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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 November 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 novembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOVING ONTARIO FAMILY LAW FORWARD ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 FAISANT AVANCER LE DROIT DE LA FAMILLE EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 207, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act, the Courts of Justice Act, the Family Law Act and other Acts respecting various family law matters / *Projet de loi 207, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur le droit de la famille et d'autres lois en ce qui concerne diverses questions de droit de la famille.*

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Good morning. I'm happy to have the opportunity today to lead off debate for the opposition on third reading of Bill 207, the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, 2020.

This was a once-in-a-generation opportunity to open up this act and to make changes. However, since our first debate on this bill, very little has changed. As we all know, this act introduced technical changes to legal procedure and definitions, and slightly alters legal tests. Some of these changes are welcome. We know that the legal professionals we've spoken with are glad to see some of these changes.

The bill has three schedules. The first amends the Children's Law Reform Act to change definitions and terminology used when relating to custody and other matters. This includes adding a statutory definition of the "best interests of the child." This bill also requires that family violence be considered as a matter that is relevant to the best interests of the child, and that the child be protected from the conflict that arises from litigation. These are good things. There is also a soft requirement for counsel to encourage clients to seek alternative dispute resolution, including mediation.

Schedule 2 of this bill amends the Courts of Justice Act to clarify the appeals procedure for family law matters. Before this, it was a mixture of legislation and case law.

These changes clarify and streamline some of the appeals procedure.

Schedule 3 of the bills amends the Family Law Act to require the Minister of Finance to provide the court with certified copies of notices of calculation for child support matters.

Through the committee process over the past weeks, only one amendment passed, and that was to change the appeals process in certain types of cases. There is still a great deal missing from this bill. Many of the issues I raised in my lead debate on this bill have still not been addressed. This bill, even after committee, does nothing to address the crisis in family law that I have discussed in the past.

While the changes to the law introduced in the bill are fine, I again have to ask, does the family in court actually have legal representation so they have the best chance of getting a good outcome? Once again, I have to ask: After the family law case, how does the family go on and live under the court orders? Do the community and the government agencies which enforce the orders have the ability to serve families? I hope once again to touch on these issues and explain what is missing from the bill in my debate today.

Through the committee, we heard some difficult stories and a lot of good advice on how to change the family law system. The appeals process stands out as an important piece of what is needed to change in this bill. It has been noted many times that the appeal routes for family law cases are confusing, time-consuming and often lead to jurisdictional issues and wasted time. The process is highly confusing. The appeals court you go to depends on the type of order that was made, which court your case was heard at or what was spelled out in the legislation.

The legislation added an extra requirement where people would need a leave to appeal to make the appeal of their decision. This means you would need to make a motion to the court explaining why they should hear your appeal, and there are rules on how much time you have to provide notice and what you have to provide next and so on. This process could take months, and it could be next to impossible for self-represented parties.

We supported the position of the Ontario Association of Child Protection Lawyers, the Office of the Children's Lawyer and the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies to amend the legislation to provide a direct appeal to the Ontario Court of Appeal without the leave requirement in child protection cases. We asked that the bill be amended so the leave requirement for appeals be removed for all cases under the Child, Youth and Family

Services Act. The government also introduced a similar motion, which passed, but only applies to adoption and child protection cases.

We also introduced several other amendments to make this legislation stronger and to reflect the needs of stakeholders and experts in family law. When it comes to the best interests of the child test, we wanted to add a clause that recognizes the cultural heritage of the child, especially as it related to Indigenous children. We wanted the best interests test to consider the “child’s cultural, linguistic, religious and spiritual upbringing and heritage, including Indigenous upbringing and heritage, and in the case of a First Nations, Inuk or Métis child, the importance of preserving the child’s cultural identity and connection to community given the uniqueness of First Nations, Inuit and Métis cultures, heritages and traditions.”

We also wanted to ensure that the child’s physical, mental and emotional needs were considered, as well as “the child’s race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, family diversity, disability, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.” We put these considerations into amendments that were voted down by the government.

Further, we introduced an amendment to more fully consider the issue of family violence in the best interests of the child test. Family law practitioners and experts told us that if there is family violence, they were concerned about what could be considered the best interests of the child. So we introduced amendments to ensure that family violence was properly considered. These amendments were directly requested by people who work in this area, day-to-day. These are the experts that we should be listening to.

We understand the government wanted to align the provincial and federal laws when it comes to family matters. However, there was nothing stopping this government from going further and beefing up the legislation to make it better: a made-in-Ontario approach. We can add additional considerations that meet the needs of families that were recommended by stakeholders.

Another amendment we introduced was a new duty for lawyers to screen for family violence at the outset of a case. That way, the lawyer would know right away what options are on the table and how to proceed in a way that does not subject a child or spouse to further abuse. This would be a duty for lawyers and would have been collaboratively determined through regulation, in consultation with the law association and experts. This was a recommendation that came straight from the front-line practitioners, who were supportive as long as they had a say in how it works.

0910

The government’s response to this was odd. They accused me of trying to interfere with the law society. They said that lawyers are self-regulating and that the law society should implement this change if they wanted to. They deflected the responsibility. To quote the member from Durham, she said, “I’m just trying to understand what the proposal is from the New Democrats. Are they

saying that the law society should no longer be a self-regulating organization?” That’s a draft from Hansard.

There are duties and responsibilities placed on lawyers in other areas of law. It’s not like we’re inventing a new way of working. There are all kinds of laws and regulations in each field of law that impact lawyers. This duty would be created in collaboration and consultation with them, and it’s not unheard of.

You don’t have to look very far for similar requirements being placed on lawyers in legislation. In this very bill, schedule 1 introduces a change to the Children’s Law Reform Act that imposes a duty on lawyers to encourage their clients to resolve matters using alternative dispute resolution. The government introduced this positive requirement on lawyers in their own bill. Surely, they’ve read their own bill and, thus, are okay with governing the conduct of lawyers to some degree.

Our suggestion in amendment 10 to screen for family violence was to put this change into regulations in order to provide for ample time to consult with lawyers and other stakeholders. It would have been a good change, and the lawyers we talked to agreed. It’s a shame that the government voted this amendment down, and without any good reason.

The real issue here is that practitioners have called for some type of screening for violence, but the government is not interested. Instead, they hide behind technicalities and deflections.

Last week, we introduced an amendment to address an issue in the Family Law Act. In that act, there is a limit to who can strike an agreement in the predetermined categories that can create a settlement agreement and avoid going to court. We introduced an amendment that would make this more flexible. We would make it easier for people to strike settlement agreements and avoid costly court appearances. The government shut this amendment down, first by claiming it was out of order and then by voting it down when they realized it wasn’t.

Some of the responses by the government members to our amendments were confusing. It appears that this government wants to align the rules with the federal Divorce Act and do nothing more. I want to remind the government that while it is good to make the rules easier for people in the Family Court system, the federal Divorce Act does not limit us from making our family law system more responsive to the needs of Ontarians. If anything, we should use our power as a government to ensure that the needs of families are met through family law. Our stakeholders and experts gave us great advice, but this government followed very little of it.

As I mentioned before in this House, Ontario’s family law system has been in crisis for decades. Countless judges, lawyers, academics and community workers have spoken about this. This bill is largely unchanged from the last time we discussed it here in this House, so there is still a lot missing and it still does not address the crisis in family law. These are legal matters that affect the family. Divorces, splitting assets, custody of children, child protection and adoption: All of these matters affect the course

of people's lives. It is emotionally charged and deeply personal.

It is deeply disturbing that across Canada, more than 50% of people that go to Family Court do so without a lawyer. According to the National Self-Represented Litigants Project, which presented at committee, court outcomes are significantly worse for those without legal representation. In their submission to the committee, they write, "The result is a travesty of justice for many Ontarians who are not getting a fair chance. This is completely unchanged by whatever legal name you give to 'custody' or 'access,' or even the definition of 'best interests of the child' (as this bill enacts)."

The most important reason that people show up without a lawyer is the cost. As of 2013, the average cost for a basic family law case was \$12,000. So many people in Ontario still simply cannot afford legal help, and our legal system is designed to keep regular people out. The result is that very few Ontarians can afford access to justice in our Family Court system. Too many people have no choice but to try to follow advice from legal clinics and duty counsel offices while they go it alone.

As a result, our legal system is slowed to a crawl, and these people have worse outcomes that impact their family for years. These inequities are amplified for single mother families. They face a high risk of poverty if they can't obtain and enforce their child support orders. This impacts women fleeing abusive situations or families interacting with the child welfare system.

Of course, if you're rich, this doesn't matter to you. You can simply hire the best lawyer you can afford and get your way.

Many people who show up to court without lawyers simply ran out of money as they went along. Some people are able to pay a lawyer at the outset, but lengthy court cases deplete their funds.

As I mentioned the last time I brought up these issues, this is not new. The issues in our family law system are decades in the making and were caused by successive Conservative and Liberal governments.

Last time I spoke on this bill and the crisis in family law, I quoted Justice Warren K. Winkler, who was the Chief Justice of Ontario, who spoke in 2011 about the family law crisis. In 2011, Justice Winkler said this:

"There is a growing concern among the bar and the general public that our family justice system is not delivering on its primary purpose: access to justice for families in transition.

"I was made starkly aware of the level of dissatisfaction with our family justice system after I became Chief Justice of Ontario four years ago. I travelled throughout the province, and met with law associations to get their feedback on issues facing the legal system. The overwhelming theme of these conversations was that the family justice system was in a state of crisis....

"I agree with Alf Mamo"—a family lawyer—"who has written that our goal in family justice reform should be 'meaningful access to justice,' which he defines as 'the ability of a citizen to bring about a solution to his or her

legal problems that is (a) financially affordable; (b) timely; (c) easy to understand; and (d) easy to manoeuvre through.'

"Unfortunately, rather than a system that is financially affordable, timely, easy to understand and manoeuvre through, the public is experiencing a process that is unaffordable, slow and overly complex. Moreover, rather than finding solutions to their problems, litigants often find that the legal process exacerbates problems in an already emotionally charged situation.

"There are two noteworthy trends occurring in the family justice system. Those that can afford it are increasingly choosing methods of private mediation or arbitration where they seek a faster and more efficient process over which they have greater control. Meanwhile, the public court system is increasingly dominated by self-represented litigants. These litigants either commence their litigation in this manner or are forced to represent themselves after exhausting their funds midway through the process. More than half of family law litigants are self-represented. In some Toronto-area courts, over 70 percent are reported to be self-represented.

"We are thus increasingly seeing a two-tiered justice system. On the one hand we have a public court system which is filled with large numbers of people who cannot afford lawyers, and on the other we have a second process for people who can afford to seek justice elsewhere."

I have read these words again because they clearly lay out the issues with family law. We in this House cannot say we were never warned about the two-tiered justice system. This bill before us today does not get at the root of the issue that Justice Winkler highlighted nine years ago, which is that people need access to legal help in order for family law to be a fair and just process.

This bill still misses a key component to fixing the family law system: providing access to justice for Ontarians. While aligning Ontario's family law with the federal government is good, the bill doesn't help with the very first barrier faced by families: accessing a lawyer to help them make sense of the family law system.

0920

The first barrier in family law is access to legal representation. This government would like us to believe that changing definitions and some procedures will enable people to continue to represent themselves in court. This government assumes that most people are self-represented at court because that is their preference. In reality, access to legal advice and representation is a real financial barrier in this province, and pretending it is not doesn't serve anyone.

This government has made huge cuts to legal aid during its mandate. Reversing these cuts is the first place that you have to start if you want to ensure that families can get through the Family Court system. Give people who need lawyers and can't afford them access to lawyers. This minister has no idea about the economic reality for most Ontarians. Lawyers are expensive, and most people in court want them but can't afford them.

I want to call your attention once again to this government's \$133-million funding cut to Legal Aid Ontario.

That's 30% of the budget for Legal Aid Ontario gone. That is devastating for this organization. There was a huge public outcry back when the cut was made. It was so bad that the Premier promised everyone access to legal aid if they called him—probably one of the times he gave out his cell phone number. Of course, we know that the Premier did not actually guarantee legal aid to anyone. Originally, the devastating 30% cut was supposed to rise another \$30 million by next year, but, thankfully, the opposition to these cuts worked.

This bill and this government are not thinking clearly if they believe they are making the family law system better while simultaneously reducing Ontario families' ability to obtain legal support. These actions work against each other; there is a contradiction here. The legal system will be easier to navigate through the bill, but those who cannot afford lawyers and who don't qualify for legal aid due to cuts will still face the same hurdles they faced before these changes.

Legal Aid Ontario and its network of legal clinics are indispensable parts of our legal system that provide access to justice to thousands of Ontarians each year. These legal clinics exist all across the province, and people from all of our ridings have accessed their services. The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic in my community serves roughly 6,000 clients a year. Many of these clients are fighting for the basics. The clinic works to make sure that people stay housed, with some form of income. It also helps with many of their ODSP and OW applications, and helps with WSIB. Last year, Legal Aid Ontario, through its clinics, provided over 100,000 legal aid certificates and helped 650,000 people through its duty counsel services. If there is one thing that this government excels at, it is cutting supports for those who need it the most.

I've spoken about this issue before several times in this House, when we debated the bill a few weeks ago, and when we debated Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act. The cuts to legal aid hit Ontario's most vulnerable people the hardest. That includes women fleeing violence, refugees fleeing persecution, people facing homelessness, and many more. In family law, single mothers bear the brunt of the lack of access to justice. They have to worry about both the power imbalance of their relationship and the court system. If they don't receive legal help, they could end up without the monetary support their child needs, or with less parenting time to access their child.

Access to justice through providing legal aid also helps lower the cost of court proceedings. People who don't have lawyers, who don't know court rules and procedures, end up slowing down the court system. It's worth considering the cost of self-representation to the system. Cases drag out much longer than is necessary, taking up court resources.

The Conservative cuts to legal aid are not only cruel, they're fiscally irresponsible, short-sighted and naive. There is a large gap in this province. There are so many people that don't qualify for legal aid but can't afford a lawyer. I would say most people fall into this category.

The threshold for legal aid is far too low, and everyone knows this. This bill should be addressing this issue and reversing the devastating cuts.

In the last debate, I quoted Ontario Court of Appeal Chief Justice George Strathy discussing self-representation and cuts to legal aid. He said this: "It is, quite frankly, a false economy to think that cutting these vital services saves money. When litigants are unrepresented and unsupported, the justice system slows to a crawl, valuable resources are drained, and other cases are held back. More important, the most vulnerable members of our society, those whom our justice system purports to protect, are further victimized because their playing field is uneven."

Further, at the same virtual event, Chief Justice Lise Maisonneuve of the Ontario Court of Justice said, "Even more than before the pandemic arrived, legal aid in this province needs to be properly funded to ensure that the most at risk in our society are served, particularly in light of the move to virtual proceedings which many vulnerable litigants may be challenged to access due to limited access to telephones or Internet. Without the support legal aid is intended to provide, justice may be out of their reach in this new reality."

I read these quotes into the record once again to demonstrate that those inside the legal system know these issues. We are not making this stuff up. Ontario's senior judges can clearly see that this government has attacked access to justice in Ontario by cutting funding to Legal Aid Ontario. They also know that it makes absolutely no sense for saving money or for making sure that people are treated fairly in their legal disputes.

As the critic for youth and children's services, I know that the child welfare system is one of the areas where access to justice is sorely needed. The child welfare system is another area where the lack of access to justice intersects with family law in a way that is very damaging for families and children. Families are routinely out-gunned by children's aid societies, who have legal teams that are well versed in child protection laws.

Children's aid has an important mission and can do important work in preventing harm to children. Prevention work and helping families before any apprehension is made is important, but there are still many families who went to court and lost custody of their children simply because they were out-resourced. We've all heard these cases. Child protection cases move quickly, deadlines come fast, and they are complicated. The court operates in a different language and has its own rules and procedures.

At committee, Dr. Julie Macfarlane of the National Self-Represented Litigants Project told us this:

"I think the other thing that this committee really needs to understand is that parents often are facing children's aid societies without representation. This is extremely common. It is especially common amongst Indigenous families. What the children's aid society has done, systemically—and we have data on this, going back many years—is, they have used something called the summary judgment procedure to strike out those self-represented litigants. A summary judgment, as the lawyers here will know, is

something that you bring forward at an early stage to try to say that the other side shouldn't have any kind of a full trial or a full hearing or any arguments.

"We have data showing that when those motions are brought against self-represented people, 96% of the time they're successful—and that includes a lot of families who would like to go to a hearing to make their case to children's aid. I think that is an absolute travesty, that families who are facing such a critical decision about the future of their family and may already have had children removed—as I say, we see this problem especially affecting Indigenous families, whose children are removed at a far higher rate, still. They should have representation. To imagine that the children's aid society, as a government agency, can simply knock them out 96% of the time is absolutely outrageous."

0930

I wholeheartedly agree with Dr. Macfarlane here. Families should not be outgunned by children's aid societies. They should have a fair chance to make their case. The lack of access to justice in family law feeds on existing social inequalities, and that makes them that much worse. It is no surprise that Indigenous and Black children and youth are overrepresented in the child welfare system when these communities are disproportionately unable to access legal services as well. To improve family law, especially in the areas that are most damaging to families, we must improve access to legal services for families.

The bill, as I've said before, is fine when it comes to schedule 1 changes. The best interests of the child test is a good addition to our legal system. Courts have a clear and consistent definition for this legal test. It brings this important issue out of case law. However, like I have discussed before, we must remember that the best interests of the child do not exist in a legal vacuum, but are determined by the world that the child lives in. These legal decisions are all about what comes next for the family once the court case is over. There are community programs and services that allow for the best interests of the child to be met, but they need to be supported too.

I have raised the issue with the Family Responsibility Office, which enforces court orders, in previous debate on this bill. That office consistently generates most of the complaints for the Ombudsman when it comes to social services. I often have to send those who reach out to my office to our local legal clinic so that they can get legal advice on dealing with their FRO cases.

Community programs that support families are important as well and should be considered when we are talking about the best interests of the child. In the previous debate, I brought up a supervised visitation program in my city, in my riding, run by the YWCA. As I mentioned, the Hamilton YWCA has supervised custodial visits for parents and other family members for many years. These supervised visits allow court orders about parental visits to be done in a safe and healthy way.

The YWCA had received government funding to provide this service—about \$178,000 of provincial base funding annually. What I found shocking is that amount

has not changed since 2008. That's 12 years of inflation eroding this organization's ability to do this important work that is very much related to family law outcomes. During COVID-19, this problem became even worse, as they didn't have any money to open with additional safety measures—no money for PPE or cleaning. It's difficult to see the bill's emphasis on the best interests of the child, and then see how, outside of the courtroom, this government could refuse programs that allow the best interests of the child to be met.

Life goes on for families. They leave the legal dispute behind and they try to live and abide by court orders. Community services like the YWCA's supervised access program allow families to follow court orders safely, but they're chronically underfunded. Like I said, what happens in the courtroom does not happen in a vacuum. If a family doesn't have access to a lawyer before the court case and then does not have access to help after the court case, fixing the courts is just not enough.

Schedule 1 of this bill also includes some language around mediation and alternative means of resolving disputes. Here, as well, the government does not go nearly far enough. This bill gives new duties for legal advisers to encourage families to seek mediation or other dispute resolution processes. Section 47.3(2) reads, "It is the duty of every legal adviser who undertakes to act on a person's behalf in any proceeding under this part,

"(a) to encourage the person to attempt to resolve the matters that may be the subject of an order under this part through an alternative dispute resolution process, as provided for under subsection 47.2(1), unless the circumstances of the case are of such a nature that it would clearly not be appropriate to do so."

The bill also says, "To the extent that it is appropriate to do so, the parties to a proceeding shall try to resolve the matters that may be the subject of an order under this part through an alternative dispute resolution process, such as negotiation, mediation or collaborative law."

So the bill is very softly trying to move families into mediation. Mediation is good, but perhaps some form of mediation should be required, when appropriate and with legal counsel. If some form of alternative dispute resolution is not required, it generally doesn't happen for these families. That is what we've heard from the lawyers and the experts. Mediation frees up our legal system to focus on other matters, and it is much cheaper for family members involved. It helps the family narrow and understand the dispute and work with families to resolve the dispute. But again, any push from this government towards mediation or alternative dispute resolution, which this bill suggests, should come with legal support.

In their submission to the committee, the Society of United Professionals takes this position. They write, "It is important that the call for greater use of negotiation and mediation be supported with additional legal services for low and middle-income Ontarians, including legal aid services.

"These services will be necessary to allow parties to make effective use of these processes with a clear understanding of their rights and obligations, and to facilitate a

pathway for their agreements to be formalized in domestic contracts or court orders.”

Further, as I read into the record earlier, from Ontario Chief Justice Warren Winkler—at the opening of the courts in 2010, he spoke about mediation and the need to really push mediation in family law disputes—before his time, Speaker, and we’re still not there: “In the area of family law, I question the effectiveness of the slow and steady approach of fine-tuning and rationalizing the present system. Rather than incremental change, perhaps it is time to consider a more dramatic and pragmatic revision of the manner in which family law services are delivered across Ontario.

“Experience has shown that litigants need a family law justice system that provides early access to legal information and timely disclosure of financial data. The centrepiece of such an upfront family dispute resolution scheme ought to be an alternative dispute resolution process. Such an approach would have the advantage of being more informal, with fewer procedural steps, thus reducing costs to the litigants and increasing the opportunity for early and fair resolution. Accordingly, only in the event that the alternative dispute resolution process is unsuccessful would access to the costly, time-consuming, adversarial and sometimes acrimonious court process be made available to litigants.

“I think the time has come for a fresh conceptual approach to resolution of family disputes in Ontario.”

Any call for greater use of mediation, which this government is suggesting, should come with legal support. As I’ve said in the past, there is no ambition in this bill, no strong desire to try to move these cases into alternative dispute resolution processes.

Another element missing from this legislation that many experts our team have spoken with agree should be a priority is the expansion of unified Family Courts. Family law is complicated, and it involves both federal and provincial legislation. Jurisdiction over family cases in Ontario is divided between the Superior Court of Justice and the Ontario Court of Justice. It gets more complicated when you parse out what each court is responsible for. Under federal law, the Superior Court of Justice has jurisdiction in cases involving divorce and division of property. Under provincial law, child protection and adoption cases must be heard in the Ontario Court of Justice. Both courts can preside over child and spousal support cases and child custody and access cases.

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You can see how the difference in overlapping jurisdictions can complicate things for families. Now imagine adding the inability to afford a lawyer on top of this. It just continues to get worse and worse.

Right now, there are there are 25 Family Courts in Ontario. These are one-stop shops. These court locations can hear all of the issues related to family law in both federal and provincial jurisdiction. Outside of these family courts, overlapping jurisdictions make this area of law a mess for families and even lawyers. Those we have spoken to about this bill see a missed opportunity to prioritize and expand unified Family Courts.

This bill introduces several changes to the language used in family law cases. They’re all very supportable from our side of the House. We think they are very positive changes. What was called a “custody order” will be called “parenting orders,” and those orders will set out parenting time, with no distinction in language between what used to be “custody and access” and “decision-making responsibility.” This language reduces the adversarial nature of these disputes.

The definition of family violence in the bill is also something that I can support. The definition reads as such: “Any conduct ... towards another family member that is violent or threatening, that constitutes a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour, or that causes the other family member to fear for their own safety or for that of another person, and, in the case of a child, includes direct or indirect exposure to such conduct.” The bill goes on to say, “The conduct need not constitute a criminal offence,” and it lists the actions that can constitute family violence.

This definition, plus the requirement that family violence be considered in legal matters, will likely ensure that the courts take family violence seriously. It’s something that has been going on for much too long. We heard from quite a few folks through the committee process who want further education, as I had said, and further help to ensure that people recognize family violence before we even get into the court system, to ensure that people have the ability to stand strong on their own, when we know that a lot of partners can be abusive and very dominating. To ensure that they have this in legislation is good, but again, it should have gone further.

These are welcome additions to the system that ensure more consideration is given to family violence in deciding what is the best outcome for families. The language changes are also very welcome, as this bill makes the language used in court and outside of court less adversarial and confrontational as families continue to live their lives. These changes will help many people continue their lives after the family dispute, but again, we need to make sure the people who have these disputes have access to legal help.

We heard very clearly that access to legal help is one of the greatest challenges. We’ve heard from several justices, who I’ve quoted here today, who know that families are outgunned, particularly in family law. When you’re taking someone’s child, you should be giving them every opportunity for the best representation. We know that children’s aid societies have the best representation. We know they have all the top lawyers who know the ins and outs of the law—all the language, all the little bits and pieces and how they can use the “gotchas” and everything. Every tool that could possibly be in the box, the lawyers for a children’s aid society have. Then we’re sending moms or dads, people who need help, people who have already been struggling or else they wouldn’t even be there in the first place—life is obviously not good for them, or else they wouldn’t be in a child protection case with their child and their family. So they’re already down and out, and now we’re sending them to the wolves to literally get

eaten alive without representation. If somebody has a little bit of money and they try to get a lawyer, we know that the percentage of families that end up without a lawyer at the end of the system because they've run out of money on the way through is so high. It's so great.

That is one of the biggest things that this bill is missing, and the opportunity, the once-in-a-decade opportunity to open this act to make changes, to make a reform, has been missed because those are the people who need us the most, and yet they were the first ones to get chopped. There's something wrong with that.

A government is created to take care of their people, to ensure that the people in our communities can live healthy and decent lives. Most people don't ask for too much. If they like a lot, they work hard to get it and they strive for better. But a lot of people are just happy to go to work and have a roof over their head, take care of their kids, send their kids to school with a decent lunch—a simple life. But when that family falls into trouble, sometimes through no fault of their own, and we leave them to hang to dry and we send them in to the wolves to take away their children—the most precious thing that any of us can have and to give from ourselves. To have that child taken away from you just because you don't have the ability to have representation, that's a gross misconduct. That's just wrong on every level.

If we're not ensuring that people truly have access to that justice, then you're failing as a government. You're failing at the opportunity to open this act and to make changes for the greater good of our community and say that it's better for folks because it will be easier for them to represent themselves. That's not the province that I want to live in. That's not the province that people take pride in. That's not the country that we take pride in as Canadians, taking care of each other and making sure we're looking out for our neighbour. That's the pride of Canada.

When we miss opportunities like this, to continue to allow families to be outgunned by children's aid and our court system—cutting legal aid services that truly serve our most vulnerable populations. You've heard throughout my speech, it's people who are having trouble with their homes, their apartments. They're getting evicted. They have bedbugs and mould and ceilings caving in, and nobody cares about them, so they have to go to a tribunal and they don't know how to represent themselves. Some folks don't even know how to read the applications. We all know this from our office. How much of our staff—I know my staff are constantly filling out paperwork for folks. We're holding people's hands as far as we can to get them through the process.

But we need a legal system. I'm not a lawyer. My staff are not lawyers. We can't give legal advice. People need access to legal advice. They need these services, our most vulnerable who don't have a leg to stand on, who can't fight back against their landlord when literally their roof is caving in on them and they have black mould in their homes. These are the services of legal aid. This is one of your first attacks on vulnerable people in this province:

\$133 million; 30% of the budget gone, attacking our most vulnerable people in the court system who are already outgunned.

This is where this bill falls short. As I said, there are many things in this bill that we agree with. We'll be supporting this bill. There's nothing that we can't see that couldn't be fixed. One of the greatest things that I noticed right off the bat when I started reading the written submissions before committee was hearing from the Ontario Association of Child Protection Lawyers. I noted right off the bat that there was a problem with the appeals system.

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I asked the minister first thing—he was our first deputation the first day of committee. I asked the AG specifically about what—because I don't understand; I'm not a lawyer. I'm doing my best to get through this. I have a team of people around me, but this was something I recognized as I was at committee so I had nobody to ask. So, I go to the AG. I'm like, "What does this mean? What does this mean when the protection lawyers are saying that this appeal process is a problem?" Unfortunately, I felt like he fluffed me off, that he was saying—he literally said, "It's the parents. It's their lawyers." Well, that's the greatest need. If they have a problem with the appeal process—I'll tell you, Speaker, I stayed on that like a dog with a bone.

I was sending out notes everywhere: "What does this mean?" Then finally, we started to hear from the Ontario children's lawyers, and we heard from the OACAS that, yes, this appeal process was a problem. Then the minister got on the phone—good for him—with all of these folks that night, and by the next day there was already talk of change. There was already talk of change. But these are the same people who were not spoken to in the consultation process. They said very clearly in their letter—I'm sure I have it with me—that they hadn't been consulted, that they hadn't been talked to.

I understand that the government is looking to mirror, and I understand that MPP Park—I'm sorry, I can't think of her riding, so respectfully—had done a lot of work. She had been travelling around. She had been looking at the court system. She had been listening to folks. But she kind of missed some of the really important people that needed to be talked to, and those were the child protection lawyers, because they are some of the seriously most outgunned here in our province.

I'll tell you, being the critic for children's services, I have heard from many families—and I know you have too, Speaker—whose children have been taken by the children's aid or they were in the court process. We can't do anything when they're in the court process; our hands are tied. There is nothing worse than just feeling like a fish out of water in this really important role as an MPP in representing my riding, and yet I have a family who is getting eaten alive in the court system, and they're going to take their kids. They're going to take their most valuable thing: their children. And there's nothing that I can do to help them.

What I can do to help them is what I'm doing right now. It's talking about the issues that they're facing. It's talking

about how they're outgunned in the system. It's by saying to the government—we're at the third reading; I know this is it, but I'm not going to give up. I'm going to continue to fight for these families. I'm going to continue to fight for access to justice. I'm going to continue to speak up when I can that we need a law system that truly provides people with the opportunity to go into a court with legal representation.

Like I said, the greatest downfall of this bill is the access to justice. And like I said, the minister had said yesterday in his hour lead that this bill is about making it better so that people can be self-represented. Does he really think people want to be self-represented? Is he out of touch with so many Ontarians? That's the concern.

This is my plea. Maybe this is a piece of a puzzle. Maybe this is a piece of legislation that's going to continue to move, that he is going to add more, that there is going to be more coming that will truly help families. I'm hopeful. The forever optimist, I am; I've been accused. But that's okay, because you know, if I just gave up and I just said, "To heck with it, they're never going to listen so I might as well not even bother," then I shouldn't be here, right?

The optimism in me is that we will get to the point in my lifetime that we have a government that cares about people, that cares about the most vulnerable people, that doesn't chop their legs out from under them in the legal system, that doesn't allow them to be outgunned, and doesn't allow them to have their children taken away just because they don't have the legal representation, the smarts, the knowledge and the ability to fight back to a lawyer who does this every single day of their life. Every single day of their life, the lawyers for the children's aid are guns blazing, right? "Gotcha."

I can find you one more thing: We've seen it with Motherisk and what happened there. For folks who weren't here at the time, Motherisk was doing the testing of hair follicles for people who were within the children's aid society and there were concerns of drug abuse. The hair-testing—the follicles would be sent to Motherisk. They claimed to have all these credentials. What it came down to at the end of the day is they really didn't have the technology and the credentials to be even doing the work and to be used in a manner that was the be-all and end-all.

Gratefully, they were shut down. There are appeals, because people lost their kids because they were accused of being drug addicts when, quite frankly, the tests were wrong and they weren't what they should have been. If we had had the appeal process that the government was looking at for child protection, those families would never have had the opportunity to get to the appeal unless they went to the leave, and it's a whole very confusing process. Going through it, and the work that I've already done on this bill, I still find so much of it confusing.

So imagine our families who are at home in our community; like I said, those simple families who are just trying to get through every day of life, and going to work and making sure their kids have clean clothes or a good, healthy lunch—simple. They don't own a car. They're on the bus. They're living a good life. Then something bad

happens, and they have no ability to fight back in a court of law; particularly when we had cases like Motherisk, where people could be accused of many things and possibly had never done them, and yet they were accused and found guilty of them, per se, because people trusted Motherisk and the test results that came back, when in fact that was not the case at all.

The Society of United Professionals wrote this, and this is their overarching perspective: "Speaking generally, Bill 207 is useful legislation to align the provisions of provincial family law legislation with the provisions of the amended Divorce Act, which will come into force on March 1, 2021. These positive changes include a shift from the charged and status-related terms 'custody and access' to the more neutral and functional terms 'decision-making responsibility, parenting time, and contact,' a codification of the case law with respect to mobility cases and a process for allowing mobility issues to be more easily addressed outside of court, recognizing the harm of involving children in conflict between parties, and exhorting parties and counsel to utilize negotiation, mediation, and collaborative law, where appropriate.

"While these are generally positive provisions, it would be unfortunate if Bill 207 represented the 'once in a lifetime' review of family law statutes in Ontario. The access to justice crisis is most pronounced in family law, the area with the highest rate of self-represented parties. It is worth noting that this crisis exists despite the efforts and dedication of court staff, the judiciary, members of the private bar/certificate lawyers, paralegals, and staff, and the host of professional associations and agencies serving family law litigants.

"It is beyond the scope of this submission to delve into all of the challenges experienced by people seeking resolution of their family law disputes. It is clear, however, that this bill will not likely result in the transformation of family law and the delivery of services to help" people "resolve their parenting support, property entitlements, and other related issues, include the cross-cutting issue of domestic violence.

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"It is also important to recognize, without going into greater depth, that family law issues and their resolution exist within the context of broader socio-economic conditions and the availability of things like affordable housing, shelters and domestic violence services, supervised access centres, mental health services and a host of other programs and services. This of course includes funding for legal aid services, the Office of the Children's Lawyer and other agencies necessary to give effect to legislative objectives. Policy regimes, such as drug policy, can also have significant implications.

"And during the pandemic, availability of affordable Internet and access to computers and other devices has taken on added significance. Despite the fact that the use of technology has in many ways increased the ability of some to engage with the court, it is clear that the access to justice barriers for people who are unable to access or use these technologies has been exacerbated. The challenges are also greater for members of equity seeking groups."

We're hearing from the Society of United Professionals about the barriers and the challenges that families are still facing.

We needed this legislation to address the two-tiered legal system that we have, where those with thousands of dollars on hand can afford legal representation in their family law dispute and those who don't have to go it alone. This bill does nothing to improve access to justice for families. It does not reverse the massive 30% cut to legal aid this government introduced. These are important issues about family resources, child custody decision-making power and parents rights. These legal matters have a lifetime repercussion for children and families.

Access to legal help in family law must be a priority. We should be making it easier to get legal help, not harder. Nor does it offer consideration for life outside the courtroom as family lives go on but the community agencies that are supposed to help facilitate court orders are slowly defunded.

While this bill does have a number of changes that we agree with, and we know what legal experts have been calling for, we hope to see this government do more to help those in family law disputes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. It's time for questions and responses. I recognize the member from Carleton.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member's debate this morning, when she was speaking about how it's frustrating for her that as an MPP she can't interfere in the legal system. That's because MPPs are not supposed to interfere in the legal system. Our judiciary system is supposed to be independent.

Coming from a legal background, I have a lot of constituents reach out to me as well for assistance, but I have to clarify that as an MPP I can't provide them with legal advice. What I can do is work on fixing legislation to make it easier for them to do what they need to get done.

Part of what this legislation is doing is it is simplifying the appeals process. It's getting rid of the need to require leave for appeal for child custody matters. Essentially, this is simplifying the process. It's making it more affordable and more accessible.

My question to the member is, does she support the measures in this legislation that actually make it accessible for families like yours and mine in our ridings?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Hamilton Mountain for her response.

Miss Monique Taylor: I was very clear on the fact that no, I am not a lawyer and no, I cannot give legal advice, which is the problem: We can't even send our constituents into the community to get that, with the lack of services available to them.

Also, I do agree with many measures in this bill. When she talks about the appeal process, I fought that right from the very get-go. As soon as I saw what was happening here, through our written submissions, I realized that the office of the child protection lawyer was saying that concern. What she's talking about is something that I was on and helped to get the government to change their mind

on, that decision—to make sure that it is easier for families.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's a pleasure to rise. Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain for this debate.

I want to talk a little bit about context, because I think this was a theme that ran throughout your speech, and the removal of pieces of legislation from how they operate in the real world.

I think if there was one thing I took away from you, it was asking this government to understand how this is going to play out on the ground. This is in respect to this legislation, but I think this has actually been a theme of this government through many pieces of legislation—no greater example than the autism file, that attempted to possibly do something well and did not take into account the lives that it affected on the ground.

So, Speaker, through you, my question is this: How could this government better prepare pieces of legislation to both improve the process, which we have admitted that this piece of legislation does, but to operate better in context on the ground?

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you very much to the member from Kingston and the Islands. He's absolutely right: This is where the bill falls short. I talked about families finally getting through the court system, and be what it may and how it comes out, but then when you have services that are court-ordered by the courts after the fact, like the YWCA that we talked about for supervised access, if we can't get that part of the system to actually help families—so we're forcing them to do something through the court and then we're not allowing the system to actually provide that service because they're underfunded. It really needs to be more than this legislation to ensure that families can get the supports and live the life that they need to live.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm happy to rise and to talk about the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, 2020. Mr. Speaker, I am not a lawyer, but I know good friends of mine are a couple of lawyers and they are specialized in family law. I was talking to them. They are very positively talking about the changes that our ministers and the Attorney General are taking on.

Our government is introducing changes that would allow parents to request and receive certificate copies of support payment notices online, without having to go into the courtroom. These are the common-sense changes that help make our justice system work better for families. This is an important change, especially now as we seek to limit in-person interaction.

My question to my colleague the member from Hamilton Mountain: She passionately talked about family supports. Will the member support Bill 207 and give single parents the opportunity to enforce their child support orders online and avoid the need for an in-person visit?

Miss Monique Taylor: Family responsibility is a beast of its own. It's probably one of the highest call levels to

my office, where people are constantly saying, “I’m not getting this amount; I’m supposed to get this amount.” So if there are any changes that are coming forward through this bill, I’m grateful for them. But we also need to make sure that family responsibility has the ability, at this point during COVID, to actually enforce the mandate so we know that no mandates are happening—that parents are not getting away without paying their child supports. There’s nothing forcing them to do so during this time.

So, lots of work to do on family responsibility. I welcome any measures of family responsibility that actually make it easier and help parents through that process.

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

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My riding represents 20% First Nations. On the James Bay coast, there’s a lot of isolated communities. In your allocution you did mention the lack of service for First Nations. First Nations in my riding, they lack good schools, they lack good hospitals and now the services, the family services, and also legal aid. I would like to hear from you how this government can fix this issue so that they have the service. Because they’ve been cut, and with even less services, they’ll be impacted even more. So I would like to hear from you on this particular issue.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you so much. Yes, First Nations families are completely impacted by lack of services, as we very well know. Indigenous children are overrepresented in our children’s aid societies, and that’s for a reason. We know that they don’t have proper services. We’re hearing about the lack of fresh water, housing, not having supports in the communities that are necessary to keep families healthy and safe and able to move together, ensuring that we’re keeping families together. I know that the ministry is trying to work on these things, but without proper housing supports, education—kids have to leave their families, their culture, their language and leave for thousands of miles to go to high school, and end up in communities where, quite frankly, they’re abused. We need to do better by those young people and those families.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: When asked about the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act, Frances Wood, chair of the Ontario Bar Association family law section, said that the OBA “has been a strong advocate for changes that streamline and remove barriers to the family law system to increase the public’s access to the help they need from lawyers. We commend the Attorney General for offering clarity and equal application of laws to married and non-married spouses by responding to our call for consistency between provincial and federal laws following changes to the Divorce Act.” We look forward to working with the Attorney General to strengthen access to justice as these and other amendments introduced today move forward.

This is Ontario’s largest legal organization, and we listened to them. Will the opposition do the same and support Bill 207?

Miss Monique Taylor: I think I was very clear and I’ve been very clear through the entire process that we are supporting this bill. We understand that these are changes that need to be made. We understand that we had to move in line with federal legislation. There is nothing wrong with that. I’ve said several good things about pieces that are in this bill.

What the member fails to mention and maybe failed to hear were the things that are missing from this bill, where we could have ensured that families truly have access to justice, that they have legal representation when they need it, that they’re not outgunned in the court system, that they have the supports, and when they get through the court system, that they have the supports to actually fulfill the court orders that have been put upon them.

I’m supporting this bill. We’re all supporting this bill. We look forward to its passage, but it was a missed opportunity, once in a lifetime, once in a generation to open this act, to do some good work. They missed the opportunity to truly make sure that there was access to justice in the province of Ontario.

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

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: If you seek it, I’m sure you’ll find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the order of precedence for private members’ public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

Back to the government House leader.

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 Ms. Skelly assumes ballot item number 31 and Ms. Bell assumes ballot item number 32.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): 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 Ms. Skelly assumes ballot item number 31 and Ms. Bell assumes ballot item number 32. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

CINEMAS

Mr. Ian Arthur: I rise today to recognize local cinemas and to speak to the difficulties they are facing in this pandemic. In Kingston, our local independent cinema, the Screening Room, is a gem of our community. It’s the last

independent downtown cinema that we have, and it's a place where I've had many fabulous evenings with families and friends.

But these small businesses, like so many others, are facing unprecedented financial hardship, if not outright closure, because of the inadequate supports available to them as well as other artistic venues. These are all venues that have worked hard to operate within the conditions put forward by public health, but who have simply seen their attendance and revenues drop too much to be able to continue.

My office has received many emails from a campaign named Save My Cinema, which are advocating for several reasonable supports, including working with all levels of government to extend the commercial tenant eviction ban for six months so that they can get through the last quarter of this year and the first quarter of next year, and still have the projectors playing movies when we get to the spring and we, hopefully, are through this pandemic.

Aside from the government providing additional supports, I want to encourage everyone here and everyone out there who can afford to do so to buy a gift certificate. Make it a stocking stuffer. You don't have to go to the cinema right away, but make that purchase now to try to give them some of the revenue they are going to need to get through this winter. And then they will have a welcoming space for you when you go back in the spring.

FOOD DRIVE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak today about a very special group of students in my riding of Carleton, from St. Stephen Catholic elementary school in Stittsville. Ms. Shannon O'Brien's 5C class won the food donation championship at their school because they donated, collectively, 288 items to the local Stittsville Food Bank. They reached out to me with a thank you for the letter of congratulations that I sent them, and we ended up connecting. I was very pleased that this past Monday, I had a virtual meeting with the class over Zoom. They got to ask me about what it's like to be an MPP, and we chatted a little bit. It was a lot of fun and very interesting. It was also very inspiring to see how engaged these young students were in politics and in getting involved in their community.

I want to let them all know that I'm so proud of you. Congratulations for your hard work. You're not getting just the letter, but I've also signed scrolls for each and every one of you, which you will be getting very shortly.

On top of that, I just want to say that not just this class, but all students in Carleton are so inspiring. It shows that Ontario has a very bright future ahead of us.

REGISTERED PRACTICAL NURSES

Mr. Jeff Burch: Since the start of the pandemic, I've been hearing from registered practical nurses, also known as RPNs, and other health care workers about the impact the pandemic has had on them. We all know that the

coronavirus has put pressure on our already overburdened health care system.

RPNs with Niagara Health say that prior to the pandemic, they already faced staff shortages. With more patients and less time, RPNs report that their caseloads are far above the standard rate over 50% of the time. They're gravely concerned that with very little time to spend on patient care, rushing from one emergency to the other puts them and their patients at risk. Jake, an RPN at Niagara hospital, says that he has been exposed to COVID-19 twice. He has been unable to see his family or his friends due to the risk. Another RPN with the Niagara Health System said two units adjacent to hers went into an outbreak.

Despite the increased work, the risk of exposure and the emotional impact of having to be away from family and friends, RPNs have received no pandemic pay. The government has not even made sure their workloads are manageable. RPNs continue to receive depressed wages despite the increase in their work and exposure.

Speaker, this House cannot call health care workers like RPNs heroes one day and disregard their work the next day. Workers providing critical services during this crisis deserve to be compensated at the level that recognizes the essential work they're doing. It's the right thing to do. Let's treat RPNs with the respect they deserve now.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr. Mike Harris: Last week, I had the opportunity to announce that our government will be providing Waterloo region with \$6.5 million in social services relief funding. It will be used to support the region's plan to create modular homes on surplus lands, and almost half will go to supporting the service agencies that operate our local emergency shelters. A huge thank you goes to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for supporting the work that these organizations do.

I want to take a moment and recognize one of their more recent initiatives. The House of Friendship and Inner City Health Alliance members have been developing the ShelterCare model. They've been doing this for just about a year now, and they launched it during the pandemic. ShelterCare combines health care and shelter by giving those experiencing homelessness access to 24/7 shelter and care for their mental and physical health. The outcomes have been a great success. Overdoses have been reduced by 50%, and EMS calls have decreased by 75%. In the past six months, 50 men have been housed, with none of them returning back to shelter. To quote the House of Friendship's housing services director, "This way of shelter has proven so successful that there is no going back."

1020

I look forward to sharing the continued successes of ShelterCare with my colleagues and supporting this ongoing work in my community.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The Premier and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing are using a tool called a

minister's zoning order to bulldoze the planning process across communities. Minister's zoning orders were once rare, but in the last eight months, under the cover of COVID, this government has quietly issued more than the last government issued in 15 years. The MZOs allow the government to exempt certain projects from public consultations, environmental reviews and other planning rules, and they cannot be appealed.

The Premier should not be using a pandemic as cover to issue dozens of MZOs to pave over farmland and irreplaceable, provincially significant coastal wetlands like Duffins Creek in Pickering. We've already lost an estimate 90% of wetlands across the GTA.

Speaker, Duffins Creek is a beautiful area, with swans and birds and wetland critters to keep you company. I've taken my paddleboard for hours, exploring the creek and then paddling out onto Lake Ontario. The creek winds and winds through cattails and grasses and takes you into stands of trees that arch low across the creek, draped with fruited grapevines—like a scene out of Narnia. It is a favourite local place to go for families, cyclists, picnickers and kayakers. But the minister has made a deal to pave paradise and put up a warehouse.

Wetlands are awesome. They serve as filters and essentially the lungs of our ecosystem, mitigating flooding, sequestering carbon, filtering runoff, purifying drinking water and protecting the quality of the lakes they guard. No warehouse will do that.

The province can't just replace significant wetlands or make it up to folks. And if the government's plan is to take all of the trees and put them in a tree museum, they should not expect communities to let them get away with it.

CANADIAN SOLDIERS SOLDATS CANADIENS

Mr. John Fraser: Tomorrow is the start of Remembrance Week in Ontario, which is recognized by an initiative from the member from Simcoe–Grey, who kindly asked Cheri DiNovo and myself to co-sponsor his bill. It's something I'm very proud of, and I want to thank him again for including us.

Remembrance Day is going to be different this year at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre in Ottawa South; we won't be all together as we are every year. Linda and I won't be there with my father-in-law, Lorne Hooper, a veteran and resident of the Perley. He passed away almost one year ago.

War touches everyone's family in some way, somewhere. In Linda's family, her uncles fought overseas in World War II. James Cavanagh flew 36 flights over Germany, including in the bombing of Dresden. Bill served on the Assiniboine. Neil served in the army overseas. They all made it home but with very deep, lasting scars.

One brother didn't. Robert Ansley Cavanagh died at Dieppe in August 1942, along with thousands of other young men. My mother-in-law, Yvonne, who was closest

to Ansley, dearly loved him. She kept his picture on her dresser for 75 years, looking at it every day. She never forgot him—never. She had a deep, lasting scar.

So we now have his picture in our house, along with his letters home. Thanks to her, we'll never forget him, the sacrifice that he made. That's why I mention him today. It's our duty to always remember those sacrifices that are made on our behalf.

Lest we forget. Nous nous souviendrons.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is an honour to rise today to speak about the importance of organ and tissue donation. Over 1,600 men, women and children are currently waiting for a life-saving organ transplant in Ontario, including 29 people in my riding, Markham–Thornhill.

Last week, I met with the Trillium Gift of Life Network to discuss how we can improve donor registration rates across the province. The numbers are shocking: Every three days, someone in Ontario dies a preventable death, waiting for a transplant.

More than 90% of Ontarians are in favour of organ donation, yet only one in three Ontarians have actually registered to become a donor. One organ donor can save eight lives and enhance the life of up to 75 others through their tissue donation.

Ontario has some of the best facilities in the world for organ transplants. Everyone has the potential to be a donor, regardless of age, medical condition or sexual orientation. I would encourage every eligible Ontarian to speak with their family about becoming a donor today and help save someone's life.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: The private lab system in Ontario always had some customer issues, but since the pandemic, the problems have increased to the point that they literally leave seniors out in the cold.

Yolande Gignac tried for several weeks to get into LifeLabs, but they had no record of her requisition. When she finally was able to book an appointment, she worried about how long she would have to wait, because there is always a big crowd waiting outside LifeLabs in her community.

Hélène Beauchamp left her home in Gogama to drive all the way to Azilda, so she would be there when LifeLabs opened their doors at 8 a.m. After driving for two hours and waiting outside in the cold for another hour, the LifeLabs employee told her they had no record of her appointment.

Elie Martel from Capreol—some people would know him—called LifeLabs a dozen times; no one ever picked up. Finally, his daughter Shelley booked him an appointment online. Picture this: An 85-year-old man, who just had surgery, has to wait outside in the cold, in the wind, in the snow, with no place to sit. He cannot wait in his car, because there is no receptionist at the Val Caron LifeLabs

site, just a lab technologist that comes to the door asking for the next appointment. If you're not there at the door, you lose.

LifeLabs' 1-800 number is either busy or they just keep you on the line; nobody ever picks up. We tried reaching LifeLabs to let them know, to file a complaint. It is impossible to talk to them. The level of customer service from this private lab is not acceptable. Winter is coming in Nickel Belt, and it's cold outside. The minister has to look into this to make this better.

ANITA STEWART

Mr. Vincent Ke: Today I want to pay tribute to an incredible woman, a Canadian icon, an activist and a proud agri-food culture pioneer: Dr. Anita Stewart, who passed away last week.

Back in 2003, when the US placed sanctions on the export of Canadian beef due to mad cow disease, Dr. Stewart responded by holding the world's longest barbecue. Her successful initiative evolved into Food Day Canada, a wonderful event that continues to take place every summer.

Dr. Stewart provided the inspiration and tremendous support for my first private member's bill, Bill 163, entitled the Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020. I still recall that during the second reading, she and many of her friends were right there in the members' gallery supporting my bill. I am humbled to have had the privilege to work closely with Dr. Stewart, who was not only a respected trailblazer in her field, but also a very dear friend to me and many others.

I extend my deepest condolences to Dr. Stewart's family, colleagues and friends.

JOHN WEIR FOOTE

Mr. Daryl Kramp: As Remembrance Day approaches, my thoughts always turn to great individuals who gave their all for all of us. One such hero was John Weir Foote, from my hometown of Madoc. Many here will know the name, because he never stopped serving.

I would like to pay tribute today to John, who served with the Canadian Chaplain Services attached to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry. Reverend John Foote was the first Canadian chaplain to win the Victoria Cross. He ministered to his troops during the blistering battle of Dieppe on August 19, 1942, through eight ungodly hours of death. He carried soldiers from the beach under heavy fire to safety. He assisted medics in tending to the wounded. The next day, incredibly, he refused to evacuate and surrendered to the Germans so he could continue ministering his charges who had become prisoners of war.

1030

Freedom came back to him three years later after the Allies took back Europe. But John Weir was not done serving. Educated at Western, Queen's and McGill, he still had more to give here back home.

Lieutenant Colonel Foote served for a decade in this chamber, from 1949 to 1959, as the Progressive Conservative MPP for Durham. His votes supported the building

of the first Toronto subway, expansion of Ontario universities and the launch of Highway 401.

I think of John when I drive to Toronto each week through Durham and along the 401. John was a giant wherever he strode, and we all serve in his shadow. Lest we forget.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my first question this morning is for the Premier. Front-line doctors and public health experts are raising dire concerns about the Premier's latest rewrite of the government's response to the second wave of the pandemic. Dr. Michael Warner, the medical director of critical care at Michael Garron Hospital, is pretty blunt about it. He says it "creates the preconditions for rolling lockdowns, continued economic uncertainty, and unnecessary death and illness."

Did medical experts at the Premier's command table raise any of these same concerns? And if so, why did the Premier ignore them?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the question. I think there are a few things that need to be mentioned with respect to this question.

First of all, with the modelling that was produced last week, there was an indication that Ontario was moving much in the same way as Australia had in Victoria, with a sudden, sharp peak. But in reality, it looks more like Ontario is following the same tradition as Michigan, which reached a level of between 800 and 1,000 cases per day, higher than of course we'd like to, but reaching a sort of plateau.

What's happening with this new case framework that's been brought forward is to allow for earlier intervention so that closures might not have to be necessary. There is a gradation, steps up and steps down, within this framework that allows for businesses to understand if there are concerns with what's happening in their area, that there can be some restrictions placed on it, but not closures. This is something that has been formulated with public health by public health for the benefit of all the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, doctors fighting COVID-19 in our hospitals are desperately warning that the Premier is marching us right into disaster. Last summer, the Ford government ignored similar pleas and refused to prepare properly for the second wave, leaving us with understaffed long-term-care homes, where tragedies continue to unfold; crowded schools, where outbreaks continue to occur; and families left waiting for hours and hours and hours for a COVID-19 test. And now doctors

warn us we're heading into disaster again. This is what doctors are saying.

If the Premier has evidence to back up his plan, he can make it public today. So will he make public any reports and documents prepared for the government by public health experts supporting these measures?

Hon. Christine Elliott: As a matter of fact, our government has been very clear and very transparent with the people of Ontario about what the state of affairs is in Ontario. The Premier has been very clear about that throughout.

In addition to this framework that we have provided the people of Ontario, we also are providing a daily dashboard that they can take a look at to understand, in their own public health unit, what is the state of affairs, how many tests have been conducted, what level are they in, so that people can make their own determination about what they want to do.

It's really important for the people of Ontario to assume part of their responsibility, because we are all in this together. It's important for the people of Ontario to have that information. That is what we're going to continue to provide on a weekly, updated basis for the people of Ontario, so they can see what we are seeing, which is the number of cases; unfortunately, the number of deaths; the number of people in hospital; and the number of people in intensive care. All of those issues are readily available for the people of Ontario to see.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People are tired of watching the Premier veer all over the map as more and more people fall sick—1,050 yesterday. He promised the largest flu immunization in Ontario's history, but people are being turned away at pharmacies and other clinics due to a lack of supply. He promised contact tracing so effective it could stop the virus in its tracks, but in Toronto we still don't know where two thirds of people actually contracted COVID-19.

Now he has new plan, which one expert compared to throwing in the towel in the fight against COVID-19. So why would people have any confidence whatsoever in the Premier and his government?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Because in fact we do have a very clear and comprehensive plan: Our fall preparedness plan contemplates all of the issues that the leader of the official opposition has just raised. We also have a very clear framework for allowing decisions to be made about whether there should be any lockdowns or any restrictions placed on any geographic area. That's important for the people of the area to know. It's important for the businesses of the area to know. It's important for the doctors and hospitals to know as well.

We have had conversations with the Ontario Hospital Association, with the Ontario Medical Association and with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, and in fact what we're seeing now is that we do have the capacity in our health care system. It's not being overloaded to the point of being overwhelmed.

We know that COVID-19 is going to be with us until a vaccine is available, and so we have to have a framework to be able to make those decisions. That is what we have that's been developed in consultation with the public health experts who are advising the government.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The next question is for the Premier, but I just want to say that we're talking to those folks too and they're really worried, because the last thing we want is to get to a point where things are overloaded and overwhelmed. It's the government's job to stop us from getting there, and folks are very worried that that's exactly where we're headed.

If the Premier was really interested, though, in another aspect of this, which is support for small businesses to help them pay the bills and keep people on the payroll, he'd be investing the money needed to get COVID-19 under control and provide direct supports to small business in our province. The government's refusal to invest in contact tracing and testing last summer is one of the reasons that we're in the crisis that we are today.

In the summer the government quietly backed away from a goal of getting to 100,000 tests a day by October. We're now in November. Yesterday, we tested a quarter of that amount, Speaker. Does the government have a plan to reach their target, or any evidence that says that their new scheme is safe, when we're so far away from where we should be at this moment in time?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I think it's really important to remember that while we have the ability to reach up to 50,000 tests per day, it is demand-driven, so it depends on the number of people that actually show up. I'm not sure if the leader of the official opposition would like us to just go and grab people and bring them in for testing. That's not what we do in Ontario.

We want to make testing available for people, and we have. We are putting \$1 billion into extra testing and contact tracing and management. We have put the money into that. We do have those available and ready to go. We have 160 assessment centres. People can go and make an appointment there. They can also go to pharmacies. They can be tested. We do have contact tracers available. We've hired 600 more on top of the 2,750 contact tracers we already have. We're getting another 600 more from Statistics Canada. At that point we'll have 4,000 contact tracers with \$1 billion behind it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Minister of Health knows very well that what this government did to deal with their lack of ability to prepare for a second wave is actually make testing less accessible for the people of Ontario, and that is nothing to brag about.

Small businesses and the people who work for them need help. They need help to get them through the second wave of this pandemic, not a constantly changing scheme from the Premier that sees more and more people getting sick. For months and months small businesses have been pleading for direct support from this government to help them pay the rent and keep people on the payroll. But yesterday the government told businesses hanging by a thread in places like northern Ontario, Windsor, Hamilton, Kingston and London, “You’re all on your own, because none of you are going to get a penny of the \$300 million in aid that the government announced a little while back.”

If the Premier was truly interested in helping small business and spurring economic recovery, why is he constantly coming up short when it comes providing the support that they need to stay afloat?

1040

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

Mr. Stan Cho: I am proud to announce that this government understands that small businesses are going through a very difficult time right now, and that’s why our government responded very quickly with \$30 billion in direct support, \$241 million in relief for commercial rent, \$50 million for the Ontario Together Fund to help businesses retool during this time of great uncertainty. We heard from small businesses that they need help with their other taxes, like their employer health taxes, so we responded by providing \$355 million in direct relief. We heard from thousands of businesses that they needed help with their hydro bills, so we responded with \$175 million in additional hydro rate relief.

Of course, there is more to be done for these small businesses, and that’s why I look forward to outlining this government’s plan tomorrow as we table the 2020 budget, which will state our plan to protect, support and recover in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Ford government didn’t make the investments that they should have made to prepare for the second wave. They simply didn’t. Now, the government is scrambling to try to react. Tough talk in the Premier’s daily campaign news conferences isn’t going to do anything to repair the damage that they’ve already done to businesses and to our health care system under this Premier’s watch. Now, a new, confusing system with looser rules isn’t going to help. It’s going to make things even worse.

When will this Premier stop making stuff up as he goes along and start making the investments, the direct business support investments and the supports that public health needs to make sure that we can actually fight this pandemic, and do the things that they should have done months and months ago?

Mr. Stan Cho: What this Premier and government have done is listened to the thousands of small businesses out there that are going through this very difficult time that is COVID-19. They asked for help with their hydro rates,

and that’s exactly what we provided. They asked for help with their overhead fixed costs, and that’s what that \$300 million in the recent announcement is going to help with. It will help with property taxes, keep hydro rates low and help with their other fixed costs.

This government has listened by balancing the investments in health care—\$7.7 billion to the health care sector, because nothing is more important than protecting the people that we serve. Those additional supports that have gone to businesses have continued throughout this pandemic in a very adaptive and prudent fashion. As I mentioned before, tomorrow we will outline the next steps to protect, support and recover here in the province of Ontario.

COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Minister of Colleges and Universities. The minister this week made inappropriate comparisons between Ontario’s proud colleges and universities, and Charles McVety’s college. Instead of doing that, he should have done his research before he brought legislation forward to allow Charles McVety to grant science degrees.

Here’s why: In May 2018, Charles McVety said on video at his college, “People talk about the world being billions and billions of years old, but I’ve never seen anything more than 6,000 years old. You have a perfect historical record for about 6,000 years and then ... stopped.”

Mr. Speaker, that’s not science. Why would the minister let Charles McVety grant science degrees when he believes that humans walked the earth with dinosaurs 6,000 years ago?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: Once again, I’m very happy to respond to the question. Last year, we cut red tape in the fall red tape bill. We created a process whereby any agency or institution out there does not apply directly to a minister to obtain minister’s consent. Any licensing process or designation of this nature now goes directly to the independent advisory board, PEQAB. Last year, no one on the other side of the floor raised any concerns with that process. That was the process that was created: directly from the institution to an independent advisory board who then makes a recommendation.

We had two institutions that then were legislated in the same fashion as what you see here: Algoma University and OCAD University. They went through the same process.

What the member opposite doesn’t seem to understand is that this is an independent advisory process where we’ve created an accountable, transparent, clear way to address these matters—clear.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Day after day, the Minister of Colleges and Universities defends the indefensible in this House, which is allowing a person who has made Islamophobic and homophobic comments to grant university degrees and college degrees in Ontario. But I'm sure that at some point you'll be rewarded with a cabinet promotion by the Premier for your loyalty to him and his friend.

In a course Charles McVety teaches—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. Once again, you can't impute motive. I'll ask the member to rephrase his question.

Mr. Chris Glover: In a course Charles McVety teaches and is still advertised on Twitter, he warns of imminent Islamic war. He writes, "One world governance is here!" He wonders whether trying to stop climate change is "earth worship." He questioned the science of climate change many times before.

No one is suggesting that Charles McVety can't hold his own personal views, but no one believes he should be able to teach hate and anti-science beliefs, and then grant degrees. Why won't the government do the right thing and pull the legislation that gives Charles McVety university-degree-granting authority in arts and science?

Interjections.

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

Again, the Minister of College and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: I continually speak about process because I'm trying to help the members opposite to maybe appreciate that there is no mechanism to interfere with this type of procedural process.

No matter what institution it is, for any institution in the province, just like any individual who applies for a licence, there is no way for us to meddle with that process, nor should there be—unless, of course, what the members opposite want us to do as governing members of this House is to actually meddle with process. Do they actually want us to interfere? Is that what they're asking us to do? Would they like us to actually stick our hands in the pot and try to play games with process?

This is a process. It's a fair process. It's an independent advisory process. What does the opposition have against the independent advisory process that is established, that they had no problem with one year ago?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Donna Skelly: My question is to the Minister of Education. School administrators and principals in Hamilton and right across Ontario have been working extraordinarily hard to keep schools safe and ensure quality learning for our kids, thanks to record investments into education by this government.

To support smaller class sizes, staff virtual classes and cover for teachers who may have been exposed to COVID-19, school boards have extensively used their list of supply teachers, but those supply lists are limited and we've seen a troubling staff shortage emerge.

Across Ontario, retired teachers are stepping up to the plate, offering to help ensure that we can deliver education safely to our students. Can the Minister of Education please share what our government is doing to bring more teachers into the system and help alleviate the shortage?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member for Flamborough–Glanbrook for the question, for the advocacy for public education. We have, over the past months, been supporting school boards in every region of this province, hiring over 2,700 new educators to reduce classroom sizes and ensure quality learning.

In addition, we've also rescinded regulation 274, a relic of the former Liberal government that thankfully has been relegated to history, to ensure that principals have the speed and the latitude to quickly hire. But in addition, we have been working with our school board partners and the principals' council to encourage the Ontario Teachers' Federation to allow us to have retiree teachers who have worked up to 50 days work beyond the 50-day current quota. We believe that by rescinding that maximum from 50 to 95 days, for example, it will help our school boards ensure that every parent and every student gets an educator they deserve.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is obvious that the issue of staffing in our classrooms is not a matter of money. Over \$200 million of additional funds have been made available this year to address staffing issues and other board priorities, as well as unlocking nearly \$500 million in reserve funds. As the minister said, we have already enabled the hiring of over 2,700 new teachers. Despite what the opposition claim, our government is willing to spend what it takes to have schools up and running while keeping everyone involved as safe as possible. This is an issue about a policy that needlessly prevents educators who want to work and want to help from being part of the solution.

1050

Could the minister please explain why all partners must work together to ensure that every student has a teacher?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It is really an important question. I think all members of the Legislature accept the premise that every student deserves a teacher.

There is a way, today, right now, that the Ontario Teachers' Federation can work with the government, knowing that the principals' councils and the school board associations of this province have asked them since July, since we've been negotiating and working with them, to expand that quota from 50 days to 95 days, allowing more retirees, willingly, voluntarily, to re-enter our schools and to staff our schools to ensure that learning continues. That is important.

When we did a survey of our school boards, over two thirds of them, in September—the problem is much worse today—underscored that they have a challenge finding access to supply. We have a solution.

We know parents want us to work together during this pandemic, as the member rightfully mentioned—collaboration in this unprecedented time of difficulty—and we're

willing to do that, and we have for three months. We're calling on them, in good faith, to expedite the outcome. Let's get on with this and ensure every school—and every student has a teacher in this province.

COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Deputy Premier.

Charles McVety handed Premier Ford electoral victory, giving him his fringe, radical, social conservative support. Now McVety is looking for payback: the power to confer university degrees at Canada Christian College.

When their world is full of hate, LGBTQ youth may lose their home; some may lose their lives. Muslim youth shoulder bigotry every day of their lives.

Government members can't remain silent, ignore their conscience and claim to respect the process. How can anyone remain silent on McVety's platform of hate?

Will the Acting Premier stand up for Muslim and LGBTQ youth today? Will she finally stand up against hate?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the members to please take their seats.

The Minister of Colleges and Universities to respond.

Hon. Ross Romano: Again, everyone on this side of the House, everyone in this House—everybody can agree on the importance of equality and the importance of ensuring that we have a system that is free of hate.

But what we are talking about here, and what I said in my responses to the previous two questions from the members opposite—and I am truly trying to be as clear and simple as I possibly can be about procedural matters here. There is not a process to meddle with an independent advisory process. If you take an independent advisory process like that which we have, the process that was initiated last year in the fall red tape bill, which no one on that side of the House concerned themselves with—two institutions went through the identical process. No concerns were raised. They need to understand the procedural accountability measures that are there, and I hope we can help them appreciate that.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Respectfully, the minister can't even say McVety's name. Do you know what is not an independent process? McVety's platform of hate.

Back to the Acting Premier: I suspect she's listening, but her silence is deafening. Conservatives talk about their gay friends when it's convenient; now is the time to speak up for your friends, but instead all we hear is silence.

When government officials pander to radical, fringe social conservatives, they stoke the fires of hatred. This pre-emptive legislation stokes the fires of hatred.

Through you, Speaker, to all government members: Stand up and speak out against McVety's hate. Your choice will define your political career. It will define you as a human being.

Again to the Acting Premier: Where do you stand on McVety's platform of hate? Will you finally stand up as a leader?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Ross Romano: I will once again rise to speak to this matter, and I will continually speak to the facts. The facts are the facts; you cannot change the facts. We have a process. You apply directly to a board. This is not a government process. This is not a process that any minister, any member of this House has the ability to meddle with. It has been made that way for a great reason. It is to remove politics from the equation. It's to remove pandering.

Interjections.

Hon. Ross Romano: Those on that side of the floor like to laugh and they like to heckle, and they like to pander for reasons, reasons that they want to meddle with process. They don't like fairness. They don't like accountability. They don't like transparency.

We on this side of this House believe in that fair process, and we have brought this into legislation to ensure that everybody in this entire province has the opportunity to hear respectful debate. That is what we are here doing—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, this government released another COVID scheme based on meaningless data. As if the public wasn't already confused enough, our Premier changed the rules yet again; not to stop the virus, which he can't, but to baffle people and create the appearance that he can. These new measures are absurd, irrational and inane. They're better suited to a Monty Python parody.

Serving beer after 9 p.m. is now unsafe. Casinos are open, but their tables are closed. Masks are not needed while working out in a gym, but they are when lining up outside, and while your server is wearing goggles to serve your beer. All these rules, but no evidence to support them.

Lockdowns don't work, just like the millions that are unemployed and the businesses destroyed. Is the endgame a never-ending crisis of confusion and contradictions?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Actually, this framework was designed to provide more certainty to people and to businesses to understand where each part of the region or where each part of the province stands with respect to COVID-19.

You're right, it's not going away right away and in the near future until we have a vaccine, so we need to learn how to deal with it, how to live with it. As part of that, we need to provide information to the public on what their responsibilities are, too. That's why we've developed both a framework as well as a dashboard that's being posted on

our ontario.ca/coronavirus website so that people can click into their specific public health region, understand what stage it's at, what the restrictions are, if any, and be able to make their own decisions about whether they want to go out to dinner in a restaurant, whether they want to go and work out in gym—whatever it is that they want to do. This is to provide greater certainty to everyone as we're dealing with COVID-19, going forward.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: To the Premier. Thinking people understand that the true measure of risk from any disease is not the number of cases, but rather the severity of the illness and the number of hospitalizations and deaths that result. If the number of cases meant anything, every province, state and country would shut down from September to April every year for the flu. But that would be absurd, irrational and inane, just like the government's proposals.

But it gets worse. The Premier proposes testing 100,000 healthy people every day, which his own government acknowledges will produce approximately 1,000 false positives every day, which then justifies this endless circle of futility and misery. Speaker, coronaviruses are real, but the crisis is not. It is one by the Premier's own making.

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, I would like to say to the member I don't know exactly what point it is that you're trying to make, but I think what we need to look at are the facts. The facts are that we have testing; we are increasing our testing, tracing and contact management by \$1 billion; we're increasing the numbers; we're increasing the testing and contact management.

I think it's also really important to note—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, come to order.

Hon. Christine Elliott: It's really important to note that in cases per 100,000, Ontario is the sixth in order in any province outside the Atlantic bubble. Manitoba has 252 per 100,000. It goes on: Alberta, Quebec, Saskatchewan, BC. Ontario is the lowest, at 56 per 100,000. That indicates our plan is working and we are making achievements.

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The plan that we've put into place now is to give certainty to businesses to make sure that we can take action sooner so that businesses might not have to close. We want to keep businesses operating. We want to keep people in business. We want to keep track of their—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

After years of neglect from the previous government, the wait-list for long-term care in our province has grown to 37,000 people. I know this government has put our seniors at the heart of its strategy for long-term care, so last Friday, I was very pleased to see the minister announce a \$5-million investment to launch the Community Paramedicine for Long-Term Care program in five communities across the province.

Families in my riding of Thornhill have been vocal about better access for quality health care. Can the Minister of Long-Term Care please explain to this House how people like Bernice Polan, who is taking care of her husband at home, can benefit from this investment that will help seniors on the long-term-care wait-list stay safe in the comfort of their own homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member for Thornhill for being such a strong advocate for seniors in her community and across the province

The new long-term-care-focused community paramedicine program will leverage the skills of community paramedics to help reduce hallway health care and provide additional and appropriate care for seniors. Community paramedics provide quality care through at-home visits for our vulnerable population on the wait-list for long-term care, and this service is available 24/7. When they are not there physically, they have remote monitoring so that community paramedics can be in touch with our loved ones at all hours.

Community paramedics can monitor and respond to changing health conditions so that they can be addressed early. Our seniors deserve the best possible care, and our government is working every day to deliver on that commitment.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you to the minister for that response. I'm very glad to hear that proactive steps are being taken to provide quality care for our seniors. It's reassuring to hear that this program will provide better care for seniors in the comfort of their own homes. This new capacity of care will make a big difference in my community of Thornhill, since one of the locations for this innovative pilot project is York region, and I'm sure its positive effects will be felt through the region.

This is exactly the kind of outside-the-box project we need to see more of. Especially in the current COVID-19 environment, seniors can have the peace of mind knowing that they have a safe option to receive quality health care.

As someone who provided optometric care to seniors, I'm asking the minister who provided family health care to seniors for more details on how this will improve patient outcomes across the province for our seniors.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: This new long-term-care-focused community paramedicine program shows our government's commitment to ending hallway health care and to keeping seniors safe and keeping them where they want to be: at home.

The program will be delivered through local paramedic services, providing access to health services 24/7 through

in-home and remote methods, such as online or virtual supports; home visits and in-home testing procedures; ongoing monitoring of changing or escalating conditions to prevent or reduce emergency visits; additional education about healthy living or managing things like chronic diseases; and connections for participants and their families to home care and community supports.

This program is an excellent example of our government being innovative and co-operating with partners across the health care system. We are grateful for these community paramedics who will allow us to serve seniors better.

POVERTY

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I recently hosted a town hall on poverty and those made vulnerable by poverty in my riding of York South–Weston. One participant was Ryan Noble, the executive director of North York Harvest Food Bank.

Since the pandemic began seven months ago, the food bank has seen a 75% increase of need in the community over the same period last year. The North York Harvest Food Bank is doing an incredible job during difficult times. However, as Mr. Noble states, “We cannot reduce food insecurity in a meaningful way without the public, private and non-profit sectors working together to put robust, long-term solutions to poverty in place.”

My question is, what is this government doing to address the needs of communities like mine in York South–Weston that need immediate economic relief?

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

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. As part of Ontario’s efforts to support children, youth and families through the challenging time, our government has provided \$8 million in funding for Feed Ontario. This funding assisted Feed Ontario in producing and distributing pre-packaged hampers to support the great work that food banks across the province have been doing during the COVID-19 outbreak.

We’ve also invested an additional \$1 million in the Student Nutrition Program, so it can continue to run throughout the summer months. During this time, the program has been adapted to include new, local approaches to meal delivery, including distributing grocery cards or farm vouchers; delivering food boxes, meal kits or frozen meals; and supporting food banks at this time. This investment also supported the 14 lead agencies who deliver these services to 4,500 student nutrition programs that address food insecurity in communities across the province. Our government knows that proper nutrition is foundational for success, and we are taking steps to ensure every student has access to healthy food that is served.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Back to the Premier: My riding of York South–Weston and the Toronto northwest have been facing many social and economic challenges only made worse by COVID. The effect of poverty on a community

requires investment and attention to mental health supports, access to housing, employment opportunities and overdue increases to individuals living on social assistance and ODSP. We have non-profit groups like North York Harvest Food Bank and other community groups stepping up to the plate. When exactly is this government going to do their part to address poverty in Ontario in a meaningful way?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you again to the member for the question. I can tell you that myself, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services and my colleagues across this government are very interested in this important issue.

As you know, we launched province-wide consultations at the end of January to inform our new, five-year poverty reduction strategy. This will recognize the impact of COVID-19 on individuals and agencies. I am pleased to share that we are able to extend the online consultations by a month, so more individuals have the opportunity to participate in these consultations.

We heard from people and organizations across the province, including those at heightened risk of poverty, other levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors. They contributed innovative ideas on how to reduce poverty, including how we can continue to encourage job creation and connect people to employment, provide people with the right supports and services, and lower the cost of living to make life more affordable. We will continue to listen to those directly affected by poverty, community organizations, Indigenous partners as we develop a new strategy, which we will look forward to releasing later this year.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Good morning. My question is for the Premier. Today is a dark day for democratic participation. It’s bad enough that the government is attacking the ability of people to determine the best way to democratically conduct local elections; now they are denying people an opportunity to participate in our democratic institutions by ramming Bill 218 through committee with only five hours of public hearings. I’ve had many people reach out to my office, including elected municipal councillors, who have been denied an opportunity to speak at committee. It’s my understanding that only one person will be speaking about ranked ballots in today’s committee hearings.

I don’t understand why the Premier is using the heavy hand of big government to attack local democracy, but will he at least agree to letting people be heard at committee by extending the number of days for committee hearings?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member opposite will know that this House voted on the way forward with respect to this bill.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I'm disappointed that that was such a brief and unsubstantial answer. Twenty-one thousand people in Kingston voted for ranked ballots. Bill 218 overturned their democratic decision. We have an opportunity in this House to pass a unanimous consent motion that would extend the amount of time for committee hearings.

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Speaker, AMO, elected city councillors, numerous people are reaching out because they want their democratic voices to be heard. Will the members opposite, and will the House leader, agree to a unanimous consent motion to extend the hours for committee hearings so that people can be heard, so our democratic institutions can work for the people?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that a motion was brought forward in front of the duly elected members of the Legislative Assembly. It was voted on, and the way forward at this committee was approved by the members of this assembly. So no, I will not overturn the democratic vote and voice of the people on this particular issue.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. Last summer, the Minister of Infrastructure unveiled the community, culture and recreation stream, one of five streams of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program.

My community was thrilled about the potential for more amenities like sports facilities, community spaces, boardwalks and nature trails being built in the growing city of Mississauga. As the local member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga–Lakeshore, I know first-hand that creating spaces for residents to enjoy the outdoors means a lot to so many people, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when we've been asked to stay home as much as possible.

Not only does improving and increasing community spaces encourage a more healthy and active lifestyle, it creates space for families to spend time together and seniors to remain connected with their community.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell my constituents what kind of investments the city of Mississauga can look forward to through the community, culture and recreation stream of ICIP?

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore for your great question. I'd like to remind this House that funding and details around the ICIP program were set by the previous provincial and federal governments in early 2018, prior to the current provincial government's election, and the CCR stream is the second smallest of the ICIP streams.

The CCR stream allows municipalities, not-for-profits, Indigenous communities and others the opportunity to make strategic investments to improve access to the

quality of recreational, cultural and community infrastructure.

Given the fact that Ontario had the largest sub-sovereign debt in the entire western world, you would expect that we would have some great infrastructure to show for it. Unfortunately, we don't. To put it bluntly, the overwhelming infrastructure deficit created from years of neglect by the previous government resulted in this intake being extremely oversubscribed. We received approximately 1,200 applications totalling more than \$10 billion worth of projects for only \$1 billion in joint funding available.

We're doing the best we can with the limited funding available, and I urge all members of this House to join us in urging the federal government for more funding for infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Thank you to the member from Oakville for that answer. In August, the federal Minister of Infrastructure announced the creation of the COVID-19 resilience stream that the province could use to support municipalities in building infrastructure to help rebuild and grow their local economies in the aftermath of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic.

Since then, like many of you, my local municipality has been asking the province to provide them with infrastructure dollars that would help create jobs, grow the economy and get shovels in the ground.

While we were all thrilled to learn that the province has gone to great lengths to reallocate existing funds to offer flexibility to our municipal partners, we would have liked to see new funding from the federal government to support infrastructure needs and ensure that municipalities like the city of Mississauga get their fair share of funding.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us how much funding will be available for my community through the COVID-19 resilience stream, and how much this needed funding will be broken down?

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you for the question. The member is quite right. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 resilience stream required our government to reallocate funding between the current ICIP program. That's why Premier Doug Ford has continued to call on the federal government to end approval delays and invest an additional \$10 billion per year over the next 10 years to get shovels in the ground for much-needed infrastructure projects.

With our strong desire to ensure that our municipal partners can address their infrastructure priorities, the new COVID resilience stream allocates nearly \$15 million to the city of Mississauga and almost \$19 million to the region of Peel, which they will be able to apply toward projects that meet specific criteria.

Our government's contributions to the city of Mississauga do not end there. Funding through the Ministry of Long-Term Care has been invested to build more long-term-care beds and investments to the Ministry of Education to build more and local schools.

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question to the Premier: Last week, the Premier received a letter from Shawn Haggerty, president of UFCW Local 175. UFCW represents many workers on the front lines of the battle against COVID-19—workers in grocery stores, pharmacies, meat processing facilities and health care settings. The major companies, like Loblaws, that employ them called them “heroes” and raised their pay. However, once the cameras were off, these companies ripped away those pay increases. They made record profits while workers were carrying on under the same low-wage conditions.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier stand with the community heroes, these front-line workers, and demand that these highly profitable companies make the pandemic pay increases permanent?

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

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much. I want to give—

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Labour to reply.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for this important question. He is right: All of us in this province owe a debt of gratitude to all of those front-line heroes who have served our families and every single community in this province during the COVID pandemic and beyond.

I, too, want to pay our respects, on behalf of Premier Ford and our government, to those grocery store clerks, to those front-line health care heroes, to those truck drivers, to every single worker, like the half a million people in the construction industry who continue to work during this pandemic.

As I've said repeatedly in this House, we will spare no expense to ensure the health and safety of every worker in this province is protected. I'll have more to say in the supplemental.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the Premier: The Weston family is worth \$9 billion. They could share that enormous wealth the workers are creating and put it in their paycheques as they risk their lives every day in the province of Ontario.

The workers that UFCW Local 175 represents were already providing care in a broken system, yet have kept our health care system functioning under the stress of a pandemic. These workers watched their patients and co-workers get sick and, in many cases, watched them die. Almost one in five of those workers contracting COVID-19 are health care workers.

Despite the lack of PPE, respect and pay, these front-line workers have done everything they can to keep those in health care safe from the virus. It is time to do more than just call these workers heroes. It's time to treat them with the respect heroes deserve.

Will the Premier and this labour minister make substantial permanent pay increases for all health care workers across the entire sector, along with presumptive WSIB coverage?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We'll continue to stand with all workers in this province every single day during this pandemic and as we come out of the pandemic, when that happens.

I'm proud of our government's record when it comes to PSWs, for example. I congratulate the health minister and the Minister of Long-Term Care for boosting the pay of those heroes who are serving our family members and our communities right across this province. But we're working every single day to ensure a strong economy. We're working with our labour partners, with those union leaders, with businesses and workers to ensure that the wealth is spread across this province to every worker.

That's why we've championed getting more young people into the skilled trades. In many cases, these jobs pay over \$100,000 a year. They come with pensions and benefits. Those are the jobs that we're going to continue to create in this province every single day.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. Throughout the pandemic, members of this House on all sides have heard loudly and clearly from entrepreneurs and businesses that their businesses have been battered. In particular, those who own or run businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector have faced devastating challenges. This has been particularly true in the regions that are still in the modified stage 2.

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Earlier this week, our leader, Steven Del Duca, had a chance to participate in a virtual meeting with representatives of the tourism and hospitality sector, which was facilitated by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce. The stories that he heard were heartbreaking, especially from those who run banquet halls and event venues. Many of these women and men are on the brink of disaster, and they explained that they simply have not qualified for the relief measures that have been offered to date.

With a budget scheduled to be released tomorrow, can the minister confirm that Vaughan's and indeed all of Ontario's banquet hall and event venue sector will be genuinely eligible to access desperately needed relief?

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

Mr. Stan Cho: I appreciate the question and the concern from the member from Orléans about the very important hospitality sector. We know they've been hit hard. That's why those who are in the revised stage 2, like the ones mentioned by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, have been provided immediate support of \$300 million to help with their overhead costs and to provide relief with property taxes and with keeping hydro rates low, and other tax cuts.

The member also mentions a very important step in the process to recovery, and that will be the budget we'll table

tomorrow. That is going to outline our additional supports to protect, support and recover in this great province.

We understand that this pandemic has been tough on small businesses, and we're going to make sure we are with them every step of the way.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: My supplemental is also for the Premier.

I'm not sure event hall and banquet hall owners will appreciate that answer. They've been made many promises over the last number of months, and none of them have really come to fruition.

As I mentioned, thousands of entrepreneurs across York region and beyond have effectively been denied the chance to operate their businesses at full capacity. At the same time, they've largely been unable to qualify for the financial relief that had been offered to other sectors of the economy. They see a Premier who seems to have time to give favours to political cronies like Charles McVety, a known bigot, and yet doesn't have time to support them and their families, who own event venues and banquet halls.

When will this government do the right thing and deliver immediate financial relief to the tourism and hospitality sector, and in particular, Ontario's banquet hall and event venue owners?

Mr. Stan Cho: I appreciate the member expressing his concern for a very important economic sector in Ontario. But I do want to remind the member that it's his leader, Steven Del Duca, and his Liberal Party who listened to the Liberal insiders; not our government benches.

We are listening to the hard-working businesses around this province. That's why tomorrow, when we table our budget for 2020, we will announce the next phase of Ontario's plan to make available every necessary resource to continue to protect people's health going forward, and talk about the supports that we will expand on from our government to provide those still facing financial hardships due to the pandemic that relief. It's going to be a plan that talks about our next steps, about protecting and supporting Ontarians and making sure that we, once again, not only recover but thrive.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier.

From March to July, recipients of ODSP and OW could receive a small top-up payment of \$100 or \$200 due to the pandemic. Since ODSP and OW rates place recipients well below the poverty line and do not keep up with inflation and the cost of living, additional assistance would normally be welcome news. But the Daily Bread Food Bank reports that one third of their ODSP clients didn't receive the benefit, either because they had no idea about the top-ups or because they found out about it much too late.

With COVID-19 cases higher than ever before, can the Premier tell us when ODSP and OW top-ups will be reinstated and when he'll finally raise the rates above the poverty level?

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

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question.

Over the last several months, the COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on communities. Last week, in the House, I announced that more than 250,000 recipients and families received the emergency benefits that we announced back in March as a temporary measure to help individuals who may have faced additional costs during the lockdown. In fact, 41,000 people have received the discretionary benefits, so people are widely accessing the program.

As we continue to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, we will also need to be ready to assist those who have left the workforce as a result of the impacts of COVID-19, and those who are able to work to find meaningful employment. That's why we are moving forward to modernize the social assistance program through the recovery and renewal program that will improve access to employment training supports, centralize the delivery and modernize and digitize services and resources.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Frankly, that answer is just not good enough. People with disabilities who live in poverty are already more susceptible to getting COVID-19. This Conservative government should be doing everything they can to help people at risk and struggling.

I'm going to remind them that in their last budget, they cut \$1 billion from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; \$720 million of that was a direct cut to social services.

Instead, this Conservative government is looking to hire 17 ODSP fraud inspectors, who will be paid up to \$1,600 per week—\$1,600 per week. For perspective, ODSP recipients receive less than that for an entire month. That's almost \$1.5 million that could help people receiving ODSP, people with disabilities, rather than trying to kick people off crucial support during a pandemic.

When will the Premier stop attacking people with disabilities living in deep poverty and provide them the help that they desperately need?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for the question. We provided new direction to ODSP and OW staff to ensure individuals on social assistance keep much more of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit than they would have under the current rules.

Recognizing these are unprecedented times and that the CERB was designed to replace employment income, our social assistance programs treated it as such. This change allowed existing clients to partially stack the CERB and social assistance benefits while maintaining their health and other benefits. Most individuals on social assistance who received the CERB saw an increase in their monthly income as a result of this change.

We recognize the economic impact that the COVID-19 outbreak has had on many Ontarians, and the new federal recovery benefits, along with employment insurance, are

designed to support individuals as we reopen businesses and they transition back—

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

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Colleges and Universities. It's not a secret that the pandemic has hurt our economy, and we know that Ontarians are not impacted equally. Instead of trying to prop up the Premier, who is rewarding his friend Charles McVety with degree-granting privileges in spite of the serious concerns raised in this House about human rights violations, this minister should be focused on more urgent priorities.

Stats Canada reported that the youth unemployment rate is the slowest to recover across Canada, reaching a high of close to 30% in May. Part-time and summer employment opportunities have disappeared, leaving students struggling to make tuition. Jobs in restaurants, tourism and entertainment venues have vanished due to the virus.

Speaker, can the minister commit to enhancing OSAP and investing in youth employment and training programs so that our young people can be brought into the economic recovery rather than spending—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister to reply.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond. Certainly, that member opposite, as a former Minister of Colleges and Universities, has a very clear appreciation of the process and how broken it was and what we inherited as a government to have to fix that process.

When we talk about these issues we've been dealing with for the last three weeks, we have painstakingly gone through and described a process and how there is no ability to meddle with that process. I'm not sure why the members opposite want us to meddle with that process. I'm not sure why they think it's appropriate to interfere with independent advisory agencies and boards. I don't know why they think it's appropriate to interfere. Perhaps it's just the way they like to do things. But let's move on.

Let's think about this for a moment: Imagine for a second that we were to follow their process, what that would mean in the province of Ontario if we did not have—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: This minister needs to stop fixating on Charles McVety. There are more important things that you and your ministry need to focus on. I want to remind you that the first act when you came into office was to cut a billion dollars from student financial aid and from the OSAP program. Young people in this province need that support now and they need it reinstated.

Will you, in your upcoming budget, reinstate the billion dollars that you have cut from student financial aid and OSAP, so that young people, students and women can

participate in retraining and upskilling so that they can get back into the economy and fully participate? Why are you spending so much time on your friend when there are so many other broad concerns that really need this government's time and attention, so Ontario can experience—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response?

Hon. Ross Romano: Speaker, I am proud of the work that our colleges and universities have been doing throughout this entire pandemic and throughout these last few years. It's incredible work that we have been doing. They have been doing such better work because we made changes to issues like red tape, tremendous amounts of red tape that that member opposite, as Minister of Colleges and Universities, permitted to exist.

Imagine that it took three years to create a program. Imagine that for a second. How can you stand by and be okay with that? Three years to develop a program that you would want to give to your colleges and your universities so that they could deliver labour-market-responsive programs to their students.

Mr. Speaker, that was why we changed the process. That's why we created a clear and transparent process. That is what continually happens here in this government. I'm not sure why the member opposite thinks it's appropriate to meddle with the affairs of independent schools and boards and agencies.

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À L'ÉDUCATION EDUCATION FUNDING

M. Guy Bourgouin: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. La semaine passée, le membre d'Algoma-Manitoulin et moi avons parlé avec des enseignants, des directeurs d'école et des conseils scolaires francophones dans le nord de la province. Nous avons entendu que les enseignants et la direction sont frustrés et épuisés, non par leur travail, mais à cause d'un manque de direction de la part du ministre de l'Éducation. On parle d'équipement de protection manquant, des écoles qui débordent et même des fenêtres ouvertes dans les écoles et les autobus quand on a déjà eu des journées de moins 15 dans le Nord.

Monsieur le Président, le premier ministre va-t-il avouer que l'accès à l'éducation francophone dans le nord de la province est devenu un défi à cause de sa mauvaise gestion, oui ou non?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We obviously value very much the challenges in remote and northern parts of the province. That's why we enhanced funding early in the pandemic for them.

We've been working very closely with our northern school boards. I actually was very proud to join some of the virtual learning experiences within one of our school boards in northern Ontario and see how they have adapted and pivoted, and ensured quality learning amid this pandemic.

I'm grateful for the work of our educators, doing incredible things in very difficult circumstances. In this province, we have over 2,700 more teachers. In northern Ontario, amongst our English and French and public and Catholic boards, we have seen more net hiring of teachers, of custodians, as well as of virtual principals to support those students that are online.

We'll continue to make the investments in these regions in broadband connectivity, which is a pivotal priority for this government—over \$300 million province-wide. We're working with the federal government to leverage their dollars. There's more to do in this respect to ensure that Internet access is accessible and available for every Ontarian.

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

The House recessed from 1133 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. John Fraser: 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 (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive Quadrant Consulting Services Inc.;

Bill Pr30, An Act to revive 2372830 Ontario Inc.

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

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC HEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (IN HONOUR OF DR. SHEELA BASRUR), 2020

LOI DE 2020

SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE (EN HOMMAGE À LA DRE SHEELA BASRUR)

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 227, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to the positions of Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health and related matters / Projet de loi 227, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne les postes de médecin-hygiéniste

en chef et de médecin-hygiéniste en chef adjoint et des questions connexes.

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 for Nickel Belt care to explain her bill briefly?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Public Health Accountability Act (In Honour of Dr. Sheela Basrur) will do two things: (1) It will make the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health an independent officer of the Legislature, and (2) the bill will create a select committee of the Legislature to hear directly from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and allow the Chief Medical Officer of Health to answer questions.

SKYPRIDE TRAVEL & TOURS LTD. ACT, 2020

Ms. French moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr32, An Act to revive Skypride Travel & Tours Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1040062 ONTARIO INCORPORATED ACT, 2020

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive 1040062 Ontario Incorporated

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): Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FRONT-LINE WORKERS

Hon. Monte McNaughton: This year, as we all know, is a year like no other. COVID-19 continues to impact the lives of each worker across our province, their families, their friends and their communities. Every person across every profession has felt this pandemic. However, there is one group of workers who felt COVID-19's impact harder than anyone else, and they are our front-line workers.

First and foremost, I want to commend them for their service.

To all of them: Know that you have our government's heartfelt thanks. Since the pandemic began, thousands of you have kept our province running. You wake up early and you get to bed late. You roll up your sleeves and get the job done, no matter how tough. You are heroes who don't wear capes, but you are leading the fight against COVID-19. I would like to say all of your names individually in the House today, not only some of your professions, but obviously there are time constraints. You are our health care workers, grocery store clerks, truckers, bus drivers, construction workers, power and water workers, postal and delivery workers, emergency personnel and many, many more.

Mr. Speaker, we owe those on the front line our gratitude. Ontario couldn't function without them.

To these moms and dads who put in a hard day's work: Our government stands with you, and we have your back.

When every worker is healthy and safe, we are all stronger. Business, labour and government are all on the same team. We all share the same goal of keeping our workers safe.

COVID-19 has created heightened vigilance for health and safety at all workplaces in Ontario. From the very beginning, we brought labour leaders and contractors together to keep key construction going. That includes residential construction projects critical to thousands of families who need a roof over their heads. It includes essential health care projects like hospitals and COVID-19 assessment centres, on which we enabled construction to proceed 24 hours a day, to get these in place where we needed them the most.

In this chamber, COVID-19 has also given us the opportunity to come together. Throughout the pandemic, our government has worked to protect the health and well-being of every person in Ontario. That's why the very first measure our government introduced—a measure I'm pleased to note received unanimous support in this House—was to bring in job-protected leave for workers affected by the pandemic. We were among the first in Canada to pass such progressive legislation, enabling leaves longer than any sick leave period, with no sick notes required. Our new leave makes it clear that if you stay home to self-isolate or to care for your loved ones, you won't be fired. It makes sure nobody has to choose between their job and their health.

I also want to recognize that, by and large, businesses across the province have been stepping up and doing their part to fight COVID-19. Dealing with a pandemic means that everyone—from the boardroom to the shop floor—is learning new knowledge and skills to protect workers on the job, and our government is here to support them every step of the way. We developed more than 200 workplace resources in consultation with our health and safety partners to help employers protect their workers. We have developed a guide to help businesses use these resources to create a COVID-19 workplace safety plan, customized to their own circumstances. To date, there have been over one million views of our safety page, where these resources appear. That website is ontario.ca/COVIDsafety.

Ontario businesses have taken these guidelines seriously. They are facing unprecedented challenges with many unknowns, and I thank them for keeping their workers and their customers safe.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing everything in our power to keep workers safe. We have doubled the capacity of Ontario's health and safety call centre from 25 phone lines to 50, assigned more than 50 employment standards officers to help businesses know what to do, and deployed 30 health and safety specialists to the field to educate workers. To further support businesses, we have been conducting proactive meetings and calls in various sectors to raise awareness of what is needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

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Unfortunately, while the vast majority of employers are doing the right thing and ensuring that their workplaces are safe and clean, we know that there are some bad actors. In addition to providing our best prevention advice, our health and safety inspectors are out visiting workplaces. Each and every day they are checking that employers are doing all that they can to keep their workers safe.

Since March 11, our inspectors have conducted more than 24,700 COVID-19-related workplace visits, including more than 2,400 visits to health care workplaces. To ensure precautions are being taken to keep workers safe, our inspectors have issued more than 23,500 orders during COVID-19-related workplace visits. Our inspectors have been working long hours—days, nights, weekends—to ensure that workplaces are complying with occupational health and safety laws. I want to thank them for stepping up and doing this important work.

We recently announced a recruitment campaign to increase our team of front-line inspectors by nearly 25% to protect more workers during the pandemic. We are currently hiring more than 100 inspectors to help enforce health and safety laws in Ontario's workplaces. These new recruits will begin their training later this fall. Under our government, there will be more inspectors on the ground than ever before in Ontario's history.

While I have spoken so far about helping people stay safe on the job, we all know that this pandemic has caused numerous job losses across our economy. As many as 2.2 million people across Ontario had their hours reduced or eliminated entirely as a result of COVID-19. These hard-working people lost their income. They lost something else, Mr. Speaker: They lost a source of dignity and pride.

For those who are eager to earn their next paycheque, we are by your side. For those who want to join us in building Ontario, we're here to support you. My message to those struggling is clear: Our government will help you get back to work.

Prior to COVID-19, under the leadership of our Premier, Ontario created over 300,000 net new jobs. We know that the workplace and labour market have changed, unfortunately, due to COVID-19. This is why we are doing everything in our power to support job seekers in Ontario. As businesses and communities recover from COVID-19, it is more important than ever to prepare workers for the challenges of tomorrow.

Overall, we are investing more than \$1 billion this fiscal year to support employment services, training programs and apprenticeships. We also recently announced a \$37-million investment in innovative training projects across the province. They will help people gain in-demand skills quickly. And we have committed \$100 million in funding through Employment Ontario for programs for workers affected by the COVID-19 outbreak.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we are:

- improving the delivery of Employment Ontario by focusing on the local needs of communities and workers;

- providing a new, \$7.5-million Ontario Tools Grant to assist new apprentices with purchasing the equipment they need to help start their careers, and forgiving \$10.6 million in outstanding loans;

- committing \$107.6 million to literacy and adult learning programs that help people prepare for jobs;

- investing \$3 million to provide, for the very first time, free online health and safety training courses for up to 100,000 job seekers and workers to help them get essential qualifications;

- working with industry, as well as research and education partners, to develop talent for the auto sector through thousands of internships, training opportunities and other supports; and

- developing Ontario’s first-ever workforce development action plan to ensure that workers can learn the skills to find good jobs and that businesses can find the talented workers they need, now and in the future.

Our recovery plan is helping to bring government, businesses, workers and communities together to rebuild a stronger Ontario.

Looking forward, we will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario to monitor the status of COVID-19. We will take the steps needed to support businesses in staying open and keeping their workers safe.

As Ontario recovers, we will also continue to help job seekers acquire the in-demand skills that lead to fulfilling, well-paid jobs, such as those offered by the skilled trades. We will roll out training and employment supports in the coming months that reflect the individual needs of local communities.

Having jobs to come back to after COVID-19 also means keeping businesses afloat.

We have also extended the pause on temporary layoffs becoming permanent until the end of the year for non-unionized employees and employers affected by COVID-19. This extension will give businesses more time to reopen and return to full operations, helping them stay viable as they recover.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, since day one, our government has made it clear that everyone must do their part when it comes to responding to the COVID-19 outbreak. Together, we can win the battle against COVID-19 and create a brighter future for everyone in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Interjection: That’s all you got?

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the minister.

I also want to reflect my colleague’s comments: That’s all you have? It’s frustrating.

My background is in health and safety. I have more than 17 years in health and safety. I was the chair of our health and safety committee. I had a full-time job representing workers. I was the co-chair of operations representing surface plant workers across Ontario for a mining company.

This report and this statement—I was notified yesterday, but it was shared with me during the speech. The cornerstone of health and safety is the IRS, the internal responsibility system. That’s where the employer and the worker and the Ministry of Labour work together. It isn’t done covertly; it isn’t hidden from us.

While preparing for this, I thought about what possibly could be in this. Because we’re in the midst of COVID-19, I thought surely it was about saving jobs. It’s about safety, which I appreciate. I appreciate the offer to hire more inspectors.

I want to give a shout-out to my friend Ryan St. George, and I want to give a shout-out to Shaun Carter—two inspectors in Sudbury who do wonderful work.

I want to go back to the IRS, the internal responsibility system. I want to go back to risk matrixes and evaluating risk and hazard safety. These are tried-and-true models that we use to evaluate health and safety. The decisions that this Conservative government is making in terms of protecting children at school don’t follow any risk matrix that I’ve ever seen. This model that goes towards helping people in long-term care doesn’t go towards helping, or any safety-risk matrix that I’ve ever seen, Speaker.

In long-term care, we’re looking at about 2,000 long-term-care deaths. We’re having the pandemic spread all across Ontario.

These outbreaks of COVID-19 in the schools—when the Minister of Labour talks about supporting workers, he overlooks the fact that they passed Bill 195, which took collective bargaining rights away from workers permanently. For more than a year past the expiry of COVID-19, workers do not have a voice. They don’t have to follow their collective agreement.

I want to share what Mike Bellerose from Sudbury shared. Mike is the president of CUPE Local 4705. He said this bill has been used to extend measures shifting the hours of some of the city’s outdoor works. “The employer has changed their hours of work. When they ought to be working for the most part 7-3:30 or 8-4:30, the employer has them working afternoons.” That has nothing to do with COVID-19. That’s not COVID-19 prevention. That’s an abuse of power, and this is the government backing them up.

We should be talking about small business. As the government knows, small business represents 95% of all employers in Ontario. They employ 28% of Ontario’s workers. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business survey results show that only 64% of businesses are fully open in Ontario—that’s the lowest rate across Canada; 34% said they can’t survive less than a year on their current revenues; 17% are actively winding down or

considering bankruptcy; 56% said that rent relief significantly increased their odds of staying open. I want to remind everybody that the Conservative government didn't provide any rent relief. We proposed a 75% rent subsidy. They didn't do that.

I went for a walk this morning, Speaker, two blocks from here. In about 10 minutes, I saw 12 businesses that had closed their doors and shuttered: Borgo alterations; Specchio; Acupuncture Center Toronto; Starbucks; Burgs and Burgundys; Joni Korean restaurant; Mr. Sub; Roberts Gallery; Warriors, which had been open for 30 years; the Draft House; So Chic; and Hair Story. That's in a 10-minute walk outside of Queen's Park.

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Some 1.1 million Ontarians have lost their jobs since the shutdown; another 1.1 million have had their hours sharply reduced.

There's so much to criticize that I'm going to run out of time.

I want to share a story from Amy Barbe about the need for child care. She wrote a letter to the minister. I'm quoting parts of it, because I have less than a minute:

"I simply want to make sure those concerns are clear and being heard regarding job-protected leave since children are going to be sent home for all symptoms.... I am not aware of any programs for parents who just can't bring their kids anywhere because they have a cold....

"This would essentially mean that with three kids, one being asthmatic with allergies in JK, another in full-day daycare, I will be working very little this winter.... I cannot work from home, which means sooner or later I will be earning no income."

In this ministerial statement, there's no comment about that.

With the last 10 seconds, I want to talk about all the money that was committed. Some \$31 million was committed to northern and rural broadband infrastructure; of that, \$0 was spent. Talk is cheap.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My time is limited so I'm going to get right to the point.

I want to first of all thank all the front-line workers who have been heroes during this pandemic.

While we've all voiced our support and respect for front-line workers, we need to back words up with action. The minister talked about the early legislation we passed for job-protected leave and a temporary ban on routine sick notes. I want to say today—and I hope I have the minister's support on this—that we have an opportunity with my private member's bill, Bill 200, to permanently ban the use of routine sick notes. If we're going to show respect for workers, if we're going to talk about workers being heroes, we need to trust them when they say they're sick, and we need to follow the best public health advice, which is for workers to stay home, to rest and recover, and to not require them to go to a doctor's office and potentially get others sick.

Right before I came in here, I met with the Decent Work and Health Network, a network of doctors and nurses and other health care providers who said to me that if we're

going to show respect for workers, we need to trust them. We need to make sure that they don't put extra strain on the health care system by requiring sick notes. We also need to have a real conversation about paid sick leave, so that those workers, especially those low-wage workers who cannot afford to stay home, have the opportunity to stay home and recover.

Let's back up our respect for workers with action for workers.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I want to recognize the important contributions of our front-line workers, those who continue to keep our communities moving throughout the pandemic—the grocery store workers, the transit workers, those who are on the front line of health care, and all of those workers who braved the COVID-19 pandemic and put their lives on the line for all of us.

Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has upended so many lives and disrupted the economy. We know that the impacts are not felt equally. The second wave is keeping thousands of Ontarians from resuming work due to the fact that the shutdowns are ongoing. The second wave and the government's lagging response are keeping workers in the hospitality and service sectors from earning a living.

It's the Ontarians who are already most economically vulnerable who are most impacted by the ongoing economic recession. Women, BIPOC and youth have consistently been the slowest groups to resume pre-pandemic levels of employment. It's clear that this government needs to invest in a job strategy that will bring everyone into the economic recovery. That means reversing the deep cuts that they've made to OSAP so students who have missed out on summer employment can make their tuition. It will take training and reskilling programs for people to adapt to the changing nature of work. It means stepping up for entrepreneurs so that they can have the tools that they need to succeed—especially for women and for BIPOC.

First and foremost, the province needs to get the spread of COVID-19 under control. There can be no recovery if Ontarians can't do their jobs safely, if they don't have the consumer confidence to participate in the economy—and that confidence simply isn't there, because this government pursued a failing strategy of refusing to invest in early testing and contact-tracing infrastructure. We're seeing high positivity rates in Ontario and record-breaking numbers of positive cases. Shockingly, this includes schools. Teachers at the Glamorgan Junior Public School in Scarborough refuse to work because of the virus that is spreading throughout their school, and there are even now reports that one teacher is in ICU due to COVID-19. Schools lack a consistent standard of when to close when outbreaks happen, and now workers have had the burden of taking matters into their own hands to keep themselves and students safe. Despite this, the province is raising the bar on COVID-19 restrictions, which allows the virus to continue to circulate in hot spots, like in my community of Scarborough.

To quote a Star reporter: "This government failed to upgrade testing and contact tracing and long-term-care staffing in the summer, failed to intervene when case

counts started to climb in early September, and has now decided to move the goalposts as far towards the horizon as they dare.”

With \$9.3 billion in reserve and unallocated funds, we need Ontarians to have the investments in things to make sure that they return to work safely and that our communities stay safe—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I seek unanimous consent for the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to extend beyond 6 p.m. to accommodate the witnesses scheduled for presentations on Bill 218.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Hamilton Mountain is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to extend beyond 6 p.m. to accommodate the witnesses scheduled for presentations on Bill 218. Agreed? I heard some noes.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: It’s a pleasure to present this petition on behalf of Daniel Oster from my riding of Davenport. He presented this to me. It reads as follows:

“Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting our education system is vital to our province’s future;

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

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take credits online with as many as 35 students in each course;

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

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

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

I support this petition. I’ll affix my signature and hand it to the Clerks.

ACCESS TO PERSONAL HEALTH RECORDS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Personal Health Information Protection Act ... currently allows health information custodians to charge a fee that does not exceed the prescribed amount or the amount of reasonable cost recovery, where no amount is prescribed; and

“Whereas given no amount has been prescribed, the amount of ‘reasonable cost recovery’ has been left to the discretion of health information custodians; and

“Whereas in 2006 the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care proposed a regulation for fee enforcement under subsection 54(11) of the act; and

“Whereas in 2008 the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (the IPCO) submitted a recommendation for amendment of the act to include enactment of a fee regulation that is substantially similar to the regulation drafted by the ministry in 2006; and

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“Whereas the IPCO’s recommendation is based on the numerous complaints from members of the public about fees charged by health information custodians for access to personal health records; and

“Whereas health information custodians continue to charge exorbitant fees for access to personal health records, against the recommendation of the IPCO; and

“Whereas the Center for Patient Protection recently cited this as one of the most common public complaints; and

“Whereas inaccessible fees continue to (1) be a widespread barrier to access of personal health records; (2) cause undue hardship and stress to the public; and (3), inundate a tribunal that could otherwise allocate its resources to other matters.

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

“That the government of Ontario enact the ministry’s ... fee regulation so as to enable hassle-free access to personal health records, as well as transparency and accountability of health care institutions.”

I affix my signature, of course, and give it to an usher.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled “Affordable Housing.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to the usher to deliver to the table.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Robin Martin: I have a petition entitled “Pass Bill 215, Main Street Recovery Act, 2020.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s downtown businesses have experienced much of the negative economic impact of COVID-19; and

“Whereas our downtown businesses are small mom-and-pop shops, employ local citizens and invest in our communities; and

“Whereas our main street businesses have faced unique challenges through the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“Whereas in that same vein, these businesses face particular challenges such as costs associated with acquiring personal protective equipment and expanding their e-commerce capabilities; and

“Whereas if passed, the Main Street Recovery Act, 2020 would offer a grant of up to \$1,000 for eligible main street small businesses, connect them with Ontario’s 47 small business enterprise centres, help them grow their businesses online, and establish Ontario’s small business recovery web page to provide single-window access to small business supports;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass Bill 215, the Main Street Recovery Act.”

Of course, I support this petition. I will affix my signature and pass it to the Clerks.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Dr. Kusnierczyk and Dr. Leroux from Chelmsford Eyecare for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Petition to Save Eye Care in 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;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

GESTION DES SITUATIONS D’URGENCE

M. John Fraser: « Pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario concernant la table de commandement du COVID-19 pour comparaître devant le comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d’urgence :

« Attendu que le comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d’urgence a été investi du mandat de fournir aux Ontariennes et Ontariens la justification du gouvernement pour prolonger les ordonnances d’urgence COVID-19;

« Attendu que les ordonnances ont été prolongées trois fois depuis la formation du comité, le plus récemment jusqu’au 21 novembre;

« Attendu que les Ontariennes et Ontariens attendent de la transparence de leur gouvernement;

« Attendu que les Ontariennes et Ontariens méritent d’entendre quels conseils le premier ministre et son gouvernement reçoivent, quand cet avis a été donné et les preuves qui sous-tendent ces recommandations;

« Attendu que les Ontariennes et Ontariens devraient entendre directement les membres de la table de commandement du COVID-19 et avoir la possibilité de poser des questions sur leurs conseils et recommandations;

« Attendu que le premier ministre désigne, comme il est en son pouvoir, des membres de la table de commandement du COVID-19 pour comparaître devant le comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d’urgence sous forme d’audience publique pour faire une brève présentation sur les conseils fournis au premier ministre et son gouvernement, suivies de questions des membres du comité;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario comme suit :

« De demander au premier ministre de désigner les membres de la table de commandement du COVID-19 pour comparaître devant le comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations d’urgence sous la forme d’une audience publique lors de la prochaine réunion prévue. »

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Burch: This petition is entitled “Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting our education system is vital to our province’s future;

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

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take credits online with as many as 35 students in each course;

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

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

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

I affix my signature and will get it to the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: I have a petition entitled “Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford’s new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign this petition and will forward it to the Clerk.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Chris Glover: My petition is entitled “Stop Ford’s Education Cuts.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Doug Ford’s new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and pass it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Shantel Howard Smith from Lively in my riding for these petitions, called “Pandemic Pay.

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

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

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

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

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

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

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

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Agathe Leduc from Val Caron in my riding for these petitions. They read as follows:

“Gas prices.

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

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

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Tanya McCaffrey from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They read 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 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, Speaker, will affix my name to it, and send it to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for petitions this afternoon.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order? The government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, if you seek it, I’m sure you’ll find unanimous consent to waive notice for ballot item 31.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to waive notice for ballot item number 31. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOVING ONTARIO FAMILY LAW

FORWARD ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 FAISANT AVANCER

LE DROIT DE LA FAMILLE EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 4, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 207, An Act to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act, the Courts of Justice Act, the Family Law Act and other Acts respecting various family law matters / Projet de loi 207, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l’enfance, la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur le droit de la famille et d’autres lois en ce qui concerne diverses questions de droit de la famille.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I’m pleased to have the opportunity to speak at third reading today on the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act. This legislation, if passed, will build on the progress that has already been made during the COVID-19 pandemic in modernizing our outdated justice system, and will reinforce our government’s commitment to continue moving towards a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system for all Ontarians.

I know that the Attorney General went over some of those initiatives when he kicked off third reading debate yesterday, but I’ll just reiterate a few of them; some of the

most impressive moves, maybe, that have been made so far:

- the use of remote and virtual hearings, including 50,000 hearings at the Superior Court of Justice alone;

- allowing virtual commissioning services;

- online court case searches;

- an emergency order allowing for virtual witnessing of wills and powers of attorney;

- the ability to submit and respond to documents by email for Small Claims Court matters;

- the ability to dispute traffic tickets and other provincial offences remotely by audio or video, where available;

- expanding the number of civil and Family Court documents that can now be submitted online;

- the ability to obtain a certified copy of a notice of calculation or recalculation for child support online;

- introducing the ability to file for joint or simple divorce online;

- and we are gradually rolling out access to Thomson Reuters CaseLines, a document-sharing e-hearing platform that supports both remote and in-person hearings.

These are all big changes that happened because of necessity, because COVID-19 required us to find new ways to keep the justice system functioning amid a global pandemic.

I just want to take a moment to commend the Attorney General and his team and everyone working in Ontario’s court system, as well as those in the legal profession, for their hard work in overcoming the significant challenges of the past few months and keeping the justice system running. And I’m sure it wasn’t easy. It is never easy to change decades of tradition on a dime. From my time as a practising trial lawyer, I know how difficult it can be for a change to take place in the justice system, the legal profession or the courts, and I know some of my colleagues know that as well.

But now that we’ve all seen the benefits of these new technologies, these new ways of operating—and not just in the justice sector, but more broadly across society, in health care, in business, in government services—it’s hard to imagine us going back to the old way of doing things. That’s really, I think, how we should always be thinking. We should always be looking to find new and more effective and more efficient ways of doing things, and not just during a once-in-a-century pandemic. Doing something the way it’s always been done just because that’s the way it’s always been done isn’t really good enough anymore.

Now, if the old way of doing something proves to be the best way, I’m not saying that we should change it just for the sake of change. I’m really the first person, probably, to recognize and respect the wisdom in many of our traditions, but we should always be making the evaluation. For far too long, that’s something that has been missing from our justice system. The reality is that many of the policies and procedures that govern how our courts and our justice system operate have not been reviewed or

revised in decades, and we all know that that is the case across all areas of law, be it civil, criminal or family law.

But the bill that we're considering today focuses on modernizing our approach to family law, and so I'm going to try to focus my remarks on that. It's a field that I've watched for many years with great interest. As an MPP, it's probably the field of law that my constituency office gets the most calls about, and I'm sure that goes for other members as well.

For many people who interact with our family law system, this may be the only interaction with the justice system that they have ever had or ever will have in their life. That interaction often happens at the time of, or as a result of, some of life's most significant and difficult personal events. They can cause severe mental or emotional strain. It's not really an easy time for anyone involved.

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Because of this, we all know that family law is an area of law where there are not always easy answers or quick fixes. Every disagreement, obviously, has two sides to it. We need to do what we can to make our system responsive, easier to navigate and more accessible for the people of Ontario. I know that the Ministry of the Attorney General has been focused on this goal for some time—really, long before the pandemic forced the issue even further.

The parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General, the member for Durham, led a review of this very field starting in July 2019, I believe, exploring ways to simplify family and civil court processes, reduce costs and delays for families and find pathways to earlier dispute resolution. She consulted widely with sector stakeholders, collected their experiences, their suggestions and their ideas and brought them back to the minister to move forward.

In the time since those consultations, our government has already taken some steps to introduce or expand several online services to help people resolve their family law issues outside of the courtroom. As I mentioned earlier in my remarks, one of the most significant changes here is the expansion of the online service that allows spouses who agree on ending their marriage to file a joint or simple divorce application online.

Family law has not been ignored. When I spoke of the filing of documents electronically, more than 150 court documents can now be filed online in any of the new or existing family proceedings in the Superior or Ontario Courts of Justice. Speaking as a former lawyer who acted and represented people in those courts, I can say that that is a revolution in how courts operate, but it's about time.

The government has also been working with the Superior Court of Justice to expand the important dispute resolution officer program, where people involved in family proceedings are provided with an early evaluation of their case by a neutral third party. Dispute resolution officers can help families to narrow and identify the issues in their case and to facilitate an earlier settlement. They mainly deal with requests to change existing child and spousal support orders. The program is currently operating in Toronto, Barrie, Brampton, Durham, Milton, Newmarket, Hamilton, London and St. Catharines, and I

believe the Attorney General mentioned in his remarks earlier that it will be expanding to Kitchener and Welland as well.

But there are, of course, other initiatives proposed in this bill that require legislative change to happen. Let's take a look at some of those.

Earlier in my remarks I mentioned the online Child Support Service, which makes it easier and faster for families to set up or change child support payments without having to go to court. This legislation addresses an issue where someone who uses our online Child Support Service is required to get certified copies of their notices of calculation or recalculation that were issued by the service. This tends to be an issue that comes up when a parent or guardian wants to register, enforce or change child support amounts outside of the province of Ontario.

The Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act would provide a way for parents and caregivers to obtain certified copies of their child support notices that are issued through the online Child Support Service so that they can manage or enforce those amounts outside of Ontario. Really, it's a simple solution to a simple problem, but one that requires legislative change and will make a difference for families.

Speaker, the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act also aims at addressing the process of family law appeal routes. Three different courts hear family cases in Ontario: the Ontario Court of Justice, the Superior Court of Justice, and the Family Court branch of the Superior Court of Justice. Each has its own appeal processes, and having different routes to appeal a case can make it difficult for even lawyers to determine where to appeal a matter. It's confusing. So one can only imagine the challenge that is faced by those who seek to navigate that system without legal representation, or those who don't speak English as their first language, or those who face other barriers in navigating and accessing our justice system.

To make the family law appeal system easier to navigate, the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act proposes amendments to the Courts of Justice Act to make it easier to understand the appeal routes for family law cases. It will make it easier for parents to understand where to appeal their cases, regardless of where the matter was initially heard. It will help people understand the family law appeal process and it will help them to reach final decisions faster.

I should mention that another important measure to help people navigate the system has been the establishment of the unified Family Courts. The unified Family Courts streamline Family Court processes by ensuring Ontario families only have to go to one court to resolve their legal issues. Currently, we have 25 unified Family Court locations in Ontario, including eight new locations that were added last year in Belleville, Picton, Pembroke, Kitchener, Welland, Simcoe, Cayuga and St. Thomas.

Our government continues to work towards future expansion of the unified Family Courts to other communities across the province, and we will continue to seek a commitment from our federal counterparts to make this a reality. But we really need the federal government's

support in accelerating this project. This is something we are definitely willing and wanting to accelerate. But even if someone doesn't have a unified Family Court in their area, if they have to go through the three courts that I mentioned, the proposed changes in this bill that I just spoke of will make it far easier for them to navigate the family law system going forward.

Additionally, there are changes proposed in this bill to bring Ontario's law in line with the recent changes made by the federal government to the Divorce Act, which will come into force on March 1, 2021. The federal changes and the corresponding changes to provincial law proposed in the bill before us today align with the province's overarching goal of making the justice system more accessible, responsive and resilient. This includes the evolution of language to ensure consistency, using terms like "decision-making responsibility," "parenting time" or "contact," instead of words like "access" and "custody." These simple linguistic changes will make family law more accessible and will make it at least slightly, I think, less confrontational. That, obviously, is a salubrious change.

It also includes a more comprehensive list of the factors for the court to consider when determining the best interests of the child, as set out in the federal Divorce Act. It asks the court to consider (1) the stage of a child's development; (2) the nature of the relationship with the child's parents, siblings and grandparents; (3) the history of the child's care; and (4) plans for child care—all factors to consider when determining the best interests of the child, which is probably one of the most important things that the family law courts consider. These are all important factors, so aligning Ontario's test with the updated criteria in the federal Divorce Act just makes sense.

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The Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act also includes proposed changes to ensure that Ontario's family laws are equipped to address family violence better. It provides greater clarity regarding what constitutes violence by adopting the definition of "family violence" and "family member" as set out in the federal Divorce Act.

It also provides more clarity and guidance around circumstances that require the relocation of a child by adopting a statutory framework for when a person with decision-making authority relocates with or without a child.

It adopts the obligations in the federal Divorce Act that encourage the use of alternative dispute resolution processes whenever appropriate, as well as the duties of courts to consider the existence of other proceedings.

The proposed changes in the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act ensure that Ontario statutes, including Ontario's Children's Law Reform Act, are consistent with federal law. They ensure family law in the province of Ontario is clear, helping ensure timely results for families and helping reduce the burden on families and on our court system.

Ontario, of course, is not the only jurisdiction in Canada grappling with the challenge of updating their family law

legislation to align with the recent federal changes to the Divorce Act. Alberta, British Columbia and Nova Scotia have all introduced similar changes to post-divorce parenting, while Saskatchewan has passed amendments to its own Children's Law Act to align it with changes to the federal Divorce Act.

I'm pleased to support these changes proposed in the bill as well as the others that I haven't had the opportunity to touch on today in my remarks. I hope the rest of my colleagues will consider supporting the bill, as well.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: Through you, Speaker, thank you to the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. She's obviously also very knowledgeable on the subject. We believe this is a good change.

My question is about funding. For decades, access to legal aid help in family law has been getting worse and worse. Underfunding has caused delays and inequities in the system that leave many without the justice that they deserve. This government made sweeping cuts to legal aid. In the last budget, this government took away one third of legal aid funding in a system where people already faced challenges getting the help they needed.

Does the member believe that this is possibly the last opportunity to fix some of the underfunding problems that her government has exacerbated since taking office?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Niagara Centre for the question.

I just think we're, first of all, talking about the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act and the access to justice and not re-litigating, if you will, things that we talked about with respect to a different act.

But I will say that I'm very proud of all we've done to update and modernize Ontario's legal aid system. I note that Legal Aid Ontario has given us a positive endorsement of what we're trying to do in the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act: "Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) recognizes that access to family justice is promoted through clarity and consistency between federal and provincial family legislation. That is why LAO fully supports the Ministry of the Attorney General's proposed amendments to the Children's Law Reform Act (CLRA) as part of the new Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act."

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her presentation on the Moving Ontario Family Law Forward Act.

I wonder if she can tell us how she feels we can better use technology—we understand that our government is investing a lot of money in improving broadband across the province—and what that would mean for people who are trying to navigate our court system, in terms of having that access to either the courts or even with their lawyers and filing papers, as well through that virtual world we're all learning to adapt to.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Thornhill for the question.

I want to commend again—I know I did in my comments—our Attorney General for the incredible work that he has done to really bring our justice system forward 30 years in a matter of a year or two.

You might think I'm exaggerating, but having worked in the court system here in Toronto for many years, I can honestly attest that the court system is very resistant to change. It's very tradition-bound. There are some good parts to that—I do love some tradition myself—but it is important to adapt and change.

This is, in a sense, a silver lining to COVID-19—that it has pushed it forward so quickly. But the Attorney General, as I said, was already working on these initiatives to make access to justice more accessible by bringing things online for people, and to make it more convenient and efficient. I think these are all very laudable results.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I was listening as the member was speaking for the last 20 minutes, and she talked about access to justice. She talked about how this bill is going to make it easier for families to be able to navigate the system.

You were in the Chair this morning, Speaker, when I had an hour to speak about this bill and the lack of access that truly will still exist for families.

We've heard from justices, we've heard from law societies, about the importance of having legal representation.

Do you not think that it is important for people to have legal representation to truly be able to navigate a very complicated system, regardless of the changes that you're making today?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain for the question.

Of course, no single piece of legislation will fix every problem in our justice system or in our legal system. There are always more things that we can do and work on. But I think that this legislation goes a long way to addressing a lot of concerns—concerns that were raised in consultations with the people who use the system on the ground, which were led by the member for Durham.

We've gone a long way to make things more accessible in this legislation, by making it more user-friendly, frankly. I listed a whole bunch of those, but the use of remote and virtual hearings—even using virtual hearings here for our committee has made those more accessible by allowing disabled people to participate more fully. It's just an example of what we can do.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her presentation.

During the robust consultation process that we undertook, one of the areas that hard-working Ontario families brought up is the difficulty that they were having in navigating the family law appeal processes. Could the member for Eglinton–Lawrence speak a little bit more

broadly about how the changes in this legislation will address that long-standing concern here in Ontario?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Whitby for the question.

The objective of the Attorney General and the member from Durham, his PA, was to increase access to justice and to ensure fairness and consistency across the various courts, so we didn't stop listening to what people were asking.

Apparently, at committee, there were also some changes suggested, and we've made those changes. We eliminated the leave requirement for child custody cases, no matter which court they came from. And following the committee, the Federation of Ontario Law Associations told us in an email, "FOLA welcomes changes designed to simplify and streamline the appeal routes for family law cases, as well as the continuance amendments to Ontario statutes in order to make Ontario's justice system more accessible to Ontarians." These are just some of the supportive messages that we received for those changes—also from the Ontario Bar Association, the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, the Office of the Children's Lawyer, and the Ontario Association of Child Protection Lawyers.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It's great to hear all of the endorsements that they've received for this bill—because there really is nothing in this bill other than mirroring what the feds had done. That was the goal of this bill.

They missed the boat on so many levels. I know that there are virtual experiences coming in on this and that it's about making it easier for the person to be able to access the court system. What about if they don't have broadband? What about if they can't afford Internet service? They won't even have legal aid to be able to utilize those services. I think that they've missed a lot of opportunities to truly make access to justice in this bill. They talk a good game, but it's unfortunately not in the legislation.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain for the question.

As you know, our government has still funded legal aid. We have a great legal aid system, and we've updated and modernized that system to make sure that people who need lawyers have lawyers and the resources are focused where they should be.

Also, we have, you will know—and even today, I think, again—announced a lot of money to promote broadband across this province, because we know how important that is for everybody, and we're making it happen. It's happening now, as we speak, with even more investments for broadband.

We are doing everything we can on numerous fronts. But let's talk about what's in the legislation—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. Further questions? The member from Scarborough–Rouge Park, you have about 20 seconds.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her presentation.

As we are going through the second wave of COVID-19, could the member please explain and highlight how this bill will make it easier for parents dealing with child support during COVID-19?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park.

The child supports—the calculation and recalculation can be done online pursuant to this legislation, which will be a huge help to many people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: If you seek it, I'm sure you'll find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Orders of the day.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EXALTING OUR VETERANS ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 RENDANT HOMMAGE À NOS ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

Ms. Skelly moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 221, An Act respecting identification for veterans /
Projet de loi 221, Loi concernant l'identification des
anciens combattants.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Skelly.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I stand in the House this afternoon to introduce the Exalting Our Veterans Act, 2020. This is an act that will allow an individual to request that they be identified as a veteran on his or her driver's licence or Ontario photo card.

Recognition of their service on an official Ontario government identification card is merited. The freedom we enjoy in Canada today was hard fought on battlefields over centuries. Our proud veterans have protected and preserved the freedom that we hold so dear today. As Remembrance Day approaches, it's even more important to acknowledge the incredible sacrifices made by those who served our country and defended our values.

On Remembrance Day, we recognize the courage and sacrifice of those who willingly went to war. During times of war, individual acts of heroism occur frequently. Only a few are ever recorded and receive official recognition. That is why acknowledgement of veterans' service period is so vitally important.

The acknowledgement of service on an official government of Ontario identification is for veterans who have served in the Canadian Forces, including the reserve forces

and the forces of the Commonwealth or its wartime allies. They have served in the merchant navy or Ferry Command during wartime. They have served in NATO operations or as members of the United Nations Peacekeeping force.

This official recognition of service on a driver's licence is done in other provinces and jurisdictions. It's not only a piece of identification that signifies our appreciation for their service, but it readily identifies veterans to businesses that may be offering a discount to those who have served our country.

Glenn Gibson, Honorary Colonel of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada, heartily endorses the initiative to offer Ontario government identification that signifies the holder has served in the Canadian military. Military personnel are eligible to receive discounts involving dozens of brands of goods and services—everything from retail to restaurants to vacation destinations. Gibson says individuals don't get rich serving in the military, and they don't necessarily collect a robust pension. Any initiative that would make it easier to receive a discount would be greatly appreciated.

Let me tell you some of the personal stories of people in my family who have made sacrifices in service to our country over generations. My grandfather Henry Skelly served in World War I. I still have and very much cherish his World War I diary. Papa Skelly, as we called him, enlisted in the armed services in North Bay in 1916, at the age of 35. He was a member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force in the 4th Canadian Railway Troops, 159th Regiment. He trained in England, and he served in France, in Belgium and in Holland. My grandfather, Papa, suffered injury from exposure to mustard gas and shrapnel wounds to his leg. Papa was born in 1881. He died in 1969 at the age of 88. Because of my grandfather's service, Remembrance Day is especially meaningful to me.

During the First World War, the Canadian Expeditionary Force acquired an enviable reputation among the allied armies because it did not lose a single battle during the last two years of the war. The Canadian divisions paid a heavy price in terms of human lives lost on the plains of Flanders. One quarter of the 60,000 Canadian dead in the First World War fell on Belgian soil.

As a young reporter, I worked in Pembroke and in Kingston. I spent numerous hours and days at CFB Petawawa, CFB Trenton and RMC Kingston, speaking to military personnel about their experiences in conflicts around the world. In 1991, I travelled to Doha, Qatar, where I reported from the Canadian bases called Canada Dry One and Canada Dry Two, where CF-18s were stationed during Operation Desert Storm.

I have a deep, deep respect for the men and women in our Armed Forces who are willing to risk their lives so that we as legislators, regardless of political stripe, can stand in this House and debate the issues we believe in. We often take for granted our Canadian values and institutions, our freedom to participate in cultural and political events, our right to live under a government of our choice. But Canadians who step up to defend our values truly believe that without freedom, there can be no ensuring peace, and without peace, no enduring freedom.

We live in the greatest country in the world. It is the greatest country in the world in part because of the sacrifices of the members of our military and our veterans. We should all take the time to appreciate the great life that we enjoy in Canada. This wonderful freedom is enshrined in our Constitution and is preserved by the rule of law. But freedom is not free; it never has been. It was won on battlefields over the centuries. Freedom is being preserved by our soldiers today.

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Unfortunately, there are people in this country who seek to attack and undermine our freedoms. Six years ago last month, Hamilton's Corporal Nathan Cirillo was gunned down while standing guard on ceremonial sentry duty at the Canadian National War Memorial in Ottawa. The attacker was a terrorist sympathizer who expressed his desire to "kill some soldiers." Nathan Cirillo, a member of Hamilton's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was only 24 years old. He left behind a young son.

Nathan Cirillo was also a dog lover. He had three dogs of his own. A leash-free dog park in Hamilton was named in honour of the fallen reservist. I often take my dog Louie to that park. Each time I pass the plaque that has been hung in his honour in that park, it brings back memories of the horror we all felt the day he was murdered.

Corporal Nathan Cirillo's death shocked our nation. People questioned how a Canadian soldier standing guard at a war memorial could be ambushed on Canadian soil by a person with terrorist leanings.

We remember the service and sacrifice of Corporal Nathan Cirillo and the tens of thousands of other soldiers and military personnel who lost their lives defending our freedoms. These are courageous men and women in uniform who often risk their own lives to defend our values and freedoms here at home and around the world. Many of them bear the scars of war, scars that may not be readily obvious in soldiers and veterans who are suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. These are members of our family, our friends, our neighbours and our co-workers.

We lost 158 Canadians in Afghanistan. Our soldiers and veterans who served in Afghanistan laid the groundwork for changes that significantly improved the lives of people in that country. For example, because of the efforts of Canadian soldiers, girls are now able to get an education. These soldiers risked losing their limbs and their lives on battlefields littered with landmines to fight for the freedoms that people in Afghanistan now enjoy.

Our soldiers have changed conditions and bettered the lives of people in many other countries as well over the past decades, during World War I, World War II, in Korea and Bosnia. Canadian soldiers continue the responsibility of peacekeeping in hot spots around the world.

We owe a debt of gratitude to those who have served our nation. This single, simple notation on their driver's licence identifying them as a veteran is simply additional recognition for their service. This initiative has received wholehearted support from the Royal Canadian Legion branches in my riding of Flamborough—Glanbrook. In fact,

the Royal Canadian Legion is the organization that will verify an individual's status as a veteran.

Geordie Elms is the president of the Ontario branch of Last Post Fund. He is a retired Canadian Armed Forces colonel who has had a long and distinguished military career. Geordie supports this bill allowing veterans to be identified on their driver's licence or photo ID card. He says in addition to it being a nice gesture of recognition, it serves a much more practical purpose.

Many veterans suffer with mental health issues, and many of them are homeless. A government-issued ID carried by every veteran in Ontario would go a long way toward assisting veterans facing a mental health crisis. Medical personnel would be able to immediately access the federal health supports available for every veteran.

Colonel Elms said, "This identification would be an all-encompassing gesture of recognition that says more than just 'Thank you for your service.'" Such a piece of identification could have the effect of making a positive difference in a veteran's life.

The easiest way to identify a veteran is through a piece of ID that everyone carries, and that is usually a driver's licence or photo ID card. Many veterans carry identification issued by the Royal Canadian Legion or other organizations, but that identification doesn't necessarily have a photo on it. For a veteran's identification to be valid, it should be a photo ID. Presenting a photo ID would go a long way toward preventing fraud.

Mr. Speaker, the bill being presented today is intended to show additional respect to our military personnel. It's another opportunity to recognize our military personnel. They have risked their lives to protect our freedoms.

Last year, I met with a number of veterans at the Remembrance Day ceremony at Hamilton's Warplane Heritage Museum. They were adorned with medals and pins honouring them for their bravery, but being able to have that status acknowledged permanently on personal identification is another opportunity to give veterans the recognition they deserve.

With this simple designation, we can show veterans that we value them and their service to our country.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Thank you for the opportunity to be able to rise a second time this week and speak on the honour of our veterans. I want to thank the member from Flamborough—Glanbrook for giving me this opportunity.

Arny Hartnett; Michael Gander; Ernie Adams; George Darwood; Ken Servos; to my cousins, Joanne and Denis Doucette; to my son, Jonathan Lindal; and to all the veterans in this province and across this country, I would like to personally say thank you.

St. Catharines is the home of four Legions and an active community of veterans that welcome, honour and recognize their services and their sacrifices. What matters to the veterans and our Legions is different this year. It's quite different from past years. COVID-19 has ravaged our older adults, communities and our province. It is a

difficult time for almost everyone. Our veterans' community has been asking for support from this government to fix long-term care and to support our Legions. Legion halls are struggling with rising operational costs and no revenue. They are looking for tangible support, not words this year.

I sent a letter to this government about supporting veterans and Legions; so did the Royal Canadian Legion. Both were met with silence, the kind of silence that implies nothing about "we will remember" and everything about priorities that do not include them.

Fortunately, the federal government stepped in with funding supports for Legions where the provincial government did not. Legions are still not sure when this support will be delivered, and I hope everyone in this House joins me in asking the federal government to expedite this funding.

Motion 221, exalting our veterans, is a supportable motion, but it is tone-deaf to what the veterans really need during this pandemic. Veterans are still waiting for long-term care in a system that is broken. We can honour our veterans by ensuring long-term care is fixed so our veterans can feel safe in nursing homes.

In 2018, I put forward a bill speaking to the veterans. It is called the Long-Term Care Homes Amendment Act, Bill 51. It passed second reading with all-party support. The bill amends the act to require the minister to ensure that preference in admission to long-term-care homes is given to our veterans. This is honouring and respecting the service and the sacrifices of our veterans. It is ensuring they get spaces in nursing homes, and those homes are safe.

It is admirable to add the word "veteran" on a driver's licence to honour the service of our veterans, but the real way to honour their service is to be listening to what they are saying. We all have a duty, Speaker, a duty to care for those who have served valiantly for our freedom and for this country. We have to do better, ensuring their Legions are not going to be shutting their doors and ensuring veterans will have access to beds in long-term care, support for mental health, dental and medical care, and a place they can call home.

Most of all, we all need to do better supporting our heroes. We do that by honouring them with more than just words. We can bring back my bill that passed second reading in this House and ensure veterans have beds in nursing homes close to their families when they need one.

The month of November is upon us, and one week from today we will all be gathering at our local cenotaphs. Although it will look different during these unprecedented times, we all will be paying tribute with a moment of silence for all the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice and laid down their lives for our freedom and our democracy. We thank the ones who return home safely, but this should not be the only day we reflect on our veterans. This should not be the only month that we think of different ways to pay tribute to our veterans. Together, we need to pay respect for all our veterans all year round, 365 days a year.

1630

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

Mr. Dave Smith: This is really a very easy way for us to recognize our veterans. I thought a lot about how I was going to approach this speech. We're sharing time with a number of my colleagues, so I'm not going to get into too many of the statistics on it. Essentially, there are about 230,000 or 240,000 veterans in Ontario. So this is something that we can do very easily to recognize 230,000 to 240,000 people.

I got thinking about it, and we have other ways right now that we are recognizing them. I'm going to point out one, because I think it's a great way of showing the differences, and that's vanity licence plates. You can get a licence plate with your favourite sports team on it. You can get a licence plate with other things that you like—Ontario Parks, for example, could be put on your licence plate—showing that you support something.

One of the things that has bothered me about referring to them as vanity licence plates is if you're a veteran, you can have a poppy put on it. The problem I have with that—it's not putting the poppy on; it's that it's a vanity plate. Every single veteran I know is one of the most humble people I've ever met. They stand up, they do things for this country and they give back. There's nothing vain about what they're doing.

What this bill will do for us is it will give an easy, humble way to recognize that they're a veteran, an easy way for people to see that this is someone who gave of themselves to make sure that we had a better place to live.

I've talked about veterans a number of times. In fact, I introduced a private member's bill to honour one in particular, from my riding. I'm a big supporter of all of those people who will stand up and say, "No harm will come to you today because I'm there to make sure of it." This is just a very easy way, then, for us to say thank you, because we owe so much to them.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to thank my friend from Flamborough–Glanbrook for Bill 221, Exalting our Veterans. Any bill or motion that supports veterans in any way is a very positive thing.

Speaker, should he have lived this long, my father would have turned 100 this year. Unfortunately, he died when he was only 73. He was a veteran of the Second World War, and after, a career soldier who served as a peacekeeper, serving a tour of duty on the Gaza Strip back in the early 1960s.

I grew up on army bases. I've been a member of Legion Branch 255 for more than 30 years. I say to all of our veterans, thank you for your service.

Some 61,000 Canadians died in the First World War. That was the highest per capita death rate of all the Allied nations. The last Canadian killed in that war was thought to be George Lawrence Price from Nova Scotia. He was shot on the 11th of November, 1918, in Mons, Belgium, two minutes before the signing of the armistice.

The first Canadian killed in the Second World War is thought to be 21-year-old Private John Gray from Manitoba. He was serving with the Winnipeg Grenadiers in Hong Kong. He was captured and tied to a lamp post on the Star Ferry wharf in Kowloon. A Japanese officer raised his sword. Six Japanese soldiers cocked their rifles. The sun glistened off that sword as it came down, and a volley of bullets turned Private Gray into a footnote in Canadian military history.

In Korea, Canada lost 516 troops. The average age of someone who fought in the war in Korea is 87. The average age of someone who fought for Canada in the Second World War is 94.

When we lived on the base in Halifax and my dad was in Egypt, Eddie, who lived upstairs with his wife, Gertie, was serving in the Congo. I babysat for Rene and his wife, Geri. Rene was in the Pay Corps and he was in Vietnam as what is known in military terms as an “observer.”

Canadian troops have also served as peacekeepers in places such as Cyprus, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Namibia, Western Sahara, Cambodia, Somalia, Croatia, Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Central African Republic, East Timor, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Darfur, Mali and, of course, Afghanistan. We lost 158 Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. The first four were killed by friendly fire when an American pilot blew them up by mistake 20 years ago. We also lost seven civilians in that war: a diplomat; four aid workers; a government contractor; and a journalist, Michelle Lang of the Calgary Herald.

Too many of our veterans suffer from PTSD and don't have a safe place to live and to heal. Too many of them live on our streets and alleys and under our overpasses. Our government could and should be doing more to support those who join the ranks of the Canadian military.

Allowing those with a driver's licence to apply to have their veteran status added to their licence is supportable. I support our veterans, our party supports our veterans, and we support our Legions. Our Legions could use financial support from all levels of government to help them stay open, as the COVID-19 pandemic has hit them really hard. As our older veterans and their families pass away and our Legion ranks get thinner and thinner, anything we can do to show our support is laudable, and I thank the member for her motion today. War is hell. There's nothing glamorous about war. People die ugly deaths, and mental injuries last forever. Yes, we support our veterans any way we can. Thank you for your motion today.

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

M^{me} Gila Martow: J'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de parler du projet de loi de ma collègue la députée de Flamborough–Glanbrook. Ce projet de loi édicte la Loi de 2020 rendant hommage à nos anciens combattants. La loi prévoit qu'un particulier peut demander à être identifié comme ancien combattant sur son permis de conduire ou sa carte-photo.

Les anciens combattants sont des personnes très importantes dans notre société, et ils méritent d'avoir la

reconnaissance pour leur service. Ce n'est pas juste moi ni mes autres collègues qui pensent ça. On a eu le soutien d'organismes différents de l'Ontario : le président du Fonds du Souvenir de l'Ontario; Glenn Gibson, un colonel honoraire; la présidente de la Légion royale canadienne; et d'autres personnes soutiennent ce projet de loi.

Peut-être que vous vous rappelez, monsieur le Président, qu'à la fin de septembre notre gouvernement a annoncé que les Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens peuvent avoir les caractères français sur leur permis de conduire. Comme on a honoré les francophones en leur permettant de mettre leur vrai nom sur leur permis de conduire, je pense que permettre aux anciens combattants de mettre qu'ils étaient combattants démontrera que notre gouvernement les remercie, les reconnaît.

Ce projet de loi me fait penser à un groupe de personnes très spécial : La force francophone. La force francophone, dans l'adversité, a poussé un très grand nombre de Canadiens de langue française—hommes et femmes, civils ou militaires—à relever leurs manches et lutter pour la paix. C'est surtout ceux et celles qui ont vécu la Seconde Guerre mondiale, de front ou d'ailleurs, et qui aujourd'hui sont prêts à partager avec nous le souvenir de ce conflit avant qu'il ne se perde et se répète par l'oubli.

Peut-être, avec La force francophone en tête, il y aura des Franco-Ontariennes et Franco-Ontariens qui vont avoir les accents et caractères français avec la désignation comme ancien combattant sur leur permis de conduire.

Beaucoup d'entreprises, magasins et services reconnaissent les anciens combattants pour leur service, et je pense et j'espère que tout le monde serait d'accord qu'ajouter l'option pour les anciens combattants de mettre cette désignation sur leur permis de conduire est quelque chose de très important.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to rise today to speak to Bill 221, the Exalting Our Veterans Act. This motion would permit any veteran of Canada's Armed Forces or reserves to apply to have their veteran status added to their driver's licence. We already have veterans' licence plates, and now this is another simple and effective way to honour our veterans. Veterans are heroes who have served our country.

