult for people who haven't got paid sick days to do this, because they have to pay their rent. It is really difficult for people who are in precarious work to do this, because if you do this, you risk losing your work. The government has a role to play to support people to follow public health advice, and that's 10 days of paid sick days and making sure that MPPs who don't pass the test don't lose their ballot.

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

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** We're very lucky to be debating today, and the fact that all of us are able to go to work, and even when we're not at the Legislature, we are still getting paid by the taxpayer. Everyone has different HR policies, and business owners are certainly not encouraging employees to show up to work if they're not feeling well. Certainly, we have these policies here in giving people a second chance. I wanted to ask the honourable member, when it comes to second chances, why her party decided not to give her honourable member a second chance by letting him debate his bill on December 10. While he's still able to perform his duties, even if it's not here, he still has employment, unlike many people throughout this province.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** We are very fortunate as MPPs to be able to take time off when we are sick. Lots of people are not in the same situation as we are in. I can talk to somebody who works for a carpet company. His daughter tested positive, so he had been in contact with somebody who tested positive. He had to stay home from work for 14 days. He stayed on commission. For those 14 days that he was not at work, he made zero income. He is the main income for their household. They have a few kids. His wife has issues where she cannot work, and they went 14 days without any income.

This is wrong. Everybody should be able to have sick days, especially during a pandemic, and the government has a role to play to make sure that this happens.

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

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** I would like to thank my colleague the member from Nickel Belt for articulating that the failure of the government, in terms of this budget, is not

really including support for expanding the lab capacity to allow anyone with COVID-19 symptoms to be tested. That has also been the case for the past 15 years, the cuts by previous governments, and now this government had an opportunity to do it right and to invest, because we are also in the middle of COVID.

I would like to ask the member from Nickel Belt to talk about what the Auditor General states on the failure on the part of the lab capacity and the need to urgently invest now in this budget.

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** The member is right that we knew that our public health lab system needed to be upgraded. We knew this in 2007 when I was still in health care and we still know this in 2020, that our public health lab system—did you know they are the biggest user of fax? Who, in 2020, uses fax? Public health. Public health labs, because they have asked year after year after year to upgrade their IT system, and year after year they got zero budget increase.

This government wanted to cut public health by \$100 million. That's not how you bring your public health up to par to be ready to protect all of us during an outbreak or a public health emergency. But this is the situation we find ourselves in: with an outdated system that really made it difficult to keep up to date.

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

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I just wanted to follow up and ask whether the New Democratic Party will allow their member to see their private member's bill on December 10 like it was offered by the government and let them have that debate that they're so adamant on?

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Today we had a private member's bill that was scheduled to be debated. The member who was to debate it was honest. When we come to Queen's Park, we are asked three questions: Do you have any symptoms of COVID? Have you been in contact with somebody who has tested positive for COVID? Have you gone abroad? He was honest. Therefore, he is not allowed into the building.

The bill is a co-sponsored bill. It would be quite easy to show—like with COVID, you pivot whenever you can so that life can continue as normal. It's a co-sponsored bill. The co-sponsor is here. Let the co-sponsor go on, as we were scheduled, after this debate with the private member's bill. That's all we're asking. This is a pandemic. We will need to pivot every now and again. We will need to do things differently. But we will still get things done, and, to get things done, we are already—the debate was supposed to take place. The member was honest and answered the question. We could give him a hand.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** There's not enough time for further questions and responses. Therefore, further debate?

**Mr. Billy Pang:** I will share my time with my colleague the member for Markham–Stouffville.

I'm pleased to stand here today to speak on the budget motion. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Ontario government has promised to do whatever is

necessary to protect the people of Ontario from this deadly virus. Building on the province's immediate and effective response, the next phase of Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover will create stability for people and businesses while providing the necessary flexibility and resources to respond to future waves of the virus. It is a plan that provides as much certainty as possible in an uncertain time.

This plan builds on the \$30 billion in total supports to date from the first phase of Ontario's response to COVID-19 and provides \$15 billion in new support, bringing a total of \$45 billion in total support over three years.

**1750**

Our first pillar is "protect." During the first wave, our government delivered the resources necessary to help hospitals, public health units and our front-line health care heroes. Ontario's plan to protect people through the second wave and beyond builds on our government's urgent response to COVID-19 and provides \$15.2 billion in total resources.

To further support our hospitals, our budget will also increase to an additional \$572-million investment to support additional costs of COVID-19. This brings the total funding to hospitals above and beyond what was provided last year, to over \$2.5 billion.

To build new and expand hospital infrastructure and address urgent upgrades across Ontario, our government is investing more than \$18 billion in capital grants over the next 10 years. Through the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund, the government is investing \$175 million this year to support 129 hospitals across the province, with almost 70 major hospital projects across the province currently under construction or in progress. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to share that one of them is the planning of the funding for a new replacement hospital for Markham Stouffville Hospital, the Uxbridge site redevelopment project, a project that will increase ambulatory care services and development partnerships with community health providers to form a hub model of care for the community. This is good news for constituents in Markham-Unionville and beyond.

Among the \$15.2 billion in supports to protect the health and safety of Ontarians, new funding will also include increasing average daily direct care from a nurse or personal support worker—PSW—per long-term-care resident to four hours a day over a four-year period, making Ontario the leader among Canadian provinces in protecting our seniors.