Normally, I would be spending Remembrance Day at my local Legion, the Royal Canadian Legion Hamilton Branch 163, in my riding of Hamilton Mountain. But, of course, things are different this year. This year, veterans could use more than symbolic gestures and thanks. Across Ontario, Legions and veterans' clubs are feeling the impact of COVID-19. Fortunately, Melanie, the president of the Hamilton Mountain Legion, tells me that they are adapting and surviving this difficult time. But other Legions across Ontario, as we know, are not so lucky. They have been asking this government for financial support. The closures have made it difficult for Legions to keep up with their fixed costs, such as utilities, insurance, hydro and rent. Legion branches rely on fundraising events

to pay their bills and keep operating. Of course, during COVID-19, there are serious restrictions on this.

This government should be stepping up to help veterans' organizations survive during this difficult time. It is great to see that this bill has come forward to recognize our veterans, but we also must commit to honour them by supporting them during COVID-19. We have to ensure that veteran organizations and communities around Ontario survive.

Right now, the Royal Canadian Legion is in the middle of their annual poppy drive, though it looks a bit different due to COVID-19. I encourage everyone to buy a poppy, wear it proudly and visit their Legion's poppy store online to purchase some of their other goods—and always do your best to show up for the Legion fish fry on Friday afternoon. We've had many discussions of how great fish fries are at Legions, and it seems like we all feel that our Legions do it best. They have the magic, so we have to make sure that we're showing up there and supporting their fish fries.

I want to mention my colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who introduced a motion that we all supported here in the House to have the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario allow the service clubs to legally run their loonie and toonie drives. We know how important that is for all of our services, and I was so pleased to hear that the AGCO has agreed to this.

Like I said, this is a decent bill. It's one step to give something to our veterans. But there are so many steps that we could be taking with true legislation that the government has every opportunity to bring forward. When it's our time of remembrance, we need to do more than just remember; we need to act. We need to make sure people have safe, affordable housing, that they have the long-term-care needs that they need, and that they have the health care and mental health support that they need.

Like I said, this will make it easier for some to have that proper photo identification, but it's just not enough. But we will be supporting this bill.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for introducing the Exalting Our Veterans Act. It recognizes our veterans not just on one day or week, but every day in every year by allowing them to voluntarily show they're a veteran on their driver's licence.

Veterans who have served Canada, the land of the strong and free, deserve every recognition we can bestow on them—like local veteran Bill Sergeant, who served for 38 years in the Canadian Forces before retiring as a lieutenant colonel for the RCAF. Bill had an accomplished career as an aerospace engineering officer, including training Canadian Forces engineers and technicians to support the CF-18 Hornet. Bill remains involved in the RCAF Association 441 Squadron and the Veterans' Club of Barrie. This is what he said about this bill: "It is another way that our veterans could be honoured for their service and the sacrifices that they make while serving this great country of ours."

Fern Taillefer, who served for 16 years in the regular forces and six years in the reserves and was deployed to the Middle East as a peacekeeper, is another example of a local veteran to recognize. He served in the Canadian Forces military police. He was assigned to protect high-ranking dignitaries, including Princess Anne and Countess Mountbatten. Fern helped coordinate and build the memorial wall that we have at Peacekeepers Park in Angus.

John C. Hayter is another local veteran to recognize. He enlisted in the forces in 1952, at the age of 18. The following year, he was deployed to Korea as the youngest certified officer in the Canadian army. He served in the UN mission to Cyprus. He commanded the 1st Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. After being promoted to brigadier-general, he served as the secretary of the NATO Military Committee, the alliance's highest military decision-making body. Even after retirement from active forces, he served as a commander of the northern region, which encompasses the Canadian territories. General Hayter has been the honorary colonel of the Grey and Simcoe Foresters regiment and the commander of the regiment's honour guard. With 52 years in uniform, including 37 years full-time, General Hayter supports this initiative and any recognition of veterans for their service.

Speaker, I'm honoured to support such veterans. I know such veterans, and I want to thank them for their service. I support this bill in honour of so many veterans who gave us the peace and freedom that we uphold today in the land of the strong and the free. Think about them this year. Buy a poppy. Support them. Lest we forget.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's great to be able to rise today and participate in this debate. I also want to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for what I think is a terrific bill. I was very interested to hear the story about your family members involved in the military in the First World War. I think that really brings everything home, because I think most of us here in this House have some connection to the military, past or present, be it our parents, grandparents, cousins or children who are in the military.

Veterans have given so much to our province and country. Of course, next week, we honour them with Remembrance Day. This year, Remembrance Day ceremonies will look a little different, but we must still continue to reflect on their courage and bravery. So I will take this opportunity, rising in support of this bill, to extend my sincerest thank you to every Canadian Armed Forces member who has placed themselves before everyone else for the values we hold in this great country and province.

Speaker, I'm glad to speak on this bill which supports our servicemen and servicewomen. This proposed bill will be bringing forward changes that have terrific benefits. We owe it to our veterans, who have fought for our freedoms and remain committed to selflessly serving our country, to honour them in any way we can.

This bill is taking a great step to identify veterans on their driver's licence when issuing or renewing the cards, at the veteran's request, who have been certified by the Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command. We all carry a driver's licence with us, or other photo cards, and this bill will make it effortless to clearly identify those who have served our country. Carrying these cards around will help veterans easily identify themselves at the numerous businesses that offer service members discounts. There are approximately 80 different brands and private sector companies that offer discounts for Canadian veterans, and I think we all here in the Legislature can encourage more businesses to give benefits to our service members. There are other privileges and advantages that veterans can access just by carrying one of the fundamental cards issued by government.

Veterans have had to fight hard for the freedom we enjoy here today and for the freedom of others. It was won by men and women who enlisted and left their loved ones for a greater cause. We owe a great debt to our veterans, and this bill will enable veterans to be honoured by others when they show a driver's licence.

I'm glad to see the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook has the support of veterans' organizations. I think it's terrific that you've reached out and got that kind of support. The Ontario branch of the Last Post Fund, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 551 and many more have called out in support of this bill.

I believe every member of this House should vote in favour of this bill because it will help thousands of veterans in our province. We are just giving a little bit back to show our gratitude for what they've done for us.

I am very happy to support this bill, and I congratulate the member for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Flamborough–Glanbrook now has two minutes for her final comments.

Ms. Donna Skelly: As I mentioned in my remarks earlier, I had the pleasure of being able to, through my previous career in the media, work in a number of communities that were close to a military base. That gave me an opportunity to cover stories, meet the men and women in service and understand what they do. It was probably through that and through my memories of my grandfather that I developed this genuine appreciation and respect for each and every man and woman who has served in our forces.

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I want to thank the members from Peterborough–Kawartha, Windsor–Tecumseh, Thornhill, Hamilton Mountain, Barrie–Innisfil and Oakville for speaking to this bill.

I want to say one last thing to the member from St. Catharines. I just get all choked up when I think about you, as a mom of a person in the Armed Forces. From one mother to another, please share with your son that we genuinely, genuinely appreciate his service.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Skelly has moved second reading of Bill 221, An Act respecting identification for veterans.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless the member has another committee.

Ms. Donna Skelly: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): She's referring it to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPORT ON ONTARIO'S PROVINCIAL EMERGENCY RAPPORT SUR LA SITUATION D'URGENCE PROVINCIALE DE L'ONTARIO

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I move that the House take note of the Report on Ontario's Provincial Emergency from March 17, 2020, to July 24, 2020.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Ms. Jones has moved government notice of motion number 93.

Back to Ms. Jones.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Earlier this week, I was privileged as Solicitor General to table the report on Ontario's declaration of provincial emergency that was declared pursuant to the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act on March 17. I am pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this report with legislators this afternoon.

When we speak about these last few months as being unprecedented, it is equally true when it comes to Ontario's emergency management system. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario's emergency management legislation, the EMCPA, had been activated twice before in Ontario's history: during the 2003 blackout affecting large swaths of Ontario and, of course, during the SARS epidemic.

The declaration emergency supports our government's comprehensive response to the COVID-19 outbreak and allowed for temporary emergency orders to be established to keep communities safe. During the earliest moments of this pandemic, the declaration of emergency provided a framework to ensure that public health measures could be rapidly implemented against a threat that our entire world is still struggling to understand.

By the numbers, Speaker, the declaration lasted 127 days, 47 emergency orders were made across 15 ministries, 11 orders were revoked and 36 were continued under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020.

Throughout this emergency, our government has never hesitated to take action in response to the ever-changing nature of this pandemic—by supporting our front-line response, avoiding overwhelming hospitals, protecting our most vulnerable, helping businesses and workers whose livelihoods had been disrupted by COVID-19, and

keeping Ontarians healthy and safe. The report tabled in this Legislature is a demonstration of exactly what that commitment to Ontario looks like.

The provincial declaration of emergency was made on March 17. There were few points to be scored by closing bars and restaurants on St. Patrick's Day, but tough decisions had to be made at that time and in the weeks and months during the declaration of emergency. As outlined in the report, many of the orders made under the declaration of emergency were to protect our most vulnerable, such as orders restricting certain health support workers to a single long-term-care home or retirement home, thereby reducing the spread of COVID-19. Others prevented Ontarians from being taken advantage of during a period of financial hardship and uncertainty. These actions were taken with the understanding and support of Ontarians, who have shown that during adversity, we have the resilience to rise to any challenge.

Members are aware that the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act requires the government to table a report with respect to a declared provincial emergency in the Ontario Legislature within 120 days after the termination of the emergency. I'm pleased to share that, in fact, we are ahead of the deadline. This report includes information on orders made during the provincial emergency declaration, including why each emergency order was considered necessary at the time, and why, as required by the EMCPA, each was considered to be a reasonable alternative to other measures that could have been taken.

My ministry has worked closely with each of those ministries with orders made under the EMCPA to complete this report. It is a comprehensive accounting of the orders and articulates why, using the facts available to us, each order was considered necessary. The report is organized under five categories based on the rationale of the orders:

- (1) Limiting the spread of COVID-19;
- (2) Supporting continuity of critical services;
- (3) Supporting businesses;
- (4) Supporting vulnerable sectors;
- (5) Providing cost relief to Ontarians.

On limiting the spread of COVID-19: The first category includes orders that were issued to limit the spread of COVID-19 to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians. Under this category, we address the swift action undertaken to restrict the opening of certain establishments and recreational spaces, along with limiting the size of gatherings and organized public events. This category also includes orders that established targeted and regional approaches so we could tighten or loosen restrictions where considered appropriate. Included in this category were orders that enabled the use of virtual models to address meetings and witnessing of wills and powers of attorney. There are 14 orders under this category.

On supporting continuity of critical services: This category includes orders to ensure that critical services could continue while managing the effects of COVID-19. This pandemic has impacted many facets of life across Ontario. In order to ensure continuity of critical services,

we made 12 orders to support service delivery, including orders to address the service gap or resource pressure, such as when front-line staff were unable to meet requalification requirements due to closures of training centres and gathering size limits. An example would be the extension of requalification training for use of force for police officers, special constables and First Nations constables. We also worked to shorten approval times needed to create urgent temporary facilities that would support physical distancing in certain congregate settings.

On supporting businesses: Three orders were implemented to support businesses impacted by COVID-19, allowing them to operate in a safe manner while reducing certain direct costs. The orders in this category included authorizing municipalities to quickly pass temporary bylaws to create and extend patios. This enabled restaurants to serve more customers outdoors while indoor dining was limited.

On supporting vulnerable sectors: This category focuses on orders that were made to support the continuity of services for vulnerable populations, while also limiting the spread of COVID-19. These include orders that provided flexibility for certain employers to allow them to take reasonable and necessary measures related to work deployment and staffing. Because of these orders, employers were able to provide appropriate staffing in health, long-term care and other congregate settings at a time when operators are finding it difficult to meet the high demand for staff against the reality of staff shortages. Fifteen orders were made under this category.

On providing cost relief for Ontarians: The fifth category describes orders made to protect Ontarians impacted by increased costs generated by COVID-19 for necessary goods and services. There were three orders under this category:

- prohibited the charging of excessive prices for necessary goods, such as hand sanitizer;
- ensured parents didn't have to pay child care fees where care was not being provided due to the closure of child care spaces, while also ensuring child care spaces were protected; and
- temporarily changed electricity pricing rates to ensure Ontarians who were spending more time at home would not face higher hydro bills.

As I said in this House during the spring, Ontario has faced many crises in its 153-year history as a founding province in Canada. But the crisis that we face in COVID-19 has been and continues to be unlike any we have seen before.

1700

However, thanks to the framework established through the declaration of emergency and continued through the reopening Ontario act, we have been able to protect Ontarians and navigate the province through this uncharted territory. This report tells the story of a government that took decisive action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce the spread, and position Ontario for recovery.

But there is no greater story than the strong will of the people of Ontario, the sacrifices that have been made, the

acts of kindness shown, the coming together to confront and, ultimately, triumph over COVID-19.

Together, along with all 14.5 million Ontarians, I know that we will beat COVID-19.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I rise in the House today to speak to the government's report on Ontario's provincial Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. This report is a summary of measures the government put in place from March 17 until July 24 of this year in order to help limit the spread of COVID, support continuity of critical services, support businesses, support vulnerable sectors and provide cost relief to Ontarians. Those were the government's stated goals, and I would like to help add some feedback to the report by speaking about how the measures have affected residents, businesses, services in my riding of York South–Weston.

The Premier has referred many times to front-line workers, those working in health care—like PSWs, nurses, cleaners, cooks and doctors—and front-line workers like grocery clerks, transit workers and retail and service industry workers. My community has these heroes working very hard, as they did before the pandemic.

While this side of the House has long recognized these workers as heroes, where we differ from the government is on how these heroes should be treated. The emergency order quite rightly topped up eligible front-line workers with a monetary increase from April until August 13. On the surface, this seems like a fantastic idea. However, I would like to point out some realities of this measure. To this day, many workers who are eligible have not received an actual penny of the money promised to them. I'm sure that those long-term-care facilities making record profits will get around to distributing the subsidized wages promised by this government. But like many things during this pandemic, help is needed yesterday, not some time in the future. That is not how you treat a hero.

Many essential workers were left out of the pandemic pay due to this government's eligibility criteria that showed no rhyme or reason. I very much doubt that any union was consulted on this pandemic pay and eligibility.

The recent announcement of a new round of pandemic pay only applies to PSWs. This gross inequity has now pitted health care workers against each other. Housekeepers, maintenance and cooks are among those essential workers saying, "What about me?" After all, while these emergency measures have ended, many provisions, by the way, are still in place through Bill 195. COVID has not gone away. Little has changed except for the fact that we are at record numbers of cases and positivity rates, even with unacceptably low testing results.

Mr. Speaker, this report mentions limiting workers of long-term care to one workplace in order to reduce the risk of COVID spread—again, on the surface, a reasonable measure. However, a closer look reveals that a worker in long-term care, like the vast majority of those workers, has part-time hours and works sometimes two or three jobs to get enough hours for full-time pay.

Long-term-care and retirement home operators prefer part-time workers because benefits are often not paid. Well, now that the worker must choose a home, they all of a sudden lose that pay that other workplaces supplemented.

A better option for a government that knows long-term care is badly short-staffed would be to make those operators whose wages they are subsidizing provide full-time hours. They did not do this.

I am pleased the government supported the bill that was presented by my colleague Teresa Armstrong calling for a four-hour standard of care, but they now need to recognize that the fact we cannot find enough staff needs to be addressed with making full-time positions the norm in that sector and not a reliance on part-time, precarious, no-benefit positions. That is how you attract workers, along with decent wages.

The worker in long-term care working one job during the emergency measures was working alongside an agency worker who is not restricted by working in only one facility. So much for limiting the spread of COVID. That agency worker is also working overtime to fill the shortage while workers choosing one workplace now have hours cut and overtime limited. This means hours towards vacation time and sick time are limited.

We do not need to be pitting worker against worker in this province. Particularly in a sector like long-term care and retirement care, we need to stop the precarious work and make clear the need for workers full-time, with good-paying jobs.

The emergency measures did recognize the shortage of health care workers. However, that recognition for employees meant that asymptomatic, COVID-positive workers were allowed to remain working as long as they took "reasonable precautions" travelling to work and at work. I will repeat this in case you thought you misheard me: Asymptomatic, COVID-positive health care workers continue to be allowed to work in long-term-care settings, mainly because employers say they cannot fill the positions.

I have heard from more than a few workplaces using this loophole, and again, it puts residents and fellow staff at risk along with anyone they may encounter as they bus, walk or otherwise travel to their workplace.

I would suggest that limiting the spread of COVID-19 as a goal of the emergency measures was not achieved by this, or as it continues under Bill 195.

Providing cost relief to Ontarians was another stated goal of the emergency measures. These measures were brought about to protect Ontarians from the increased costs of goods and services due to COVID. My office continues to hear from residents and business owners struggling with those increased costs.

One order dealt with prohibiting the charging of excessive prices for essential goods. We heard of many cases of price gouging, and aside from the Premier talking at his daily news conference of not tolerating the "bad apples" and "fixing their little red wagon," I don't know of any real consequences to those people using COVID to take advantage of people and businesses in my community.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, words are not enough. The government included emergency measures to rein in hydro

pricing. Recognizing that COVID has meant many people working at home and increased usage, the government rightfully helped with keeping prices reasonable. Now, with winter coming, COVID is still here and many people are still working from home. The government has not only broken its campaign promise of reducing rates by 12%, but actually have increased rates by almost 2%. The financial strain on our communities continues under this government while they sit on billions of dollars from the federal government earmarked for COVID support. The province has only spent 3% of our dollars while hoarding the money provided by the federal government.

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The emergency measures were hopefully aimed at providing relief for businesses and members of our community. Both businesses and residents have spoken to my office concerned that the government support is either not good enough or they aren't eligible or that the measures are terribly misguided. COVID is still here and, unfortunately, it seems to be not going away any time soon. Our community needs support now more than ever with record COVID cases.

The second wave is here and this government needs action like funding schools to make them safe, ensuring four hours' minimum care in long-term care is law, increasing funding to municipalities to ensure no cuts to public services, establishing real affordable housing and stopping evictions that are ongoing in my community and the province.

There are many more measures to take to protect our citizens and businesses during this pandemic, and that takes cooperation with the opposition, community and labour groups. It takes bold action and a vision that puts the well-being of the people before profits. We need critical investment in public services like health care, social services and education, and we need it now.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: It's an honour to rise in the House again today and speak on this very important matter on behalf of the people of Carleton.

As the Solicitor General said earlier, this report was based on the public health measures that we had to take in a once-in-a-lifetime global pandemic in order to protect the people of Ontario. It was based on those public health indicators and the ongoing risks of COVID-19 that our government introduced the Reopening Ontario Act, 2020 on July 7. This statute was proclaimed into force by the Lieutenant Governor on July 24, 2020, which ended the declared provincial emergency. The ROA enabled emergency orders made under the EMCPA to continue under the ROA, with the ability to extend them for up to 30 days and, in certain limited cases, amend them. These features of the ROA provide the government with flexibility to address the ongoing risks and effects of COVID-19.

Ultimately, all of these orders were developed based on public health information available at the time, with the intent of addressing COVID-19 challenges while limiting intrusiveness. The province considered the advice of the

Chief Medical Officer of Health, other leading public health officials and partners across the system.

Many orders apply to the entire province due to the global nature of the pandemic. A regional approach was taken for orders outlining the reopening of the province, as every region in Ontario experienced the effects of COVID-19 differently.

In the Ottawa region, initially, everything was shut down, and when things were moving forward, Ottawa was one of the first regions to progress to the different stages and get back into slowly reopening the businesses and establishments there. However, with the recent rise in numbers of COVID-19 in Ottawa, that has been pushed back again.

However, it's always been a flexible approach, and I think that's why this regional approach is so important because it takes into account the realities that people are facing on a daily basis. These decisions ultimately were based on public health criteria being met locally as outlined in the framework, including virus spread and containment, along with health system and incidence-tracking capacity.

Dr. Vera Etches, who's the Chief Medical Officer of Health for the city of Ottawa, has been working day in and day out throughout this pandemic. I've actually been speaking with her on a very frequent and constant basis. We would meet virtually once every couple of weeks just to go over everything. She would answer my questions, I would answer hers, and she worked hard to keep those lines of communication open. Ultimately, that is why I am so confident that everything we have done has always been based on health advice because that is literally what I have been hearing from the front line.

Sometimes it's frustrating when you hear from the opposition that decisions we are making to protect and support people in Ontario to get them through the COVID-19 pandemic—it's frustrating when you hear these accusations or allegations that these decisions are based on political motives when the reality is these decisions have always been based on the health and medical advice of experts, not just in Toronto but across the province of Ontario. Every single time they criticize a decision this government is making, they're not just criticizing us; they're also criticizing health professionals and medical professionals and people who have been working day in and day out. They're criticizing their judgment and their expertise.

Ultimately, we're politicians. We all have varying backgrounds. Some of us might be doctors, some of us lawyers, some of us educators. We do not have the expertise to determine the best medical advice for the people of Ontario. As politicians, we have to rely on the experts to give us that advice. That's what I've been hearing from my constituents in Carleton over and over again—how grateful they are and how thankful they are that, throughout this entire pandemic, our government has taken a very practical approach. It has taken a non-partisan approach, and every single decision has been based on the advice of health and medical experts. I'm going to talk a little bit about that.

One of the regulations that I would like to focus on is with respect to patios. Patio season is a big deal in Canada. The running joke is that once it hits 0 degrees, that's patio season—because we know how cold winters can be. One of the regulations actually allowed municipalities to permit the temporary establishment and expansion of patios for restaurants and bars in an expedited manner in order to meet public health physical distancing requirements. We could see this all over Ottawa—not just in my riding of Carleton, but all across the city. Businesses were taking advantage of that opportunity. Ultimately, while we are here to protect the people of Ontario and make sure that we get through this pandemic safely, we also have to look at the long term. We also have to recognize that small businesses are the backbone of this province and that we do have a responsibility to be there for them and to support them as much as possible.

The fact that we actually got rid of these kinds of regulations and red tape speaks to the campaign commitment that we made two years ago, which was to reduce red tape and administrative burden. If anything, the COVID-19 pandemic allowed us to be able to see even more strongly which regulations out there have been so burdensome on businesses. Some of the feedback that I got for getting rid of this was how thankful businesses were because it gave them a better opportunity to operate and to serve their clients and customers.

One of the things that I try to do when I'm in my riding is to eat out as much as possible or order takeout just to support local business. It hasn't been really good on my hips and thighs during the COVID-19 pandemic, but I think it's an important way to support small businesses and restaurants in our community. We have some fantastic restaurants in Manotick. We have La Piazza, which is a fantastic Italian place. We have Black Dog Bistro. We have so many other local restaurants and pubs. There's the Mill Tavern. I would always order takeout, whether it was for my staff if we were working at the constituency office or whether I'm just working from home.

As soon as patios were allowed to be open, all of their patios were filled. They were always filled. They were maxed out at capacity, and it was really great to see how much support there was from the local community. There wouldn't be a day that I would go to one of the restaurants to pick up a meal and not see someone or several people that I knew. In fact, Allen Haan, a good friend of mine and a well-known local resident in Manotick—I ran into him several times with various friends. They'd always be out there. I started having some constituent meetings—before things were restricted again, I would even have some meetings with constituents at these local restaurants because it was a way to share a meal and also support these businesses. I think that's one of the ways that our government has supported businesses and will continue to support businesses.

The other thing I wanted to talk about that has been tabled in the report that I think is so important for Ontarians are the cost-relief measures that we implemented. I'm specifically referring to price gouging. Unfortunately, there was a time back at the beginning of the pandemic

when there was so much panic and so much fear that people were not just hoarding things like toilet paper—I still don't understand how that toilet paper hoarding situation came about, but I think it's a good example of what can happen if people get scared and they're not sure what's going on and there's a lack of information out there.

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I think what the Premier did with the emergency orders that were implemented was—he took a very strong leadership role. He made it very clear to Ontarians that there was no shortage of supply of toilet paper or hand sanitizer or food or anything throughout the entire pandemic. He maintained, we maintained the integrity of the food supply chain. Grocery stores kept on saying, “We have the stock. It's just that people are panic-buying, so it just takes us time to deliver.”

The fact that the price-gouging measure was implemented is excellent, but it was more than that. There was also a sense of community—because what a lot of grocery stores did in my riding of Carleton and across Ottawa and in the province is, they would actually have specific days and times when senior citizens or vulnerable people could go in first and do their shopping, in order to give them the ability to purchase these things.

I'm happy to speak to this, and I'm glad it was tabled.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Remembrance Day is next week. I want to recognize our serving men and women and remember the fallen who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Some members of this chamber have served, and all of us have had a family member or other loved one who has served.

My own late grandfather, Janko Rakocevic, died fighting the Axis in World War II, but our family never learned of how or where. My late father, Vujica Rakocevic, served in the French Foreign Legion. On my mother's side of the family, the three sons of her grand-uncle all died serving during World War II, two in the bombing of Pearl Harbour and one later from complications of malaria he contracted overseas. And so, all three LaRoche brothers were lost. May God bless their souls.

Speaker, I rise today during the second-ever take-note debate here at Queen's Park to discuss the government's report on emergency measures on the 120 days between March 17 and July 24, 2020. It is the role of the opposition to hold the government to account and to always push them to strive to be better. As such, today I will share brief words about where I think the government can learn from some mistakes and omissions in the handling of the pandemic during the first wave. I share them because we must use what we learned during the first wave to develop a better response in the second.

There is a lot to talk about. You've heard from my colleague the hard-working member from York South-Weston on long-term-care price gouging and more. Today, I will briefly touch on the handling of neighbourhoods hardest hit by COVID-19, the struggles of small business and the oversight of insurance here in Ontario.

I've spoken at length on a number of occasions here about the needs of my community during the pandemic. Like the Premier's riding, we've been one of the hardest hit. This is due to the socio-economic determinants of health and the very structure of our community—large multi-generational households, many in small apartments; low-income essential workers; front-line health workers. There are many factors that put the members of my community at higher risk.

Since the pandemic began, I have been working with our local hospitals, Toronto Public Health, community health organizations and community leaders to help ensure residents receive the help and information they need to protect themselves and their families. Together we have distributed over 100,000 masks to individuals who need them, have pushed for ongoing mobile testing, proactively reached out to tens of thousands of households through live telephone calls to see what help they need and more.

But many communities like mine need direct help from this government. Solutions must be tailored for the needs of different communities.

Funding and establishing community liaisons to fight COVID-19 on the ground would be a big help. They could ensure that information reaches everyone in a timely way and to pierce language barriers.

This is just one example of a useful tool. There are many, but they were not utilized during the first wave. Community health organizations, public health units and so many others are calling for better funding and direct help, so let's help them now.

Our province went into lockdown during the first wave under the advice of medical professionals to flatten the curve, but did the government really step up to the plate to help families and businesses that took the hardest financial hits?

For instance, for many small business owners in my community, due to the nature of their business, closing their doors meant their revenues went to zero. But their bills continued. Many such businesses struggled to pay rent, but the plan to help them required their landlord to opt in; many landlords simply refused.

While the government placed a ban on commercial evictions, there was no enforcement. I heard from many businesses that found their locks changed despite the ban. Many of these tenants weren't renting from small landlords struggling to pay a mortgage; these were wealthy landlords with substantial landholdings. To protect her livelihood, one business owner had taken to sleeping in her place of work. Without enforcement, this ban simply didn't help many business owners.

The NDP put forward a plan during the first wave called Save Main Street to help ensure businesses would receive the help they needed so they could weather the storm, but the government paid it no heed. The plan received support from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, a body that you would expect a Conservative government to heed, but they did not.

Moving on, I will briefly touch on insurance in a number of forms. Let's start with auto insurance, a real sore spot for my community because we pay some of the

highest rates in the country just because of our postal code. This has to change. During the 120-day period following the establishment of the emergency orders, driving across the province was way down. A rush-hour drive felt like a 2 a.m. drive with the sun out. I did some research and learned that accidents within the city of Toronto were down 74%, and the NDP at the time called for a 50% reduction on premiums during this time. The government's response? To allow insurers to pass on rebates, if they wanted to. Was it a surprise that most insurers did next to nothing? The Premier and finance minister were left with pie in the face and appeared frustrated when questioned on this at press conferences. In the end, the finance minister put a dollar figure to savings passed on to drivers. My response, and I will say it again here in this House: The proof is in the premiums. Not only did people not receive the savings they deserved, but their rates are even going up. I can't believe that this government is allowing auto insurers to claim that drivers who chose to switch their policies temporarily to comprehensive or fire and theft are receiving some sort of special savings. That's ridiculous. That's always been an option. One resident told me that when they took their vehicle off comprehensive, their rates went up \$300. Come on, man.

And it's not just auto insurance. Commercial insurance has been on the rise too. I've spoken to many business owners who have seen their commercial insurance rates double, putting even more strain on their finances. The response of insurers will always be to pressure governments to help them find ways out of reducing the payout of claims. Auto insurers told the previous Liberal government to reduce accident benefits in order to see rates drop, but rates went up anyway. Imagine that businesses across our province have seen much less business and have had to close their doors for long periods and are seeing their rates go up. This government must hold insurers to account.

Condominium insurance is on a dramatic rise as well. For instance, one residential condominium corporation in my community has seen a 300% increase in their rates. In this case, it was pre-COVID-19. Nothing had changed for them—no claims, nothing—yet their rates are going through the roof. These homeowners, whose financial challenges only worsened during the pandemic, are now being asked to pay dramatically more for the same service. It's not right. Again, this government must hold insurers to account.

I know that this industry is the natural base of this government, but they have to push back. This is becoming a crisis, and it will have dramatic consequences on costs of living and costs of doing business.

In my brief time today, I want to discuss an issue that arose literally on the last day of the time period addressed by this report, July 24. It is something that is being called "supply chain bullying." There was a letter from Walmart to Ontario suppliers asking them to take on the cost of Walmart's online battle for market share with other retailers. They're asking our suppliers to pay up to 5% of the cost of their goods when sold online, as though it is sitting there on consignment. Walmart is not alone in this

practice, and it is hurting suppliers and our agri-food industry. I've recently co-signed a letter, along with the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas and the member from Waterloo, calling on this government to take action to help our suppliers and agri-food producers.

There is a lot of work to be done. Let's learn from what could have been done better during the first wave and ensure that everyone, whether individuals, families or businesses, gets the help they desperately need now.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: It is an honour to rise today to speak to the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act report. On March 17, 2020, Ontario declared a provincial emergency to stop the spread of COVID-19. Mr. Speaker, the EMCPA report is a summary of the decisive actions our government took while the provincial emergency was in effect. In total, and based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the health command table and other leading public health officials, 47 emergency orders were issued to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians.

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Broadly speaking, the emergency orders were issued to:

- quickly contain and limit the spread of COVID-19;
- ensure the critical public services that Ontarians rely on could continue;
- support our business community and maintain economic stability;
- protect vulnerable populations, such as seniors and those living in long-term care; and
- provide cost relief to Ontarians.

I believe my colleagues in the opposition would agree that the actions our government took while the provincial emergency was in effect were the right measures to take in response to the challenges posed by the pandemic. For example:

- limiting the number of people permitted at organized public events and other social gatherings;
- orders to ensure the safety and care for the residents in long-term-care homes and retirement homes;
- prohibiting retailers and other businesses from price gouging customers on the sales of protective supplies, such as masks and hand sanitizer;
- helping parents with their child care by prohibiting child care providers from charging fees where care was not being provided;
- reassuring Ontario families that their child wouldn't lose their space as a result of fees not being paid during the closure period; and
- enabling an off-peak price period for electricity consumers to deliver big savings to the customers on their electricity bill when they needed it the most.

During these difficult times, nothing is more important than the health and safety of Ontarians. The actions our government took were based on the expert opinion of leading public health officials and were implemented with a focus to protect Ontarians and stop the spread of COVID-19.

While the emergency order has been lifted, we are still working day and night to defeat this virus. Ontarians have made tremendous sacrifices over the months to do their part and show their Ontario spirit.

In my riding of Markham–Thornhill, many individuals stepped up to help the community and those most in need. They are our local heroes: the front-line workers, front-line professionals, small businesses and individual residents who just wanted to do their part for their community—people like Lisa Chung of the Kuo Hua Trading Company; Ian Fine from Exact Imaging; staff from SuOn International Academy; Clair Lin, Peter Zhou; school students; Sharmishtha Joshi; and so many others. These residents donated personal protective equipment to where it was needed most in the community: to our front-line health care workers, to school boards across the province, and to seniors in long-term-care homes—people like Jit Bhamra, Sahir Jamal and Mark Mateer, who helped donate 600 meals to Markham Stouffville Hospital for front-line health care workers at the start of the pandemic.

Alex Yuan is a local businessman who donated over 4,500 masks to the community. These masks were delivered by my office to seniors' homes, long-term-care homes and other critical facilities most at risk, such as Participation House—I have to thank at this time my colleague from Markham–Stouffville, for when the Participation House outbreak happened, he coordinated with the Markham Stouffville Hospital to bring it under control, so a shout-out to the House leader for his leadership in Markham—Mon Sheong Court, the Markham Tamil seniors, Armadale Older Adults Club, and the Centre for Dreams, a facility for adults living with a development disability.

Many local community and charitable organizations in my riding also stepped up to deliver food, PPE and other essential goods. The Denison mosque of the Islamic Society of Markham delivered food packages to low-income Ontarians in Markham and helped seniors in isolation by doing door deliveries. Volunteers from Parya Trillium Foundation have delivered nearly 700 food packages to families in need, not only in Markham–Thornhill, but across the GTA. The Indian Canadian Organization donated over 600 meals to the Markham Stouffville Hospital. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all those who donated food, PPE and other supplies to front-line health care workers, to seniors living in isolation and to low-income families in need.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, our government took decisive measures to protect the health and safety of Ontarians. I'm very happy and incredibly grateful to all those ordinary residents in my riding and elsewhere for the extraordinary action they have taken to show the Ontario spirit and help their fellow Ontarians during this difficult time.

I'd also like to say a special thank you for the Premier's leadership and his hard work during this difficult time. He is commendable, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm pleased today to rise and take part in this take-note debate on the Report on Ontario's

Provincial Emergency, covering the time period of March 17 to July 24. I'm pleased to share my concerns and comments on behalf of the good people of Davenport.

A lot has happened since the state of emergency was first declared, and the impact on our health, our daily lives, on our economy and on our communities continues to be felt deeply. As the executive summary says, "This report focuses on the 129 days the declared provincial emergency was in effect and outlines the 47 orders the government issued and amended as needed to protect Ontarians."

As we take note of this report and the measures included to protect our communities from the virus, I think it's really crucial to ground it in the context of where we are today. After all, it is in the interest of all Ontarians to review whether the steps the government took at this very crucial first phase of the pandemic served their intended purposes and if they were enough.

Today in Ontario, 987 more people have COVID-19, pushing our seven-day average to slightly more than 972 cases a day, according to provincial data and media reports. Sixteen more people have died since yesterday. Over the past week, 71 people with COVID-19 have died. I'd like to just take a moment to share my condolences with all those who have lost loved ones since the start of this pandemic. That's 3,182 people whose lives were lost. Eighty-five long-term-care homes are experiencing outbreaks today, and there have been 1,569 cumulative cases related to schools in the past 14 days. For three straight days, the province has conducted less than 30,000 tests per day despite a promise that we would be testing at least 50,000 people per day by mid-October.

Speaker, that's the latest, and it doesn't look good, not for our individual health and not for our economy. In fact, as far as people in my community are concerned, it really seems like the government lost control of this virus. And so I think that this is a really important time to be looking back at what happened and what could be, and what should have been done differently.

This report divides up the emergency orders in five sections: limiting spread of COVID-19, supporting continuity of critical services, supporting business, supporting vulnerable sectors and providing cost relief to Ontarians. The first set of orders, limiting the spread of COVID-19, were those restricting the opening of certain establishments and recreational spaces, limiting the size of organized public events or gatherings and closing places of business deemed non-essential. We know that these measures were necessary and that Ontarians were behind the decision. It was a scary time, Mr. Speaker, and I heard from so many residents of my community in Davenport who knew this was the right thing to do but were equally worried about what it meant for their livelihood.

Workers in these sectors deemed essential were put at real risk so that the rest of us could stay safely home. Grocery workers, delivery people and many more never stopped working. Today, we rightly thank them for their service as front-line heroes, but we have to acknowledge that it took far too long for them to get the recognition and the pay bump that they deserved.

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Of course, our front-line health care workers, from doctors to personal support workers, nurses, hospital cleaners and administrative staff, faced enormous challenges adapting to this virus, but they stepped up and saved lives. Yet it wasn't until the last week of April that the government offered them pandemic pay, which is one of the orders mentioned in this report, and the program left out far too many front-line workers.

My constituent Celia was one of them. She worked throughout the pandemic in a dental clinic in a hospital and was not eligible for a top-up despite her work doing essential health-related work—in an environment, I would add, that is clearly high risk. That's just not right.

Among the closure orders listed here in the report is one that closed private schools as of March 17. That order is actually the only reference to schools found in this report, and that backs up what we in the opposition have been saying throughout this pandemic: namely, that the development of plans to ensure that schools could reopen safely and the funding to make it happen came far too late.

If members reflect back, the closure of schools happened in mid-March, and that was the right thing to do, but the government's approach of extending the closure a few weeks at a time caused a lot of anxiety and uncertainty for parents, education workers and students alike. A shift to emergency remote learning was plagued by problems, and despite valiant efforts by teachers and school boards to engage kids and get needed technology to students, the consensus is that not a lot of learning got done at that time.

Let's acknowledge that not a lot was known at that moment, and I think for the most part that parents and education workers and students were able to get through it, knowing that the summer was not far away, and that as spring turned to summer, the government would be working diligently on a plan to safely reopen schools by fall. Well, Speaker, it didn't exactly happen that way. When July rolled around and there was still no action from this government, we tabled a motion calling for an emergency action plan. Among other urgent measures, it called on the government to strike a COVID-19 school recovery group that would include teachers and education worker unions, parents, students and school boards. That did not happen.

Other things that did not happen that we called for in that motion were:

- guaranteeing that parents would be able to access job-protected leave and benefits until school and child care fully resumed;
- providing immediate funding to stabilize the child care sector;
- hiring more teachers and other education workers to allow for more and smaller classes;
- providing immediate funding for urgent school repairs and upgrades, including infection control measures, such as touch-free sinks and soap dispensers;
- providing immediate funding for more school buses to better allow physical distancing by students;
- providing additional, fully funded support for students with special needs and who are struggling;

—addressing disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Indigenous and racialized communities and the potential ramifications on students and their families;

—striking a COVID-19 recovery school advisory group that included teachers and education workers, as I mentioned previously;

—consulting with all levels of government to find ways to use available public infrastructure to allow school and child care centres to resume in person for as many children as possible in the safest and healthiest way;

—guaranteeing that no essential workers currently receiving emergency child care would lose child care provisions when that emergency child care program ended; and

—guaranteeing paid sick leave for all workers in keeping with the current efforts under way to control the spread of COVID-19.

And we can see the impact today of that lack of planning in our schools. Teachers and education workers are exhausted, and we're just at the beginning of November. Parents are at wits' end, I think it's fair to say. Kids are stressed and their learning has been compromised by gaps in the plan. And rising community spread of the virus is putting our schools at risk of closure once again.

With the time I have left, I want to touch on just a couple of other measures referenced in this package. In the supporting businesses section, one of the regulations allowed some exemptions in terms of patios and curbside pickup, something that we, on this side of the House, had advocated for. I want to acknowledge that this is something that helped businesses in my community a great deal; indeed, it was a lifesaver for many of them. But I have to say that, overall, small businesses in Davenport were really left hanging.

It was clear during this period that what was needed to see them through this closure were direct supports. They needed rent relief. They needed transition funding to move online. Some of this came, but for a lot of businesses it was too little, too late. I heard time and time again that the commercial rent relief program that this government developed with the federal Liberals was a failure. Many of those businesses are gone now, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, we have been calling for more comprehensive supports for months, but we're still seeing a piecemeal approach to support tucked into bills with measures that have nothing to do with this pandemic.

Fast-forward to today, Mr. Speaker: Businesses are telling me that the uncertainty and sudden shifts in direction are hurting their ability to keep up. Many are once again just a bad week away from closure and, with winter coming, it really does not look good.

So when we're looking back at the effectiveness of these orders, I think we have to conclude that the supports for small businesses were and remain seriously lacking.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much more I'd like to say about this. But looking back as we do today, we need to take stock of what happened, what could have been done better, and we need to learn from it. I think we would benefit from doing that in a deeper way with more meaningful

collaboration with the front-line workers in our communities who were the most impacted, and in the case of education, with students and education workers on the front line. I think we would benefit a great deal from that, and I'm unfortunately not seeing that from this government.

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: It's certainly an honour to rise this evening to discuss the government's management—or rather their mismanagement—of the COVID-19 public health crisis and its impact on Ontarians.

For months, Ontarians have been subjected to lockdowns while facing income loss and severe isolation. While many of these emergency measures were of course necessary to stop the spread of COVID-19, the government has failed to provide vulnerable Ontarians and small businesses with the supports necessary to get them through these unprecedented times.

Businesses need support programs that they can actually access, not announcements and empty promises with no follow-through from the government. Students and teachers need smaller class sizes, not spin. And nobody in Ontario needs a government that's focused on giving political favours to their friends instead of supporting the safety of everyone and the recovery of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, this is the reality that we're living with right now in Ontario: COVID-19 is going to be with us for some time, and the government needs to get their act together.

One of the many areas where this government has fallen short has been the proper planning for the second wave. This failure stems from a testing and contact-tracing program that's been chaotic to say the least. For months—for months—the government was telling Ontarians to go get tested. Anyone could go get a test, no matter what: "Go get a test." But they were unable to meet their basic testing targets. Mothers and fathers waited in line outside with their children for hours waiting to be tested, often to be turned away after hours and hours of waiting in line.

I was there one afternoon when this happened in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. In fact the federal Conservative leader couldn't get a test in Ottawa. He had to access the special testing for members of Parliament, as we all know.

This chaos with COVID-19 testing has flowed right into flu season and the distribution of the flu shot, which the government told us was going to be the centerpiece. One of the most important pieces of their second-wave plan was going to be an aggressive and unprecedented flu shot campaign. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've seen the results: Doctors' offices and pharmacies are not receiving the doses they need, people are being turned away daily, and there's been no priority given to children, seniors, or those with serious health issues, who are at greater risk of complications. Waiting three and four weeks to get an appointment for a flu shot is common, and some have waited all that time only to be turned away at the very last moment, Mr. Speaker. The flu shot takes place every year. It should be down to a science, but somehow this government hasn't been able to master this very simple process.

L'un des nombreux domaines dans lesquels le gouvernement n'a pas été à la hauteur est la planification adéquate de la deuxième vague. Cet échec est dû au désordre des tests et de la recherche des contacts.

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Pendant des mois, le gouvernement a dit aux Ontariens de se faire tester mais n'a pas pu atteindre les objectifs de base en matière de tests. Les mères et les pères attendaient à l'extérieur avec leurs jeunes enfants pendant des heures en attendant de se faire tester, pour ensuite être refusés.

Ce même désordre s'est fait sentir dans la distribution du vaccin contre la grippe, lequel, selon le gouvernement, était au centre du plan de la deuxième vague. Les cabinets médicaux et les pharmacies ne reçoivent pas les doses dont ils ont besoin. Des personnes sont refusées chaque jour. Aucune priorité n'a été accordée aux enfants, aux personnes âgées ou à celles qui ont de graves problèmes de santé et qui sont plus exposés à des complications.

Le vaccin contre la grippe a lieu chaque année, monsieur le Président. Pourtant, ce gouvernement ne peut pas maîtriser ce simple processus.

And while we're speaking of public health, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to understand the grave implications of the government's failure to take public health advice when it comes to class sizes and the reopening of schools. Although school boards and teachers continue to work tirelessly with the resources at their disposal to ensure the safety of our students, the government put everyone in harm's way by ignoring the best advice from experts, including the need to hire more teachers, capping class sizes for social distancing, and so much more. One need only look at what has transpired in our long-term-care homes over the last number of months to understand how ignoring expert advice can lead to disastrous results.

Les responsables de la santé publique ont déterminé que la taille des classes non sécuritaire, causée par l'approche sous-financée pour la réouverture des écoles, sont les principaux facteurs d'éclosion dans les foyers dans les points chauds de l'Ontario.

Et bien que les conseils scolaires et les enseignants continuent de travailler sans relâche avec les ressources à leur disposition pour assurer la sécurité de nos élèves, ce gouvernement a mis tout le monde en danger en ignorant les meilleurs conseils des experts : notamment la nécessité d'embaucher plus d'enseignants, de plafonner les classes pour la distanciation sociale, et bien plus encore.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also take a moment to talk about what has happened in our long-term-care sector, which has been much discussed in this place the last number of weeks and months.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Conservative government announced significant cuts to public health spending across Ontario, and according to the Financial Accountability Office, in the fiscal year 2019-20, the government spent \$49 million less than planned to support Chief Medical Officers of Health and programs to promote

and protect the public health of Ontarians. The government further shortchanged Ontarians by \$65 million less in support for local health service providers, long-term-care homes and other community health programs. The effects of this government's cuts on public health, on long-term-care-home inspections and on the health care system in general have been highlighted during the pandemic.

There is nowhere that has been hit harder by the pandemic than our long-term-care homes, and as we all know, Mr. Speaker, it didn't have to be this way. Had the government acted immediately upon learning about the tragic conditions in long-term care in the spring, homes could have been secured ahead of the second wave. On March 30, the Premier talked about building an "iron ring" of protection around Ontario's seniors, and since then we've seen the iron ring deteriorate, as long-term-care homes across the province struggle and fail to provide the most basic level of care to the most vulnerable members of our society.

Throughout the pandemic, our Liberal caucus has made a number of recommendations to the government regarding the situation in long-term care, one of which included prohibiting staff from working in more than one home at a time. Unfortunately, the government waited months to implement this rule, and as one of the results, thousands of vulnerable seniors were exposed to this virus and many lost their lives.

In recent days, we've heard that the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission has detailed the ways that this government has failed Ontario seniors. The commission noted that long-term care was left out of the COVID-19 response plan, and they've made it clear that any delay in acting on their advice and their recommendations will have grave consequences for residents in long-term care. The Premier owes it to Ontario families to act urgently on all these recommendations and to do so with haste.

Finally, I want to touch on the situation with our municipalities here in Ontario. The COVID-19 crisis has dealt a devastating blow to Ontario cities and towns, and the combination of increased expenses and a dramatic reduction in revenues is a developing crisis that threatens to stifle economic recovery and lead to social discord. With millions of Ontarians remaining at home over the first several months of the COVID-19 crisis, municipalities across the province saw significant revenue decline.

Today, in fact, the city of Ottawa noted that they're facing a \$181-million shortfall this year, and the senior levels of government, including this government here of Ontario, have only committed to date \$124 million. According to the mayor, in 2020-21 the city is facing a \$153-million deficit, and they're putting plans in place for not receiving government money.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I want to thank you very much for this opportunity to talk about the mismanagement of COVID-19.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short

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	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	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	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	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	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	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
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	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	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (IND)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Andrea Khanjin, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Mitzie Hunter, Logan Kanapathi
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Robin Martin, Norman Miller
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Roman Baber
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stephen Blais
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Daryl Kramp
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
John Fraser, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
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

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

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