In the York region, where my riding resides, the new funding will lead to the opening of the new Cortellucci Vaughan Hospital site, which will include a new emergency room and state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging and operation rooms. This is the first newly built hospital to open in Ontario in 30 years that adds new capacity to the system.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Thank you, members.

The second pillar is "support." COVID-19 has made day-to-day life more challenging for individuals, families

and employers. Reports in August in Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19, the province made available \$11 billion in direct support for people and jobs. Our government is now delivering an estimated \$15.5 billion in total support for people and job creators as part of the current budget plan.

To support parents and students during this uncertain time, our government is once again providing a one-time payment directly to parents. Through the Support for Learners initiative, eligible parents will receive \$200 per child from age zero to 12 and \$250 for children and youth age 21 or younger with special needs. This means a family with three young children, one of whom has special needs, would receive \$1,300 in 2020 to support costs related to educational supplies and technologies.

To provide more support for Ontarians and deal with the increased challenge of COVID-19, our government is making targeted investments. Through this COVID-19 pandemic—it has reminded us of the importance of our home and how it signifies safety for many people. But for many seniors, staying home requires expensive improvements, which is why we are proposing a new Seniors' Home Safety Tax Credit for the 2021 tax year. The credit will 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 investment will help tens of thousands of seniors stay in the homes that they love longer.

To support job creation, we have worked with our partners in the federal government to make a new \$600 million available to assist businesses with fixed costs, including property tax and energy bills. We are also providing \$60 million for one-time grants of up to \$1,000 for PPE for small businesses. And we've invested \$55 million with the federal government in the Digital Main Street program to help close to 23,000 businesses build their online presence.

Mr. Speaker, our third pillar is "recover." While Ontario remains focused on getting through the pandemic, our government and people must begin to build the foundation for a strong recovery fuelled by economic growth. This pillar includes \$4.8 billion in new support for recovery efforts that will be built on over time. Some highlights of the funding will include bringing more jobs to Ontario through our outlined comprehensive plan to address the job-killing high costs of electricity. Starting January 1, 2021, a portion estimated at 85% of high-cost contracts will be funded by the province, not the ratepayers.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Billy Pang:** Yes, that's a good deal. Removing this cost will result in medium-size and larger industry commercial employers saving about 14% to 16%, respectively, on average. This is good news for job creation.

To build upon our government's strong pre-pandemic economic foundation, our government is reducing property tax on job creators and levelling playing fields by lowering high business education tax rates for over 200,000 employers, or 94% of business properties in Ontario, to a rate of 0.88%.

Speaker, our government has charted a prudent course that provides the necessary resources to deal with COVID-19. While I'm pleased to stand here today to speak about the budget motion, we remain home to the best and brightest minds in the world. We will defeat COVID-19 and come out of it stronger.

I share my time with the member from Markham–Stouffville.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I recognize the government House leader.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the opportunity to briefly talk about the motion. I know that we are seized with the budget motion today, Mr. Speaker, and I think it's a good opportunity for us to reflect on some of the things that not only face the province right now, but the situation that we found ourselves in even before this pandemic hit.

I am of course grateful, colleagues, as I've said on many occasions, that the last economic statement that we provided in this House was unanimously supported by members across the aisle. I think it was the first time that the NDP voted in favour of a Conservative budget—probably the first time that they've made a smart choice on economic affairs, so I do appreciate that. I do, of course, appreciate that the Liberal Party then, with the support of the NDP, brought forward a motion of confidence in the government that passed unanimously in this chamber. Every single member of this chamber got up in their place and voted to have this government continue right through until the election in June 2022, Mr. Speaker. I don't ever

recall, as I said in the speech at the time, a more satisfying time for myself than to have the members opposite not only support measures of the government in terms of a budget, but then ask for us to continue doing the work of the people right through to June of—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. It is now 6 o'clock, and we have to stop the debate for private members' public business.

*Debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Before we do that, I recognize the member from London West on a point of order.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning ballot item 38, standing in the name of Mr. Tabuns.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** The member from London West is seeking unanimous consent—

*Interjection.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** I heard a no.

It is now time for private members' public business.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Order, please. Order, please.

There being no private members' public business, orders of the day?

*Report continues in volume B.*



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
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Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day  
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short,  
Peter Sibenik, William Wong  
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
<b>Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	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
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
<b>Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)</b>	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	



<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
<b>French, Jennifer K. (NDP)</b>	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
<b>Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)</b>	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
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	
<b>Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
<b>Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Hatfield, Percy (NDP)</b>	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	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)</b>	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	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
<b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
<b>Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier  
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Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa  
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
Peter Tabuns  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Mitzie Hunter, Logan Kanapathi  
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Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell  
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover  
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp  
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu  
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens  
Daisy Wai  
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Will Bouma, Lorne Coe  
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Lucille Collard, Parm Gill  
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison  
Lindsey Park, Guratan Singh  
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Kevin Yarde  
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford  
John Fraser, Laura Mae Lindo  
Gila Martow, Paul Miller  
Billy Pang, Dave Smith  
Jamie West  
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la politique sociale**

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Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch  
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle  
Joel Harden, Mike Harris  
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios  
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova  
Robin Martin  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

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Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations  
d'urgence**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic  
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Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin  
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park  
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell