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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 November 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 novembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAGNA CARTA DAY ACT (IN MEMORY
OF JULIA MUNRO, MPP), 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LE JOUR DE LA GRANDE
CHARTRE (À LA MÉMOIRE DE JULIA
MUNRO, DÉPUTÉE PROVINCIALE)

Ms. McKenna moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 201, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day / Projet de loi 201, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Grande Charte.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: I'm so thrilled to be here, speaking at third reading of Bill 201, the Magna Carta Day Act (In Memory of Julia Munro, MPP). The road to getting this bill to third reading started six years ago when Julia Munro first introduced the bill. I want to thank all MPPs for your support at first and second reading.

A special thanks to the members on the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, especially our committee Chair, the great member from Mississauga-Malton, and our newly elected Vice-Chair, the wonderful member from Ottawa South. The bill was considered by committee on October 7, 14 and 16, and I was pleased to receive support at committee from Omar Ha-Redeye of the Durham Community Legal Clinic, which provides legal services, information, education and representation for historically marginalized and low-income residents in Durham region.

As we begin third reading of this bill today, I can see the finish line. I want to take a moment to look back at where we started. When I was driving here today, I was thinking about the very first time I came into this House in 2011. Lady Munro, which she was affectionately known as, sat right across, there, the third row up. Minister Scott sat between us. But Thursdays, we had our duty day. I learned so much from her when she would sit there. She would sit and talk. Funnily enough, she never did tell me she was a teacher, but you just knew she was a teacher by the way she conducted herself.

There were just so many things that she would have loved. I want to mention a few things today. She would just think this government House leader has done a

phenomenal job, and I'll tell you why. Today, PMBs are what we're doing here today at 9 o'clock this morning so everybody can appreciate them, instead of on Thursdays when most people have gone home. She would be thrilled that that standing order was changed.

She would also be thrilled because PAs now have an opportunity in this House to actually get up—because they know their file—and be able to continue in the House as opposed to being out there. I know she would just be thrilled with the changes that this government House leader, the member from Markham-Stouffville, has made.

I just want to also shout out first of all to say that I know the member from King-Vaughan—it's his birthday today. I'll tell you, when I used to sit across over there, she would love ministers like that. She would say how they made our lives so easy because they knew their files. So happy birthday to him first and foremost, but I wanted to point that out because she made comments about ministers all the time and how wonderfully they knew their portfolios.

I had a conversation this morning with the former Leader of the Opposition, and this is what he said: "She really revered the institution and the important mission we were dispatched to do. She had great respect for MPPs and all of those who made the Legislature function, the traditions of the place and its history. Debate was thoughtful, meaningful and researched. She was never a heckler. She always listened. That demeanour and approach made her a natural Deputy Speaker." So that was lovely that he said that.

Then I actually spoke with the member from Oxford, and he said to me, "Jane, I went numerous times to her riding, and what she was like here?"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Sorry to interrupt the member, but when you step over here, you're out of the range of the microphone, and we're not hearing you as well as we could if you were standing by the microphone that is lit. Thank you.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you, Speaker. He said that he constantly would go and help—when she had a riding, he would go up, and he said that what she was like in this House was exactly what she was like in the riding when he used to go and speak there. But he also said that she came two times to his riding in Tillsonburg for her dog shows, and he said that as much as she knew her dogs were the best to win, she walked around and encouraged everybody there that they had an opportunity to win as well. He also said to me, "Jane, the most wonderful thing about her was she never lectured. She never repeated her opinion on you. She always just was thoughtful of the things she wanted you to hear and what she wanted you to say."

When I got in here and we both sat over there on Thursdays for duty day, I just learned so much. We had, of course, the same people that were there. Just a couple of funny things: John O'Toole used to always grab his cookie and put it in the drawer in a Kleenex. She used to laugh because he used to run in and get it. And then I was thinking this morning driving in about Frank Klees as well, when he used to get up and take his glasses off, and she used to say that every time he took his glasses off, "It's go-to time," because he'd get talking away. I just wanted to bring those because I was driving in this morning and thinking about all those wonderful things about her and just wanted to tell a bit of a story about that.

She also used to say, "You'll make it what you make it here, Jane." She used to say that what people think of you doesn't define who you are. There was always so much talk about the past in here, and she said, "People always talk about your past because they're insecure of your future." There were just so many things that I remember she used to say to me about those things, so I just wanted to bring those up.

I've got notes everywhere, so I'm going to go back over here, Speaker.

Julia Munro was inspired. She had just purchased a reproduction of the Magna Carta at an auction and it gave her an idea. As a long-time teacher, she saw an opportunity to raise awareness through a piece of legislation. In her words, "People don't know a lot about" Magna Carta. "To me, that's just all the more reason to bring awareness to it." That's why, on April 2, 2015, York-Simcoe MPP Julia Munro stood up in this place and said, "I'm excited today to debate my private member's bill, Bill 23, the Magna Carta Day Act, which proclaims June 15 each year as Magna Carta Day."

Today, Speaker, I'm honoured to continue where MPP Munro left off. Let's take a moment to review some of the legislative history of Julia Munro's Magna Carta Day Act. She first introduced it on July 23, 2014. She introduced it again on February 28, 2017, and again on March 20, 2018. It was her last piece of legislation. All three times, the bill passed first and second reading with all-party support. Six years later, I'm introducing her bill again, this time in her memory, as the longest-serving female member of the Ontario Legislature.

0910

She taught high school. She was a history teacher in Markham and Newmarket for 24 years. An interesting bit of trivia: She taught Barenaked Ladies drummer Tyler Stewart at Huron Heights Secondary School. When he was asked who was the most influential person who led him to music, it was Lady Munro.

Before the 1995 provincial election, Julia decided, in her words, that she was "tired of sitting around the kitchen table complaining about politics and decided to get involved." She was elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1995 during the Mike Harris sweep, defeating New Democrat Larry O'Connor in the riding of Durham-York, getting 61.8% of all votes cast. She was re-elected in 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011 and 2014.

In government, Julia Munro served as parliamentary assistant to the Premier, government whip, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, Chair of the Management Board and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture. She lived on a farm near Sutton with her husband, John, and her daughter, Genevieve, and she loved dogs.

Many of us referred to her as Lady Munro because she was an inspiration and a role model for many women. Julia had great courage and was known for her sincerity and for always keeping the public good foremost in her mind. As a politician, she was respected across party lines. She was passionate about history, the Constitution and proper governance. This is why recognizing the importance of Magna Carta in our democracy meant so much to her. She was respectful and compassionate, she cared deeply about the people she served, but most of all, Julia Munro was kind.

So many of us here in this place have wonderful memories of Lady Munro: our Minister of Transportation, who in 2018 was elected in Julia's former riding, and of course the member for Barrie-Innisfil, who worked for Julia in her riding and at Queen's Park before her own successful election in 2018.

I also want to acknowledge again the support I've received in moving this bill forward from our Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

My friend the NDP member from Windsor-Tecumseh, in a debate for this bill back in 2017, said, "We in this chamber are here because we are able to stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.... We are here because of established and accepted rules and traditions, and these rules and traditions are protected by law."

American author Diana Gabaldon, known for the *Outlander* novel series, once said, "Things you cherish and hold dear are like pearls on a string. Cut the knot and they scatter across the floor." Our parliamentary democracy, like a string of pearls, depends on strong connections, a foundation from which everything is built upon.

Magna Carta, or more simply the Great Charter of Freedoms, has been described as the greatest constitutional document of all time and as England's greatest export. But the Magna Carta came about through a mediated settlement. King John of England had just lost a battle. He needed money to reclaim lost land. To raise money, he increased taxes and created new ones: income taxes, import and export taxes, inheritance and estate taxes, and even a tax on widows that wanted to remain single. Then, after a series of bad harvests, which resulted in increased demand for food and high inflation, the barons, the 1%, revolted, and England was on the brink of civil war.

On one side, there was a very unpopular king, and on the other, landowners that he was at war with over how much money he wanted from them. In the middle was Archbishop Langton of Canterbury, who acted as the mediator. They met at a neutral site, Runnymede, near Windsor.

Let's get one thing straight: King John didn't come to the table willingly; in fact, the barons actually chased and

captured him. On June 15, 1215, he was forced to sign a document that put limits on his power and guaranteed various rights. The key principles of Magna Carta included that nobody is above the law of the land; the freedom from unlawful detention without cause or evidence; trial by jury was established to settle disputes; and—a major first step in women's rights—a widow could not be forced to marry and give up her property.

Now, King John wasn't really interested in giving up power. As MPP Munro said when she first introduced the bill in 2015, "King John felt that he could sign it and then wiggle around it, but history turned out differently."

The Magna Carta also inspired later charters: in 1217, the Charter of the Forest, which set precedents for the management of shared resources, and the 1258 Provisions of Oxford, which led to the development of Parliament. The principles of the Magna Carta are ingrained within the British common law system and are reflected in the Canadian Constitution and our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Now, the great part of Hansard is that it captures every word said in this place for all time. I want to knowledge the NDP member for the then riding of Timmins–James Bay and current opposition House leader who, during debate on April 2, 2015, said, "What's interesting is, some of the kings that we remember as being the better ones actually took the heart of Magna Carta and brought it further.... They started to understand, as a monarchy, that they had to move in a different direction."

During the same debate, the NDP member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said, "The Magna Carta is part of Canada's cultural and political heritage. It has inspired the truly oppressed around the world. For eight centuries, the Magna Carta has fired the hearts and minds of those who seek justice in the face of tyranny and exploitation."

During the March 20, 2018, debate, the NDP member from Oshawa said, "Magna Carta stands as a written flashpoint that has lit the fires of challenge and justice, inspiring the truly oppressed around the world. The Magna Carta represents equality before the law, trial by peers, immunity from illegal imprisonment and taxation only by the consent of the citizenry."

During the same debate, the NDP member for Toronto–Danforth said, "Nelson Mandela cited the Magna Carta in his defence.... He lived in an unjust society under a ... government that denied the rule of law by denying the equality of the people it was meant to serve. Apartheid in South Africa denied the promises of the Magna Carta."

Speaker, before I share details of the support I received from various members of Ontario's legal community, I want to go back to Monday, August 11, 2008, to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly that was discussing proposed changes to the standing orders. At about 9:15 a.m. on that day, there was some discussion about petitions, and the NDP member from Welland, the late Peter Kormos, said, "The right to petition goes back to Magna Carta. It was the hard-earned right to petition the King, and it was a historical struggle. So that petition, the right to petition the King, is a Magna Carta-based right." I

will always remember Peter as being unrelenting in his ability to fight for the underdog, as someone who fought for change and, if nothing else, drew attention to those things which he felt strongly about.

In preparation for today's debate, I also reached out to some distinguished members of Ontario's legal community for their thoughts in declaring June 15 Magna Carta Day. Here is some of what I heard:

Teresa Donnelly, treasurer of the Law Society of Ontario, shared her support: "One of the Law Society of Ontario's primary purposes is to facilitate access to justice for the people of Ontario. The Magna Carta is the foundation of our democracy and it should not be forgotten."

Joanna Baron, executive director of the Canadian Constitution Foundation, said, "The Magna Carta represents the bedrock of the principle of the rule of law and the individual sphere of liberty against arbitrary power. The Canadian Constitution Foundation celebrates the life of Ms. Munro and applauds the introduction of the Magna Carta Day Act as an important recognition for all Ontarians."

William Woodward, chair of the Federation of Ontario Law Associations, said, "On behalf of the Federation of Ontario Law Associations I am pleased to support this bill recognizing the Magna Carta, which has provided the foundation for the democratic principles that we as citizens enjoy. I would also like to congratulate and thank you for your efforts in guiding this legislation in memory of Julia Munro who introduced it."

They say that life can only be understood backwards but must be lived forward. The Magna Carta was the foundation. It started off what we enjoy today: the rules that we abide by in this House, the way we treat each other, the role of the government and role of the opposition. We take a lot for granted with our parliamentary democracy that we inherited from the people who came before us and who fought hard to preserve it.

MPP Munro introduced this same Magna Carta bill three times. With my introduction, this bill has now been debated five times and considered by four different legislative committees. I am so grateful to everyone here for your support to pay the ultimate tribute to Julia Munro, passing a bill in her honour that meant so much to her.

I leave you with a few words from our late colleague: "The ideas contained within the Magna Carta evolved over the centuries.... It signifies that no one, not even the crown, is above the law. That is such an important concept."

0920

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is quite a moment, I think, to proclaim Bill 201, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day, because I think we all have special ties to the person who introduced this bill. The member from Burlington has given us a very good chronology of events with how it got here today.

The Magna Carta bill obviously has ties to a fallen member, Lady Julia Munro. The member from Burlington was elected in 2011. I, as well, and many of my colleagues,

in the class of 2011, came to this Legislature. I listened to the stories of her reminiscing about her communication and relationship with Lady Munro.

I did not have a very close relationship with Lady Munro, but from afar, I surmised that she seemed to be a very nice person, a very thoughtful person and a very reasonable person. From the stories that the member from Burlington talked about, some of the things she said were really true to life, about not bringing up people's past because someone doing that can mean you're the one who is insecure, right? Those are life lessons I think we should all understand, maybe with age and experience.

Her being a history teacher, I think it's very, very apropos that she is bringing a bill of history to the Legislature, and even though she's not with us any longer, she is creating history by our passing the Magna Carta bill. It's very significant. She's going to leave a legacy in this Legislature, in Ontario, of passing a bill about democracy, passing a bill about equality, passing a bill about how no one is above the law in this province, and in this country, really.

The Magna Carta bill—I'm going to read it, because the preamble does give a really good explanation of the essence of the bill:

"The Magna Carta is a revolutionary document that influenced the English system of common law and was a precursor in the development of England's—and later Canada's—constitutional monarchy.

"On June 15, 1215, King John affixed his seal to the Magna Carta, which placed limits on the monarch's power to overrule the law and protected the rights of ordinary people. The document introduced key principles that hold true in democratic societies today, including equal justice for everyone, freedom from unlawful detention, the right to a trial by jury, and rights for women.

"It is important for the Magna Carta to be honoured and remembered as a document that changed the course of history. The fundamental traditions of equality and freedom that characterize our democratic society—particularly that nobody, not even the Crown, is above the law—originated in this important document."

It goes on to talk about, "Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts" it as follows.

It very well speaks to the principle of democracy. I think everyone here, we were all elected under a democratic process and we all respect what our role is in the Legislature. Saying that we have to spell out that no one is above the law is kind of unusual for me, because I think everyone should understand that, that no one is above the law, that we're all held accountable for our actions, and there are consequences to things that we do.

I say that in the context of the Legislature and the kind of legislation we present. There have been many things that as the opposition we agree and disagree with, but that's what democracy is about. I think Lady Munro understood that. People that you work with in this House have a difference of opinions and they're entitled to those opinions. She never lectured. When you have an opinion

you're allowed to express that opinion without somebody scolding you, without somebody wagging their finger. As I said, I didn't know her that well, but as a teacher she obviously was well regarded in her role.

I read a story recently about teachers, and it reflected what a teacher really aspires to. Of course there are so many good teachers. We all have had teachers in our lives that we look up to, and still today we admire them and how they taught us through our educational journey. A student had stolen some money out of a jar in the classroom. It was known that that happened and the teacher said, "The person who did that, please come forward." No one came forward, so what she did was, she said, "What I'm going to do is, everyone close their eyes in the classroom. I'm going to check your pockets and whoever has the money—no one will know. We'll just put it back in the jar and we'll just move forward." She went to each student and checked their pockets and found the money and put it in the jar.

Years later, a man came to her and said, "I just want to thank you because you changed the course of my life. That day when you didn't publicly humiliate me or embarrass me in front of the whole class I felt like I had a reason to do better things with my life, that somebody actually cared." She was surprised. She said, "Who are you?" She didn't recognize him. He said, "I'm such and such. Because of you doing that and nobody knew, I just want you to know how you changed the way I saw things." She said, "I never knew who you were." He said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I closed my eyes when I went to each student's pockets."

So you see, judging people on one act that they do doesn't help you, because you formulate opinions and judgments, and it doesn't help the person who can maybe have an opportunity to make a difference in the world, go in a different direction, take a different path.

I found that story very, very endearing, and also very true to how we should operate. That is the sign of a good teacher. I think Julia Munro lived up to that. The member from Burlington talked about how she didn't lecture and how she didn't impose her opinion; she listened. It was a wonderful story, and I'm glad that you were able to be friends with her for the short time that we had to engage with her.

We talked about how she loved dogs. She was a dog trainer. I love animals, specifically dogs. We have a pet, Maya. She's a beagle and she's one of the family. I think Julia Munro would be very impressed with her. She's a beautiful specimen. She has all the characteristics of a beagle. She has the saddle, she has the white tip, she has the white breast and she has the markings of a winner in a dog show for beagles. The beagle is with us now, after Julia Munro, but I would have shown her pictures of my prize-winning beagle if she was around.

Back to the bill: I'm going to read a little bit about the history. The bill is proclaiming June 15 of each year as Magna Carta Day. As we've said, the bill has been tabled a few times by Julia, former MPP for York-Simcoe, who was first elected in 1995 and served in the Legislature until 2018, when she chose not to run for re-election.

The first version was tabled to coincide with the 800th anniversary celebrations in 2015. The 2015 iterations of the bill passed unanimously on voice. Lady Munro was the longest serving female MPP in Ontario's history. Unfortunately, she passed away in June 2019.

0930

It's a really great way to pay homage to Julia's work, because the bill says that it's also giving rights and freedoms to women. Her having that distinguished title right now of being the longest-serving woman in the Legislature, it's kind of neat that she was bringing that bill forward.

Magna Carta is Latin for "great charter" and is one of the most important documents in political history, so it's very significant. It remains a powerful and iconic symbol of civil liberties around the world, advancing the causes of constitutionalism and parliamentarianism.

Described as England's greatest export, the Magna Carta was first drawn up in Britain and signed by King John on June 15, 1215, to make peace between the unpopular king and a group of rebel barons, limiting the powers of the monarch under the Angevin kings. In particular during John's reign, the king's rights had frequently been used inconsistently, often in an attempt to maximize the royal income from the barons.

Later, it served as a source of inspiration to those opposing the king during the English civil war and helped lead to rule of constitutional law throughout the English-speaking world.

June 15, 2015, marked the 800th anniversary of the signing—and the organizations and institutions with major celebratory events held in Runnymede, England, to mark the occasion.

The 750th anniversary passed in 1965 with little fanfare, and plans for the 700th anniversary were abandoned due to the First World War. So it took a while before we came to the 800th, where it could have the recognition that it's due.

It was the first document forced onto the King of England by his subjects, with the objective of protecting their privileges and limiting his powers. Sometimes with legislation or where there's change, there is conflict; there is a struggle. People rebelled and literally forced it on him. Good thing that he came around and saw the light and did the right thing.

It was annulled by the Pope shortly after it was signed and was redrafted in 1216, 1217 and 1225. It was confirmed as English law in 1297, but most parts have been repealed.

Clause 1, securing the freedom of the English church, clause 9, guaranteeing the ancient liberties of the city of London, and clause 29, the right to due process, including trial by jury, are still enforced. Clause 29 states, "No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned, or disseised of his freehold, or liberties, or free customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or any other wise destroyed; nor will we not pass upon him, nor condemn him, but by lawful judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land. We will sell to no man, we will not deny or defer to any man either justice or right." That section is still applicable in the Magna Carta.

This is something that maybe isn't necessarily going to change the lives of a lot of people in Ontario, but it's important, because it is history. From our history is who we are today. Our actions in history frame how we behave, and especially when we talk about how we run the Legislature. That history is significant today.

So I want to send out my sincerest congratulations to Lady Munro's family on having this be something that the government has put on the order paper and passed through the House. It's a wonderful gesture. We're glad to see that the work of members in this Legislature does come to fruition. Sometimes it takes a while, but there are governments that come around to ideas that maybe happened years ago but then become relevant later on in life.

So with that, Speaker, I'm happy to say that of course we support this bill and look forward to it coming into law and royal assent at that time.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm honoured to speak today on Bill 201, put forward by the member for Burlington in commemoration of the beloved Julia Munro, better known by many as Lady Munro.

Bill 201, Magna Carta Day Act (In Memory of Julia Munro, MPP), 2020: In my speech about this private member's bill, I want to discuss Lady Munro's commitment to upholding democracy and reminding our very busy society of what we take for granted every day. After all, she did introduce the Magna Carta Day Act a few times, and she was relentless in ensuring that it was enshrined in current-day history so that we can remember what core principles, convictions and values got us here today. Thus, it is so fitting that the name of today's private member's bill also bears her name to pay respect and tribute to her achievements and commitment to freedom and democracy.

I will talk in my speech about the core convictions that Lady Munro held on to. No matter what was popular, she always believed in what was right, and I was very fortunate to learn many valuable lessons from her.

When speaking in the third session of the 41st Parliament, Julia Munro asked the following question in debate of her own private member's bill, the Magna Carta Day Act: "Eight hundred years later, why does it matter that a King agreed to meet his most influential barons on a field in England to sign a document that he intended to tear up?"

I will get to Lady Munro's answer in a few moments.

However, I wanted to ask another question that some might ask: What is the relevance of the British Constitution to us in Canada today? Canada is connected with Britain by language. Canada is connected with Britain by customs. Canada is connected with Britain by descent. But Canada's connection with Britain is more than just these things; Canada and Britain share a monarch, and we share our constitutional development. We have a Constitution that has developed over years—not starting in 1982 or 1931 or 1867. These dates are all important, but none is remotely close to being the point of origin—the foundation.

Up until 1982, the power to amend the Canadian Constitution rested in London, with the British Parliament.

Up until 1931 and the adoption of the Statute of Westminster, Canada was not a fully autonomous state with legislative independence.

Up until 1867, Canada was not a dominion—a confederated country in its own right, albeit with the limitations mentioned above.

The answer to the question I posed—“What is the relevance of the British Constitution to us, in Canada, today?” The answer is, Canada and Britain share, deep in our history—and not always remembered—the Magna Carta.

Sir Winston Churchill called the Magna Carta the “joint inheritance of the English-speaking world.”

We share the heritage of the Magna Carta not only with Britain, but also with 15 other realms of the Commonwealth. We also share that heritage with those countries, including the United States, whose foundational documents were inspired by those ideas of the Magna Carta.

To answer Julia Munro’s question of why the Magna Carta matters, I will turn to the answer that she herself provided in debate. She cited a passage by David Frum that appears on the back cover of Dr. Carolyn Harris’s book entitled *Magna Carta and Its Gifts to Canada*. Mr. Frum wrote: “When you speak your mind without fear, worship God as you think right, enjoy your property in security, or enter a courtroom confident that you cannot be punished until your guilt is proved—then you are standing at the end of a story that begins with these words written in Latin on parchment so long ago.” The words being referred to are written in the Magna Carta, Latin for “great charter.”

0940

Many factors went into the production of the Magna Carta, which are covered in Dr. Carolyn Harris’s book, a book which Julia Munro—Lady Munro—was quite fond of and which was later recommended to me. Suffice it to say, one of the things Dr. Harris notes is that the Magna Carta “is the first example of an English King accepting limits on his power imposed by his subjects, and its terms set precedents for a broad range of modern legal rights.”

The Magna Carta is as near to a foundational document as we get; it’s a piece of sheepskin parchment, after all, four copies of which survive from the year 1215. So it is very appropriate that we are here today to recognize that historic document that is the foundation of our country. If Bill 201 is passed, when it receives royal assent, June 15 in Ontario will be proclaimed Magna Carta Day.

We are also here to honour Julia Munro, whose name appears, for good reason, in the title of this act. Lady Munro was the longest-serving female MPP in the history of the province, serving here for 23 years. During her time in government and in opposition, she held many roles. She taught history for 24 years, including serving as the head of a secondary school’s history department.

There have been a few occasions, I have to say, that I have heard from constituents—as you know, Lady Munro served in York–Simcoe, and later part of that riding

became Innisfil, where I serve. There have been a few occasions when I have run into her students, and they certainly think very fondly of her. In fact, one example was when Julia and her husband, John, and I were having breakfast. The owner of the restaurant was actually a former student of hers and said he would never think that he would have been interested in history if it wasn’t for Lady Munro.

Although I was not a student of hers in a high school classroom, I was certainly a student of hers here at the Ontario Legislature for a few years and, of course, throughout my involvement and her involvement in the Ontario PC Party. I miss our chats dearly. She was a great mentor and she was there for me for many hallmarks of my life. For example, she was there when I lost my grandmother, who brought me to this country and raised me and who actually shares a lot of commonalities with Lady Munro. They both believe that things come and go, and knowledge is forever, and Julia made it her goal, just like my grandmother did, to ensure that people have that knowledge, which is very much strength and power. She was also there for me when I first ran for the nomination, and supported me and gave me her time and advice. She was there when I opened my first campaign office as a candidate.

Certainly, she was never one to let me forget and she reminded many people in this Legislature—I’m sure you may recall this—of the core principles of the PC Party. We’d often have many discussions on this, especially when we were doing policy development. She served on the blue-ribbon panel on financial literacy when the PC Party was creating its party platform. Certainly, we had many discussions on that. Again, it was about keeping that knowledge and uplifting society.

Here are the core principles that she didn’t want us to forget, and I will quote them from our constitution:

“(a) We believe in freedom of speech, worship and assembly, in loyalty to Canada and to the monarch of Canada and in the rule of law.

“(b) We believe that government should serve the people and that progress requires a competitive economy, which, accepting its social responsibilities, allows every individual freedom of opportunity and initiative and the peaceful enjoyment of the fruits of his or her own labour.

“(c) We believe in the ethical and accountable execution of the business of government.

“(d) We believe that the interests of Ontario are best served by a strong, united and democratic Canada.

“(e) We believe that economic freedom, entrepreneurial spirit and the right to private property are essential to economic prosperity and political freedom.

“(f) We believe in the values of the family which encourage tolerance and mutual support.

“(g) We believe that social justice entails equality of opportunity, including fair and equal treatment for all Ontarians and the provision of support to those in need.”

Lastly, Speaker, “(h) We believe in and accept our responsibilities for the preservation of Ontario’s heritage

and cultural diversity and the conservation and renewal of our environment for present and future generations.”

This shows you the strong convictions that Julia Munro had always upheld, and obviously reminded all of us, because sometimes we could get a little bit lost. But this also shows you that Julia Munro loved history and she loved politics. She was an ardent believer in the power of the system of democracy: the system that has the Magna Carta as its foundation, of course, and the democracy that we have because of the Magna Carta.

In the House, following the announcement that she would not be running for the 42nd Parliament, Julia said this about democracy. She said, “Sitting at the kitchen table won’t cut it.” She said, “It is your responsibility to be engaged.” Well, I take that to heart, because I am engaged. Her licence plate also read—the frame of her licence plate, I should say—“Democracy: Don’t waste it.” Certainly, I try to live up to that every day and try not to waste it.

To end, I do want to end with a few notes. I want to quote Lady Munro from July 23, 2014, on the occasion of her first introduction of Magna Carta Day:

“The document introduced key principles that hold true in democratic societies today, including equal justice for everyone, freedom from unlawful detention, the right to a trial by jury and rights for women.

“It is important for the Magna Carta to be honoured and remembered as a document that changed the course of history. The fundamental traditions of equality and freedom that characterize our democratic society, particularly that nobody—not even the crown—is above the law, originated in this important document.”

Sadly, Julia Munro, Lady Munro, passed away on June 12, 2019, just a few days shy of the 804th anniversary of the Magna Carta. I applaud that everyone wholeheartedly supports this bill, as it is a great tribute to the lovely and graceful mark that Julia Munro has left on the world so that we, as Canadians, can remember that foundation of democracy, what we need to uphold today; and forever, we can remember Julia Munro on that day.

Thank you, Julia, for everything that you have done, and to your family. I’m so glad that we can continue to look at this day, remember you, your values and reflect on what we can do better as a society.

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

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: It’s very much a pleasure to join the debate today, not only to recognize the amazing work that the member of Burlington has done to reintroduce Magna Carta Day, but to do so to celebrate Julia Munro.

I’m going to start by thanking everyone who has spoken today, because the member from London–Fanshawe spoke to the merits of Magna Carta, and I want to share that she embodies so many qualities that we remember fondly of Julia Munro. I want to thank her for her thoughtfulness. I agree: We should be respecting different opinions in this House, outside of this House, and whenever we try to make a difference.

To the member from Barrie–Innisfil—I wear my heart on my sleeve, everybody. But hearing you speak very, very clearly, Julia Munro knew what she was doing when she shared so much with you. It was like she was passing the torch to the next generation. Hearing you speak shows that millennials can care about the Constitution. You can care about respecting rules and process. You proved in your remarks today that millennials, your generation, actually understand what it means to connect to history. By respecting and embracing history, you’re poised for an amazing future, so thank you for your remarks.

Member from Burlington, I’m going to save you for the end.

But I’m going to talk about two things when it comes to Julia Munro, and that is who she was as a person, who I came to know, as well as what the Magna Carta meant in terms of women’s rights.

0950

First of all, let’s talk about the Julia Munro that I came to love. It was in about 2008 or 2009 the PC women hosted an event to introduce aspiring politicians to what it’s like to not only run in politics but to serve as a woman parliamentarian. I remember the day that I attended this seminar. Julia was part of a panel discussion, and she hooked me. She was very thoughtful, she was very caring, and she shared so many nuggets of wisdom and a little bit of joy in recognizing what it truly means to represent the people from your home riding. Fast-forward to 2011: My mentor then came to my riding with her husband, John, to help me get into the groove of what it was like to participate in a campaign.

Again, people have spoken about the qualities of Julia Munro. She was true, whether it was on the campaign trail or on a panel discussion inciting women to get engaged or through to how she presented herself in this House.

I have to share with you that Julia, in no matter what role she served here at Queen’s Park and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, she embodied respect. She embodied respect, as the member from London–Fanshawe pointed out, for differing opinions. That’s how the dialogue becomes richer, when you do have those differing opinions. It’s so important to respect the fact that even though you sometimes differ, you can land in a really good place, and you can make something better because you’ve listened.

Julia also embodied respect for the tradition of this assembly. I think that’s something that we all have taken and embrace because of that. And Julia respected rules and processes. If ever before there was a time to remember the respect that we need to have for rules and processes, it’s now.

Again, this is a lady I came to know and love since around 2008 or 2009. One thing that bonded us together very quickly was the fact that she loved tradition, and she loved her hobby farm. We both were proud to tell everybody that we live on farms. I’ll never forget, one June I was lamenting the fact that we had a poor crop of rhubarb. Well, the next week, guess what was in my office? She had brought in and shared some of her own

rhubarb. It's interesting, I can just envision her now in her garden and thoughtfully caring for whatever she was growing, just the way she cared for legislation here in this House, in a very thoughtful, measured way.

But I have to share with everyone listening today that she had a sense of humour as well. In fact, the member from Chatham-Kent served with Julia as a deputy speaker, and he commented on how she wasn't opposed to staying up late at night. She was no stranger to the members' lounge on the third floor, and she was no stranger to a good sense of humour. With that, I want to share with you that—I'll never forget one caucus meeting we had. We always had our own table to sit at. At our table, there was the member from Perth-Wellington, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, the Minister of the Environment, the Associate Minister of Energy as well as the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. You can just imagine the banter we would have sometimes. Well, there was one day in particular that there was lot of banter happening. The caucus chair at the time, the Solicitor General, was throwing the stink eye in the corner. Then out of the blue, Julia contributed to the banter. Well, we all fell into belly laughs, and we couldn't stop it. So when the Solicitor General actually stood up to ask for some decorum, you saw five, six hands immediately point to Julia, that she was the root cause of it all. And that's just who she was. She was never more than who she was with. She had such a bright light, and she used that light in everything she did.

Another thing that really bonded us together was the spirit of trying to breed the best of the best, celebrating the science of genetics so you can produce the best of class. I did it; I grew up showing cattle, and I'm proud to have a purebred Boer goat herd that we would take to the Royal and have some national champions as well, just like Julia had champion dogs. Her family raised champion dogs, and she and Genevieve worked so hard on that.

There was one day when I remember she was trying to get somebody to swap House duty with her, because she had to get to the airport to get some straws. Now, not everybody would understand what that means, but I heard it from afar—the member from Perth-Wellington will understand the value of a straw. I'm sure the deputy leader of the opposition party would understand why it was important for Julia to get to the airport to collect these straws. When I heard her say that, I rearranged my afternoon to sub in for her, because I knew. Her eyes were just sparkling like it was Christmas Day, because she was about to embark on introducing some new genetics to her line of dogs, and that was pretty cool.

That's who she was. She celebrated what mattered. She celebrated what was true. She celebrated making a difference and being the best a person can be. That's why this bill is so important. To the member from Burlington: I thank you, because I'm so glad that you too had an opportunity to serve with Julia Munro, and that you too have picked up the torch to bring forward something that was so near and dear to her heart.

One thing that struck me is that we can't forget that the key principles of the Magna Carta include that nobody is

above the law of the land. Freedom from unlawful detention without cause or evidence, trial by jury—it goes on and on, but it all culminates to the point where the Magna Carta has to be recognized as a major first step in women's rights as well. So think about what you're doing. Thank you so much for honouring Julia Munro, but more so, to the member from Burlington, I thank you for standing up for women's rights as well. You are leaving your own legacy by making sure that we honour an amazing person's legacy unto itself.

That's why I want to talk about recognizing Julia. I'm the incoming chair for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians—some of you have heard me speak about this before—for the Canadian region. Recognizing that Julia was considering her retirement, I went to Speaker Levac and I said, "Look, we have a woman here who has proven her commitment to Ontario. She has demonstrated her absolute belief in just and right legislation that leads to laws that will be balanced and fair across the land. And we have a woman in our midst that has led by example and has lit the spark for so many other women. Could we please consider recognizing her by hanging her portrait in the Remarkable Assembly on the first floor?" He didn't even blink an eye before he said, "Absolutely." So I thank Speaker Dave Levac for doing that.

She joins the ranks of so many firsts: our first woman Premier, Premier Kathleen Wynne; our first woman Sergeant-at-Arms; Bette Stephenson etc. The list just goes on and on. I have to tell you, that Remarkable Assembly means something for all of us when we walk into this House. It means that women have paved the way for other young ladies to be inspired, much like the member from Barrie-Innisfil.

With that, I share with you that not only are we recognizing an amazing lady who brought very pertinent legislation to this House, but we're also recognizing that the Magna Carta represents the bedrock of the principle of the rule of law, and I thank the member for bringing it forward today.

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

Speaker's prerogative: For those of us who didn't have an opportunity to speak today, thank you to the member from Burlington for bringing this forward in the name of Julia Munro. Those of us who have served with Julia admire Julia. In fact, some of us actually love Julia. I say to her husband, John, and daughter, Genevieve, that you must be so proud of what you heard here today. Thank you.

Ms. McKenna has moved third reading of Bill 201, An Act to proclaim Magna Carta Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the—no, you're going to do that.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Wong): Third reading of the bill. Troisième lecture du projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Now I'll do this. I'm getting ahead of myself. Julia would be on my back for that.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further business at this time, this House is in recess until 10:15.

The House recessed from 1001 to 1015.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report entitled Provincial Infrastructure: A Review of the Province's Infrastructure and an Assessment of the State of Repair, from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: In schedule 6 of this year's budget bill, the Ford government is undermining conservation authorities across the province. The head of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority says that Ontario's proposed overhaul of conservation authorities would weaken environmental protections and put more power into the hands of private developers, while negating its fundamental role.

This is the Premier's latest pro-developer, anti-environment move. He dismantled cap-and-trade, loosened protections on endangered species, tried to open up the greenbelt twice—the list goes on.

None of the province's conservation authorities were consulted on this bill. Locally, the GRCA has raised serious concerns about the impact these changes will have on their operations. They manage water and other natural resources on behalf of 39 municipalities, close to one million residents. Conservation authorities are similar to public health in many ways: They're working when we don't see problems. CAs prevent flooding, protect species, address soil erosion and keep the water in our rivers and lakes clean.

The government chooses not to understand the inherent value of protecting our environment, but let's talk in their language. Do you know what's bad for the economy? Flooding—horrible for the economy and people's livelihoods. Insurance companies are now actively campaigning for flood mitigation strategies. Pollution—also bad for the economy, health outcomes and productivity.

All this to say, the move to undermine conservation authorities stinks of backroom politics. CAs do vital work, and their mandates deserve to be protected.

CHRISTMAS

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Every year on December 25, my family and I join billions of people around the world to celebrate Christmas. For us, Christmas is many things: a time for family, a time for love, a time for good cheer and food and, most importantly, a time for celebration.

On Christmas we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ, a truly great reason to celebrate. For me, this holiday reminds me to be thankful and reflect on all of the blessings that I have in my life. I am truly thankful this Christmas for my family and my faith.

As our cohort begins our final full day before the Christmas season, I can't help but feel excited at the prospect of spending quality time with my little ones and making memories that will last a lifetime.

We have all endured an incredibly difficult year, more difficult for many than any other year they have been through. But we have made it through: 2020 is almost over, and I believe that both Christmas and the new year are opportunities for us to not only celebrate but mark new beginnings. I have faith that we will usher in 2021, and it will be a better year for all of us.

We must always have hope for the future, and this time is perfect for finding that hope within ourselves. On reflecting on this year, let us acknowledge the difficulties but also find the silver linings. Perhaps we have strengthened our familial bonds during the additional time that we have had with our loved ones, or gained a better understanding of ourselves. Maybe we have grown more committed to learning and living our faith.

I encourage you all to try to find the good, even in the most difficult of times, and believe doing so means we will not allow ourselves to be defeated or broken by our circumstances. I encourage you to find joy and pride in your beliefs and convictions.

And so I wish a very merry Christmas to everyone in Scarborough Centre and in Ontario, and a holiday season full of faith, family, love, health, success and hope for all of our futures. May you know peace during this blessed time.

ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to share the voices of some of London's most vulnerable residents: those struggling to survive on ODSP. People with disabilities in London West have told me they can barely afford rent, much less groceries, a phone and a bus pass, on a monthly income of \$1,169. During a time of unprecedented hardship and stress, people with disabilities have been forgotten by this government.

Speaker, please listen to what they are saying:

"It seems everyone has had help with this difficult time except people with disabilities.... I am so saddened by the dignity we must lose, once we are disabled in this province."

“Disabled is not lazy or stupid, and disabled people can’t just get up and get a job.”

“Why does Ontario pride itself on keeping those who are unable to work held to a life of poverty?”

1020

This government had an opportunity to improve supports for people with disabilities but chose not to, tabling a budget that included no increase to social assistance rates and cutting the meagre pandemic top-up benefit after just four months—a benefit that required an application process few people with disabilities knew about.

It is devastating and gut-wrenching to hear of the increasing number of people with disabilities choosing medical assistance in dying because they have lost the will to live. This government can and must do better.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: It has been a tough year for all of us. However, I am proud to be part of a government that listens to the people. That’s why in my great riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills we held multiple round tables and virtual town halls to make sure that the Erin Mills community is heard here in Queen’s Park; round tables for stakeholders in the hospitality and tourist sectors to hear about the impact of COVID-19 and how we can help their recovery.

I hosted the Minister of Education, Stephen Lecce, at a round table to ensure a safe opening to schools while continuing to lead in providing the best education for our children.

I also hosted a pre-budget consultation town hall with Minister of Finance Rod Phillips and the Mississauga Board of Trade to better shape the Ontario budget and listen to the people and businesses. It is getting harder for businesses in Peel due to the lockdown. That’s why our hard-working Premier Ford has announced a historic \$600 million in total to help these small businesses which have been closed. Thank you, Premier Ford.

I want to thank the Minister of Health, Christine Elliott, for the announcement of an extra \$22 million for Peel and Trillium Health Partners. Mississauga will get 141 new beds to help alleviate capacity pressures and reduce wait times. Our government protects what matters most, and what matters most is the health and safety of all Ontarians.

While we are celebrating this holiday season apart and safely at home, my office will be offering personalized holiday lawn signs and Christmas cards through our online portal. This will help us feel much closer while we are apart. We will get through this together.

LABORATORY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Since I last spoke about the problems with LifeLabs my constituents are having, waiting outside in the cold, things have gotten worse, not better.

Mr. Phillips is not computer-savvy and couldn’t use the online portal, so he waited three hours on the phone before the call dropped.

Jean-Pierre Lauzon’s wife needs blood work every 10 days. She can’t book an appointment at any of the LifeLabs centres in Sudbury for December 3. Online, everything has a big red X—nothing available.

Victor Boulard tried the 1-877 number for three days. He never got through, so he tried the online portal, but for some reason it will not accept his password.

Mr. Denis knocked on the door of our constituency office. He had given up on the 1-877 number for LifeLabs and he could not navigate the website on his own. So we tried the online portal in our office. It would not let him book because it would not accept his password.

Suzanne and Adolphe Charbonneau will have to wait three weeks, Speaker, for a simple blood test. Adolphe asked me, “Why is this happening? This is paid for by public taxpayers’ money. This is not right.”

I agree with him. LifeLabs is paid by the government and represents an important part of our health care system, and their customer service is just atrocious.

That’s not all. Access to the flu vaccine is not any easier. Whether primary care, public health or pharmacy, nobody has flu vaccines in Nickel Belt.

SCARBOROUGH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It’s an honour today to rise and recognize a significant milestone. This week, the Scarborough Business Association celebrated its fifth anniversary. They had over 120 participants at their annual general meeting last night.

While this year has not been business as usual, the Scarborough Business Association has been laser-focused on helping small businesses survive the COVID-19 pandemic. They have been sharing information, tools and resources with their membership. They’ve also taken an advocacy role to fight for the unique needs of Scarborough businesses, such as access to broadband infrastructure for the last mile.

The Scarborough Business Association has also given back to the Scarborough community by fundraising for the Scarborough Health Network, providing PPE and much relief for our front-line health care workers. Despite the pandemic, their work has not slowed. Every week, the SBA hosts a virtual networking breakfast. They have featured many guests, such as Dolf DeJong, the CEO of the Toronto Zoo, and other colleagues and leaders in Scarborough.

I would like to thank all of the members of the SBA, its board, its volunteers, President Hazell and Vice-President Ashwani Bhardwaj for their excellent work in keeping Scarborough connected to its businesses and staying open.

Small businesses need our help now more than ever, in the midst of a second lockdown, and I urge all Ontarians to shop local this holiday season, especially next Wednesday.

SSE CARE SOLUTIONS

Mr. Billy Pang: SSE Care Solutions Inc. is a local surgical mask manufacturer located in the city of Markham. All masks produced by SSE Care Solutions are 100% made right here in Ontario.

In September, I had the opportunity to tour their production site to learn more about the detailed processes that take place in manufacturing their high-quality masks, and I am very impressed with the safety protocols implemented in their plant.

Last Friday, I had the pleasure to connect SSE Care Solutions to local long-term-care facilities in Markham—Unionville, and witnessed as the manufacturer donated 12,000 surgical masks to each facility—Bethany Lodge and Union Villa.

I want to give special thanks to donors Steve Diakanastasis, Albert Au and Frank Law from SSE Care Solutions Inc. for their generous donation to help keep our seniors and front-line workers safe.

Mr. Speaker, the government has committed to do whatever it takes to protect Ontarians during the COVID-19 pandemic. To deliver the resources necessary to help and support our front-line heroes, since March the government has purchased \$1.1 billion in PPE, to ensure our heroes have the essential equipment they need to work safely: 300 million masks, 900 million gloves, 50 million gowns and six million face shields.

As COVID-19 continues to evolve, our government will continue to be there to protect the people of Ontario.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is 10:29 a.m. As per the requirements of the Trans Day of Remembrance Act, 2017, the assembly shall now pause and observe one moment of silence in honour of trans people who have died as a result anti-trans violence. I'll ask the members to rise and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members may take their seats again.

We'll resume members' statements.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Toronto has been experiencing a housing crisis for years, and the pandemic has made it so much worse. And yet, at the Landlord and Tenant Board, they are currently in the middle of an eviction blitz. Evictions are being carried out at record speed, destroying the lives of individuals and families in minutes.

1030

The second wave is raging, Toronto is in lockdown and the cold is here—and still, tenants are being evicted and thousands are at risk of homelessness. Shelters have no available beds and can become crowded and unsafe. The only alternative for people experiencing homelessness has been to build encampments, where they can at least rely

on the support of a network of neighbours who take care of each other. Now people are being evicted from encampments as well.

Where are people supposed to go? All levels of government have done absolutely nothing to address the housing crisis. Worse, governments are actively working against the people. From the eviction bill rammed through this House, through the pandemic, to standing in the way of every creative idea and grassroots initiative to keep people housed this winter, people have had to fight their own governments to gain access to shelter. This is beyond shameful.

I call on all levels of government to take immediate action with a response equal to the massive scale of this crisis. In the meantime, stop getting in the way of people doing something about this crisis.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Lindsey Park: November is Woman Abuse Prevention Month. Today, I'm wearing a purple scarf as a symbol of the courage it takes a woman to leave her abuser. However, the courage of a woman is not enough. It takes the support of an entire community to end violence against women.

This month, Bethesda House, a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence in Bowmanville, is partnering with shelter agencies across the province for the 8th annual Wrapped in Courage campaign. Anyone can go to wrappedincourage.ca to support local shelters and join the fight to end violence against women.

Speaker, this week also marks Victims and Survivors of Crime Week. Ontario's victim service providers are an important network of support for women fleeing abuse and violence. During COVID-19, providers reported an increase in calls, particularly from victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. In my area, Victim Services of Durham Region has been on call 24/7 to be of immediate assistance to these victims. Across the province, the 44 members of the Ontario Network of Victim Service Providers provide help with planning for safety, shelter, clothing and food. They also help find counselling and immediate financial support.

I want to thank all of Ontario's victim service providers for the work they do every single day.

LIONS CLUBS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, this year marks the 100th anniversary of Lions Club Canada. In 1920, the first Lions Club outside of the United States was founded in the great city of Windsor, Ontario. Today, there are over 48,000 clubs around the world, made up of 1.4 million men and women.

Speaker, I've been a Lion since 1987. When you become a Lion, you make the choice to join a global network of volunteers who serve their communities. Melvin Jones, the founder of Lions Club International, had a simple vision for improving his community. Melvin's

personal motto was that you can't get very far until you start doing for somebody else. By extension, the Lions motto is, "We serve."

Across the globe, Lions Clubs are making a huge difference in areas like caring for children dealing with blindness, diabetes prevention and treatment, and partnering with Habitat for Humanity.

Speaking at a Lions convention in 1925, the great American author and disabilities advocate Helen Keller charged Lions with this mission. She said: I ask you to be the "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness."

During this challenging time, let's keep Helen Keller's message in mind. Speaker, out of the darkness of this pandemic, through our service to others, we will rise to new heights.

I would like to conclude by congratulating Lions Club Canada on this remarkable milestone. Roar, Lions!

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I understand the member for London North Centre has a point of order.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Last Friday, November 20, was Ontario's Trans Day of Remembrance. According to the legislation, since the day fell on a Friday, it is the following Thursday, today, that the Ontario's Legislature observes a moment of silence.

I would like to thank the Speaker for recognizing this day, a day to mourn and honour the trans people whose lives were lost because of trans misogyny and trans violence.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt has a point of order as well.

M^{me} France Gélinas: With 3,554 deaths overall in Ontario and 139 deaths in the past week, I seek unanimous consent for a moment of silence for those who have succumbed to COVID-19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt is seeking the unanimous consent of the House for a moment's silence at this time in memory of those who have lost their lives due to COVID-19. Agreed? Agreed.

I'll ask the House to rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Members may take their seats again.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Sara Singh: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier.

Since Ontario reported its first case of COVID-19 in January, 3,576 people have lost their lives. While the Premier likes to brag that he's doing well, over 3,000 families have lost a parent, a grandparent, or in some tragic cases, they have even lost a child. Every one of those deaths is a tragedy.

Yesterday, the Auditor General came forward with a thorough review highlighting the failures of the previous Liberal government and this current government's failure to act. She also offered serious and constructive recommendations on ways to protect human life throughout this pandemic.

Will the Premier stop attacking her for doing that and start implementing her recommendations?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Good morning, Speaker, and thank you. Of course, we offer our condolences to all of those families of the 3,576 people who have died because of COVID-19. It's a tragedy. None of us wanted to lose even one life, and we're working very hard to protect the health and well-being of every single Ontarian.

The report of the Auditor General did contain some important ideas about how to deal with some of the systemic problems that she has witnessed over the years, and we were already in the process of implementing some of them, including the modernization of our public health system, when we were struck by COVID-19. However, some of the issues that she raised were issues that were not followed by the previous government. We had to quickly act in order to deal with them, and we were able to do that.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Throughout the second wave of the pandemic, families have watched nervously as the Premier and his team offered confusing and contradictory directions, claiming to have the support of public health experts who in reality actually disagreed with them.

Leadership means accepting criticism and listening to advice that you may not want to hear. Why is the Premier so unwilling to do that and so unable to admit any flaws in this government's COVID-19 response?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we have indicated that there were some important recommendations that the Auditor General made, specifically with respect to some of the issues that hadn't been dealt with for many years. For example, the pandemic response plan had not been updated since 2013. From 2013 to 2018, absolutely nothing was done.

1040

There was a report by the lab services expert panel in 2015 that commented that we needed to do more to build up our lab panel in the province of Ontario. This was commented on by the Auditor General in her 2017 report. Again, nothing was done.

By the time that we were faced with a pandemic, we had to create a coordinated lab system which did not exist. We did that in record time. Now, the numbers speak for themselves because Ontario now has the lowest rate per

capita per 100,000 of any jurisdiction in North America, except the Atlantic bubble and the territories. The numbers speak for themselves.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Parents are worried about their kids losing another year of school. Business owners are facing bankruptcy and many of them are closing. Working people have lost their jobs. Thousands have lost loved ones. These folks need to know their government is doing everything it can to protect our community and prevent deaths.

But yesterday they saw a Premier defending his right to make decisions behind closed doors and attacking a woman who dared to challenge him. That's not leadership. When will the Premier start listening to advice from not only the Auditor General but doctors, public health experts and front-line heroes from across our province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government is certainly listening to the experts in public health. We're listening to Dr. Williams, our Chief Medical Officer of Health, we're listening to the public health measures table and we're listening to Public Health Ontario, and all of the decisions that we have made thus far have been based upon the recommendations that have come to us from the health experts. We are not doctors over here. I'm not a public health specialist; I need to take the advice from those who are. That's what I've done, that what the Premier has done and that's what our government has done throughout.

We are taking every step possible that we can to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians but still being able to keep our schools open—that is so important for the social and mental development of our children—protecting our most vulnerable and protecting our communities. That has been our focus from the beginning and will always be.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is for the Premier. The Premier's contempt for the Auditor General was on full display yesterday. She is an expert, third-party-opinion independent officer of this House. His comments showed a total lack of respect for that expertise.

The real question is, if that's how the Premier responds when an independent officer of the House offers a critical opinion, how are we expected to believe that he would accept the opinion of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, that he would actually allow the Chief Medical Officer of Health behind closed doors to offer an expert opinion and abide by it? How are we to ever to believe that?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The reality is that we have great respect for the Auditor General. We recognize that there are some situations where there are some criticisms that we are certainly able to accept. We are working on some of the recommendations that she has made in past years, including public health modernization. That was under way at the time that COVID struck.

But as far as the Chief Medical Officer of Health is concerned, we have been taking his advice. You may

recall that the Chief Medical Officer of Health was at the select committee in this Legislature last Friday. He was asked whether we as a government were listening to his recommendations, and his response was, "Yes."

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

Mr. John Vanthof: The government knew yesterday's damning report was coming. They knew that the Auditor General was raising serious concerns about the role of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and yet once again in the dead of night they tried to force through an extension of the contract without any outside vision.

Instead of doing everything we can to ensure that the Chief Medical Officer of Health in Ontario is ready to handle future waves of this pandemic, we'll be voting on a motion to rubber-stamp that extension minutes from now.

Will the Premier do the responsible thing, pull that motion and agree to have the Chief Medical Officer of Health appear before an all-party committee to consider extending his appointment?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, that appointment was taken over two evenings, Speaker. There will be a vote after question period today. I remind the honourable gentleman that when a motion was brought forward to this House to have the Chief Medical Officer of Health appear before the select committee with respect to this appointment, the NDP turned that down.

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: The Auditor General was simply saying what numerous health experts and front-line staff at hospitals and long-term care have been saying for months: It's time to stop gagging health experts advising the government.

The auditor recommended that the government follow the recommendation of the SARS Commission, which is: ensure all recommendations made by the Chief Medical Officer of Health are released publicly in order to ensure transparency for the people of Ontario.

The people of Ontario deserve to know what advice the Chief Medical Officer of Health is giving to the Premier. Will he release that information?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, that information is released, virtually on a daily basis. The Chief Medical Officer of Health spoke in the select committee last week. He indicated very clearly that he makes his recommendations, and his recommendations are accepted by us. Then we make the policy that goes through cabinet, and then it's publicly reported.

In addition, Dr. Williams appears twice a week at his own briefings, without any politicians around, to answer questions of the media, to answer questions coming from the issues that the public wants to know about.

Dr. Williams has been front and centre, leading the public health response to this throughout. Nobody is gagged; nobody is muzzled. We are listening to what our public health experts have to tell us, and we are following their recommendations.

And we've come through this. There have been 3,576 deaths. That is very, very sad. And I'm not bragging about where we are. However, it is important to note that Ontario does have the lowest rate per 100,000 of any jurisdiction in North America. Clearly, we must be doing something right, and we must be listening—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

M^{me} France G linas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

The Auditor General was very clear in her report: One of the reasons we are behind in our COVID-19 response is because the former Liberal government refused for over a decade to implement important recommendations from the Auditor General, to implement the recommendations from the SARS Commission and implement numerous other reports.

Speaker, it's been over two and a half years since this government came to office, bringing with them big promises to clean up the Liberal waste and patronage appointments—except really the only thing we've seen that they've managed to do is to replace them with their own. We know that the Premier has not kept that promise. Does he have any regrets?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. In fact, you are absolutely right. We were behind in terms of our ability to start dealing with the COVID-19 crisis because of the fact that the previous government had not followed up on the recommendations of the Auditor General; had not followed up, from 2013 to 2018, on a pandemic plan; had not done the work necessary to create a coordinated lab sequence.

We did that. We did that in record time. We now have a coordinated system. We've updated the technology to connect the labs with the testing stations. We have moved forward with public health modernization, which is something that was recommended by the Auditor General. We were moving forward to deal with some of the issues that had been, quite frankly, neglected by the previous governments. We did that in record time during the midst of a pandemic, with the assistance of Dr. Williams and all of the public health experts that were advising us.

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

M^{me} France G linas: Speaker, we also learned yesterday from the Auditor General's fact-based report that on top of sitting on important recommendations, the former Liberal government also refused to update the province's emergency preparedness plan and strategy.

Again to the Premier: It has been two and a half years. Will the government admit that their choice not to fix these Liberal messes sooner took us from a bad situation and made things much, much worse than they needed to be?

1050

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I would say is that it's very unfortunate that we were left in this situation when the pandemic started because of the inaction of the previous government. However, we did rise to the occasion because it's a pandemic, lives depended on it and we acted quickly. We were the first province to indicate that COVID-19 was a reportable disease, which allowed the local medical officers of health to start their work in testing and contact tracing. We were the first to close our schools to protect our children. We were the second to declare a state of emergency, right after Quebec, and we launched into action immediately because we knew that quick action had to be taken.

We were able to increase our testing from 4,000 tests per day. We're now at the point where we can test 70,000 per day. We did 47,000 tests yesterday. We have a connected lab system. We have the 34 medical officers of health in constant contact with Dr. Williams, providing us local responses to what they need to do, coordinated by Dr. Williams. We have created a system to deal with a pandemic in record time—

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

The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mrs. Nina Tangri: In September, our government introduced its return-to-school plan. This comprehensive plan has enabled our children to continue with their education, has allowed for vital and safe socialization and has given parents comfort that their children are safe in these difficult times. We have seen countless medical professionals speak up in support of the government's plan and about the need to keep schools open for the benefit of all children in Ontario.

With that in mind, would the Minister of Education please share the efforts that the government has taken so far that has led to the safe reopening of schools?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for the question and for the interest in ensuring that Ontario students can go to class safely each and every day.

We are at the halfway mark, almost, in this school year and I think we should, irrespective of our political differences, acknowledge the massive amount of work by our front-line doctors, nurses, teachers, EAs, ECEs and principals—everyone on the front lines working together. If there is one truth we could accept, as legislators, it is that there is a real focus and collaboration happening on the ground to keep our kids safe. Some 1.5 million

children in this province are learning each and every day, with every layer of prevention in place, endorsed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the very individual who gave us the advice, supported by all parties, to close schools in the spring and reopen them this September.

We have fully funded our plan. We have over 2,700 more teachers, over 1,200 more custodians, over 148,000 more devices and more than 600 public health nurses. Together, these investments and our protocol are keeping our province and our kids safe.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the minister for the answer. Schools remaining open is invaluable for our children and parents alike. During this second wave we are seeing a troubling pattern of growing case numbers in the community. It has been said multiple times by Dr. Williams, Dr. Yaffe and many other medical professionals that schools reflect the communities that they are in.

Would the minister be able to share what new efforts the government is taking in order to combat COVID-19 in hot spot areas in order to protect students, education staff and their families?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity. I want to invoke the medical officer of London, Chris Mackie, whom I spoke to recently. Members opposite were heckling, “Who can make these claims?” Well, let’s listen to the medical officer of London. Perhaps he’s an authority to the New Democrat and Liberal members: “A lot of what is happening in schools is a reflection of what is happening in the general community. Our schools have excellent protocols, no doubt, but that’s the case for school boards across the province.”

The truth is, there is an acknowledgement and a consensus among the medical community: first off, that schools remaining open is foundational to the wellness and the mental health of our kids. I think we can accept that premise collectively.

The second is that the intervention we put in place, the protocols, the layers of prevention, the investments in air-flow improvement, the investments in the hiring of teachers and in distancing and the actions we’ve taken to cohort kids—all of this, led by our front-line staff in education, is keeping kids safe.

It is not a coincidence that when you compare us to Quebec, they have four times higher the number of cases per 100,000 in schools. We are doing something right. We’re going to continue today to build up our plan and keep all staff, all students, safe in Ontario.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier stood at his podium and attacked the Auditor General for raising crucial questions about his own choices and his government’s COVID-19 response. It was weird, though, that while the Premier had harsh words about the AG when it’s his own inaction that’s being

called out, he had nothing but praise for her when she was doing her job under the previous government.

I’d like to quote. This is what the Premier had said: “Unlike the Liberals, we respect the Auditor General. We respect working with the Auditor General.”

His health minister had glowing reviews for the AG’s work when it wasn’t her job on the line as well. I’d like to quote. She has said, “We do support the work of the Auditor General. We do listen to what she has said.... We think she is thoroughly competent. She knows what she’s doing.”

This government used to believe that value-for-money audits were an important accountability tool. My question is to the Premier: What has changed?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: We do respect the work of the Auditor General. We always have. However, in the case of this particular report, there were some factual inaccuracies that we raised to the Auditor General and asked to have an opportunity to discuss.

The Auditor General points to a document that she indicates was signed off on by the Deputy Minister of Health, indicating that the deputy minister agreed with the contents of the report. In fact, the document that was signed by the deputy minister simply indicated that she had provided the Auditor General with all of the information that the Auditor General had requested pertaining to her investigation, but also attached 21 pages of factual inaccuracies.

That’s what we object to. We want the report to be based on the actual facts, and we have a disagreement with the Auditor General on many of the contents of the report that were not factually accurate.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I never thought I would hear a minister in this House challenge the qualifications of the Auditor General.

It’s not just the Premier and his health minister who were praising the Auditor General in the past. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing told us—and I’d like to quote—“Our independent officers of the Legislature exist to provide the public with unbiased reports and recommendations that rise above the politics of this place, and I find it disgusting that the government would risk eroding the confidence and trust in those officers because they fear taking an electoral hit.” The culture minister has said, “Ms. Lysyk plays an essential role in holding our government accountable. Her work should be valued and commended, not disregarded and demeaned as the government has done in the past.” Gee, I wonder what has changed.

Speaker, the government’s choices have hurt the people of this province. Attacking the Auditor General does not change that. Will they admit that this isn’t about the AG; it is about their own failure to act on behalf of the people of this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Absolutely not. In no way are we challenging the qualifications of the Auditor General, neither myself nor the Premier nor anyone in this government.

The Auditor General does play a very important role as an independent officer of the Legislature. I completely respect that. However, it is important that the information that is coming to the Auditor General and upon which she bases her reports is factually correct. In many cases, the information was not correct. For instance, any suggestion that we were slow in starting our response to COVID-19 is not correct. Any suggestion that we were not relying on the advice of Dr. Williams is not correct. There were many inaccuracies that the deputy minister tried to bring to the attention of the Auditor General. Dr. Williams did as well and I did as well.

I only found out about this report coming forward the day before it came forward. I asked the Auditor General to delay the publication of her report so that we could deal with these issues and try to resolve these discrepancies, but the Auditor General refused to do that.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Stephen Blais: My question is for the Premier. The Auditor General revealed the multi-million-dollar organizational chart that the Premier has put in place for the COVID-19 response, a structure comprised of some 30 committees, over 500 participants, with the most important committee being the central coordination table.

When the auditor highlighted the challenges with this cumbersome process, the Premier told her to stick to her job, the job she was hired for. She wasn't a health professional and so this wasn't her place. Basically, the Premier told the Auditor General to stick to her knitting.

1100

While Ontario has hired a Chief Medical Officer of Health to provide health leadership, the chief medical officer isn't a part of this committee. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the committee is comprised of career bureaucrats, professional communicators and political operatives. Why did the Premier pay millions of dollars for a slow, bureaucratic, cumbersome committee full of red tape to hear from people he doesn't believe have the expertise to provide health advice?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The member has raised another area where there was perhaps a misunderstanding or some factual inaccuracies in the report of the Auditor General.

There were several tables that she spoke about. One was the central command table. That was never set up to be a health table. That was set up as a table that was going to coordinate the response among the many government ministries who had a role to play in dealing with COVID-19. It wasn't just about health. It wasn't just about long-term care. It was about many ministries—Solicitor General, Education, Colleges and Universities—many. It was to help get the ministries out of their silos and be able to

speak to each other because that communication is essential—quick communication when you're dealing with a pandemic; being able to make those decisions quickly. It was not meant to be a health table in the sense of having public health specialists there. It was a coordination table.

Now, Dr. Williams did get involved from time to time when they were discussing specific health issues, but the main table for dealing with the health issues was the command table, which we are required to set up during a pandemic. That was set up—

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

Mr. Stephen Blais: My supplemental is also for the Premier. For months, the Premier told Ontarians he was listening to doctors. Doctors would guide his government's actions. Doctors would inform the government on what they should do to handle the pandemic.

Like most Ontarians, I thought the Premier was talking about medical doctors. But lo and behold, thanks to the excellent work of the Auditor General, we learned that the pandemic's most important committee, the one that filters all of the advice and information to cabinet, the one that the minister claims is responsible for the whole-of-government approach, doesn't actually include the province's most senior medical professional. In fact, the most important committee responding to COVID-19 is full of political operatives, spin doctors who contribute to providing COVID-19 advice.

Why is the government filtering their COVID-19 advice through political and communications advisers instead of allowing medical experts, medical leaders to do the job the government hired them for, to provide advice—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: As I just indicated, the central command table was not the one that made the health decisions. That was at the health command table, for which Dr. Williams was deeply involved. He was at every single meeting, as was Public Health Ontario, as was the public health measures table, which had a number of the local medical officers of health on that committee, as well as other public health experts. That was the table that advised the government about the measures they were recommending that we take.

I don't know, perhaps the member didn't see the presentation made by Dr. Williams at the select committee last week where he was specifically asked if the government was following his recommendations and he indicated yes. He's also available twice a week to the members of the media and to the public to answer questions. He has indicated very clearly that we have been listening to the health advice we have been receiving since the beginning of this pandemic, and we will keep on doing so.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Minister, as you know, we are now in the second wave of the pandemic, and the cold weather has arrived. The

government took decisive action during the first wave and announced the first phase of the social services relief funding, which went directly to service managers and Indigenous partners. This funding was critical to provide urgent funding for rent banks, purchase PPE and expand homeless shelters, especially in Peel region and my riding of Mississauga–Streetsville.

Can you please explain what your government has done to prepare our most vulnerable for the second wave ahead of the winter months?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Streetsville not just for the question but for her tremendous advocacy in the city of Mississauga and the region of Peel. Thank you very much for the question. I'm pleased to stand in the House to speak to our government's commitment to help the most vulnerable, especially in the face of the second wave of COVID-19.

Last month, Speaker, I was proud to stand with our Premier and fellow ministers to announce the second phase of our Social Services Relief Fund. This funding is part of our government's \$510-million investment to support homeless shelters, create and renovate more than 1,500 units and provide additional funding for rent banks across Ontario.

Our most vulnerable need our support, and I'm proud that our government stands with them, investing in their safety.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for that response.

Minister, as the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, I know that the people in my riding have been hard hit throughout the pandemic, including our most vulnerable. I want to be able to tell my constituents exactly how our government is helping vulnerable Ontarians in my riding.

Can you please explain how this funding will be used in Peel region to protect those who need our help?

Hon. Steve Clark: Through you, Speaker, to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville: That is a very important question. Our government recently approved the region of Peel's entire business case for their second round of social services relief funding. This means that Peel region will receive \$9.7 million in new funding for important initiatives like providing rent assistance for an additional 625 households; the acquisition of an emergency family shelter; upgrades to existing shelters in the region; and hiring new staff, purchasing food, new linens, new PPE. These investments will ensure that our partners have the resources that they need to protect our most vulnerable citizens that continue to battle this crisis. Thank you for the question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday's Auditor General report revealed the government spent \$1.6 million to develop the government's confusing and very ineffective command structure and

another \$3.2 million to develop their disastrous school reopening plan. All of this money, nearly five million public dollars, went to consulting companies rather than to keeping the people of Ontario, the children of Ontario, safe from COVID-19. How can the government possibly justify these astronomical expenses?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We have unveiled a plan with \$1.3 billion of investment. That should not be an abstraction to members opposite; it happens to be the highest investment of any province in this country, by far. And why did we do that? Why did we unlock \$1.3 billion, of federal dollars, of reserve dollars and of provincial monies? Because in this province, this government believes the continuity of learning is important, is foundational, and we will do everything we can to safeguard the gains, the progress made by our front-line teachers, parents and kids to keep schools open. It's why the Minister of Health, under her leadership, and the Premier have taken action province-wide, with further restrictions to ensure we keep schools open, to ensure our kids and our seniors and the most vulnerable remain safe. We will continue today and going forward to build up our plan, respond to this risk and do everything possible to reduce community transmission in this province.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I understand why the minister doesn't want to respond to this, because half the schools in the province now have COVID-19 cases. Every single dollar that this government puts in the pocket of consultants is a dollar that should have gone to keeping families in this province safe. The truth is that this government didn't like what teachers and epidemiologists, what the experts at SickKids, what parents—advice that they were giving them for free; they didn't like it, so they went out and they paid US consultants millions of dollars to tell them what they wanted to hear.

Kids are being pulled out of classrooms to quarantine because of uncontrolled outbreaks in this province. Teachers are exhausted from trying to do everything in their power to help their kids because the government has failed them.

Why did the government waste so many millions of dollars instead of listening to the health and education experts right here in the province of Ontario?

1110

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, the true failure is the campaign of fear advanced by members opposite instead of standing with parents, all of whom face anxiety as we deal with a global pandemic. We're not an island in and of ourselves when we deal with this global challenge.

What are we doing in this province? The member opposite thankfully introduced a data point, which I know she normatively is averse to doing. Here is a statistic that hopefully—to an objective mind, not an ideological one—may instill some confidence: 99.94% of students in this province do not have an active case. Most importantly,

99.8% of students never had a case of COVID in this province.

Now, Speaker, I recognize that for each and every case it creates angst, but when you compare our plan, for example, to the next largest province, they have roughly four times the rate of transmission than in Ontario for schools. I know that is inconvenient and I know it frustrates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Davenport will come to order. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will come to order.

I'm going to move on. The next question.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. Unlike the Premier, I want to thank the Auditor General for her report that she tabled yesterday. All her findings were signed off by officials.

The AG notes that when testing and contact tracing is done effectively, a person's likelihood of transmitting COVID-19 can be reduced by 80%. That's why Ontarians were shocked to read that the province was delayed in expanding testing capacity despite warnings to the Chief Medical Officer of Health by Public Health Ontario.

It has long been clear that the government's plan and response to COVID-19 has been opaque, reactionary and marked by disorganization, secrecy and chaos. Now we know that the chief medical officer's advice has been filtered by a political committee. Ontarians deserve answers on how our leaders are making decisions with life and death decisions. We have just cleared another grim milestone of deaths.

Speaker, through you to the minister or the Premier: Will you commit today to work transparently with public health officials instead of working around them to restore the trust and confidence—

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

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: It's hard to know where to start with that question. First of all, on the assertion that the Auditor General made that her report was signed off by the Deputy Minister of Health: That is not the case, nor would it be appropriate for the deputy minister to sign off. That is a decision for elected politicians to make.

What the deputy minister signed off on was, as I indicated earlier, a document indicating that she had filed and provided all of the information that the Auditor General had requested for the purpose of her investigation. But she also attached 21 pages of factual inaccuracies that were not dealt with. I think that's really important to remember in the context of the Auditor General's report.

There are some comments that she makes with respect to some systemic issues, which we of course accept. Some of them relate to the failures of the previous government: their failure to act, their failure to update their pandemic response plan since—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I am not going to quibble about who signed off on the report. This government has a very poor record of officials signing off on their reports.

The government's delay and fractured leadership has severely hampered the ability of public health units to carry out this process effectively in response to COVID-19. In October, Toronto Public Health was so overwhelmed that it made the difficult decision to suspend contact tracing outside of outbreaks in congregate care settings.

These local units need support, Speaker. They are now being asked to do more by this minister and this government. They need funds to do outreach in COVID hot-spot areas. They are asking for the support, and despite the downloading of responsibilities to the public health units, this government has not provided any additional funding since the outset of the pandemic, and they were shamefully left out of this government's recent budget.

Speaker, through you, back to the minister: Will you commit today to adequately fund public health units to do the important work that this province requires and that they are—

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

The Minister of Health.

Hon. Christine Elliott: To say that I disagree with everything the member opposite said would be a huge understatement.

We have put money in. We have put billions of dollars into protecting the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. We have put over \$1 billion in testing, tracing and contact management. We have put extra resources into the hot-spot areas, into Toronto and Peel. We are moving forward with all of the recommendations that we were given by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the many other public health officials who have knowledge of what needs to be done here, through Public Health Ontario, through the public health measures table and the many, many public health physicians that stand behind them that are volunteering their time.

To suggest that we are not acting on their response is completely wrong. Again, I have to speak to the numbers. They speak for themselves. If we were doing everything wrong, why does Ontario stand number one in North America in terms of the lowest of cases per 100,000?

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Nina Tangri: My question is to the Minister of Finance.

We all know that small businesses are struggling due to COVID-19, and we've seen incredible economic uncertainty here at home and around the world. I know our government is making unprecedented investments to support businesses today and help them survive the global pandemic, but our job creators will no doubt need help, even when the crisis is behind us.

Minister, what is the government doing to prepare Ontario today, and plan for our economic recovery tomorrow?

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

Mr. Stan Cho: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. I know that small businesses in her riding are facing an incredible challenge during this second wave, and she's been an unrelenting voice for them here at Queen's Park.

Speaker, one day, and hopefully soon, COVID-19 will be behind us. When that time comes, every jurisdiction in the world will be competing for jobs and investments. Ontario must be ready. While our focus right now is on protecting Ontarians and supporting businesses, we're also looking around the corner and laying that foundation for our recovery.

That's why in our budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover, our government is investing \$4.8 billion in measures that provide direct supports to businesses today and set them up for success and growth tomorrow.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I thank the parliamentary assistant for that answer. Ontario is the economic engine of our country, and my city of Mississauga is home to some incredible job creators. For years, the previous government's burdensome red tape, skyrocketing hydro bills and rising taxes drove companies, jobs and investment out of my community.

As the parliamentary assistant noted, when this pandemic is behind us, Ontario can't afford to be second. Can the Minister of Finance explain how the \$4.8 billion of investment in Ontario's recovery will provide the immediate support businesses need and make us competitive for the future global economy?

Mr. Stan Cho: Ontario's action plan focuses on reducing the immediate fixed costs that job creators pay today, like the employer health tax, a tax on jobs; the provincial portion of commercial property taxes; and industrial electricity rates, just to name a few. These are real costs for businesses, big and small, and they're paying it today. That's why our government is reducing them or eliminating them permanently.

As every business owner knows, a dollar saved is a dollar earned, but these measures also lay the foundation for future economic success. The reductions in electricity costs, for example, will take Ontario from the least competitive jurisdiction for energy to one of the most competitive out there.

These measures have an instant impact, but they also prepare us for that important economic success in the months and years ahead when COVID-19 is nothing more than a memory.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier.

After COVID-19 outbreaks were initially reported in two units at London Health Sciences Centre's University Hospital on November 10 and November 11, the Middlesex health unit is reporting that outbreaks have now spread to all medical floors at the hospital. With that news that there are significant cases among patients and staff, the people in my community are worried. They're worried for their loved ones who work in or are getting treatment at University Hospital, and they're worried for themselves in case they need urgent care.

1120

According to Dr. Mackie, the medical officer of health, the expanded outbreak is alarming. He said that the health unit is working closely with the hospital officials to implement measures, including halting admissions for the next week, but they cannot do it alone.

How is this government going to help London Health Sciences University Hospital pull through this crisis?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. This has been a concern at a number of hospitals in Ontario with COVID because of the staff contracting COVID, and the patients as well. However, they have specific procedures for outbreak management within those hospitals that they are working on to contain the spread to make sure that the staff—if they're ill, of course, they need to be tested and be at home. But for the patients there, there are rigorous procedures that are set in place. We are involved with hospitals on a daily basis to understand if they need further human resources or any other resources in order to deal with it. But we are finding that the hospitals are doing a very good job at containing the outbreaks and protecting the patients within the hospitals.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, I've heard from families who didn't learn about the outbreak from the hospital, even though their loved ones were receiving treatment from there; they learned about it from the media. I've heard from families that, after being assured their loved one was in a safe place in the hospital, received a call the next day informing them that their loved ones had caught COVID. I've heard from families that, due to the resulting changes to the hospital's visitor policy, have had to fight to be by their dying loved one's side. Needless to say, this is a horrible reality that no family should have to live through.

What is this government's plan to ensure that no other family has to live through this horrible tragedy?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I believe there are several issues here. One is the issue of community transmission that I know Dr. Mackie is working very hard on to contain. He provides us with regular updates about what is happening in his community. He speaks with Dr. Williams, and then decisions are made whether to move your community from green to yellow, yellow to orange, orange to red, with increasing restrictions based on that. That is one way that we are dealing with that: by being in

touch with the local medical officer of health and putting in more restrictions if that's necessary in the community.

Most hospitals right now have patients with COVID and they are using very, very specific precautionary procedures to deal with both the patients as well as the staff, making sure that the staff have the necessary personal protective equipment, making sure that only certain staff are working in those areas. We have working hard to contain the response with respect to COVID within every hospital, and they do have very, very specific, careful procedures for dealing with that.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: My question is for the Premier. Oakville, Burlington, Halton Hills, Mississauga, Guelph, Thunder Bay, Milton: The list of municipalities asking this government to cancel its rollback of flood protection is growing by the day. Despite the patronizing claim from government that they are helping conservation authorities achieve their goal, conservation authorities are saying that Bill 229 will gut their ability to protect us from flooding at a huge cost to people and communities, because it is giving the minister the power to override science-based decisions.

Speaker, can the Premier explain to the people of this province how the minister can possibly be better qualified to determine the safety of building on a flood plain than experts trained in watershed management and flood mitigation?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond from the government? The member for Barrie–Innisfil and parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, over the past year and a half, as you know, the government consulted broadly with a wide range of stakeholders about the role of conservation authorities in protecting and preserving Ontario's natural spaces. Through those consultations, one being in my backyard of Barrie, we heard from many organizations—conservation authorities, environmental organizations—and people across the province on how we could improve the consistency and transparency of all CAs.

Through that, we've made several changes that we're proposing, but we're still resolute in our commitment to making sure we have far-reaching changes that increase accountability, consistency and transparency. These proposed changes are a mechanism that we want to ensure that there's consistency across the sector and we can listen to all parties involved.

One thing that we want to be crystal clear on—and any myths that are out there—is about permitting decisions. The decisions are still based on science that is considered in section 28.1. Just as they did previously, that will continue, and full stop from there. So they don't need to fearmonger.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Speaking of the member opposite's backyard, I'd like to quote from a press release from

the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority calling on the province to “repeal schedule 6 of the budget measures Bill 229.” I'd like to offer a second quote from the same conservation authority: “The changes will in fact strip conservation authorities of our ability to ensure that people, infrastructure and the environment are protected from damage and destruction that cannot be repaired.”

I don't know who the government consulted with, but it doesn't seem like they consulted with and/or listened to the very people who for over 70 years have made Ontario a jurisdiction that works to prevent flooding.

I ask the member opposite, through you, Speaker: Will the government listen to local leaders today and commit to removing and cancelling their attack on conservation authorities' ability to protect—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I thank the local conservation authority for their work. I worked quite closely with them, actually, on improving Lake Simcoe, as I mentioned yesterday in this House.

But let me be crystal clear to help bust any myths about the minister's permitting decisions in these situations that the member is discussing. The exact same criteria, standards, definitions or rules will be considered, and the rigour remains unchanged in these changes. Decisions will be based on science that's considered in section 28.1(a), (b) and (c) in the act, just as they were previously. That will continue, full stop. Municipalities and provinces will continue to be able to work with conservation authorities and rely on their advice and support for appeals and planning decisions, increasing accountability, consistency and transparency by streamlining land use planning processes through the one-window approach.

The Liberals, the Greens and the NDP like to pontificate at the pulpit about the conservation authorities, but interestingly enough, not once are they featured in their environment plans.

WATER SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is for the Premier or the government House leader. Good morning, Minister.

Speaker, we're dealing with a worldwide pandemic. We're told to wash our hands frequently to protect ourselves. My Windsor office tells me that people are having their water shut off because they're falling behind on their payments. Why is the government allowing local utilities commissions to cut off water service during a pandemic?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I do appreciate the honourable member raising this with me.

I have done a little bit of work on it since he first raised it with me. It's my understanding—and he is quite correct—that a local utility did provide a moratorium on disconnections in March, which they have since let expire.

Obviously, we're going to take a look at that. My understanding is this is the same utility that was significantly charged by the Ontario Energy Board for disconnecting hydro earlier than they should have.

He raises a very important point. Obviously, this is extremely important. That's the information I have for him right now, and I will look into it further for him.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Some utilities commissions contract out their bill collection services. These contractors don't care about a pandemic or hygiene; they just want their commissions.

Will the government give us a clear commitment today that no one else in Ontario will lose their access to water and be hounded by collection agencies because they've fallen behind on their bill payments?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I thank the honourable member. He sincerely brought this to me a little bit earlier, and I do appreciate that. I've been doing a little bit of work since he first brought it to me.

He is quite correct: Having access to water during a pandemic is incredibly important, so he has my firm commitment that on the conclusion of question period today, I will reach out to the Minister of Energy and inquire for him immediately.

1130

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, in her recent environmental audit, the Auditor General highlighted the failure of this government to ensure meaningful public participation in decision-making processes regarding the environment. Concerns included not giving the public ample time to respond to complex proposals, not notifying the public of decisions in a timely manner, and not providing a sufficient amount of information to the public.

In Bill 229, the government continues this trend of throwing caution to the wind and making reckless changes to the statutes that protect our environment without meaningful consultation.

Could the Premier explain what concrete actions, if any, are being taken to address the Auditor General's concerns as they relate to the proposed changes to conservation authorities under schedule 6 of Bill 229?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the member for Barrie–Innisfil and parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: We thank her for those findings.

As I mentioned earlier, there are examples of what our government is doing to ensure that Ontarians have additional time to share feedback.

Of course, it was through this government that we made changes to the EBR to encourage more public consultations and its ability to be something that's easier for people to use, so they can add comments.

In addition, as seen in July, the ministry initiated a 45-day consultation period on proposed amendments to eight class environmental assessments for proposals to extend projects related to Indigenous land claim settlements, projects within provincial parks and conservation reserves and select Ministry of Transportation projects. Additional consultation time was also provided for Indigenous communities as well as other agencies that specifically requested extensions. So there is proof that we have extensions.

In September, the ministry also posted a proposed list of projects that would be subject to comprehensive assessment for a 60-day comment period.

These are examples of how we have been opening up—

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Speaker, watersheds are not bound by municipal borders. The failure of one municipality to protect its watershed affects every municipality within that watershed. This is exactly why each conservation authority includes multiple municipalities, so that the entire watershed is managed in a consistent way.

The changes proposed in Bill 229, however, would require conservation authorities to make separate agreements with each individual municipality, meaning that some municipalities could decide to protect their watershed while others do not.

Can the Premier explain how allowing each municipality to manage their section of the watershed in their own way will contribute to stronger overall watershed management in Ontario?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Again, we're helping conservation authorities reach their goals by improving their operations and giving them more transparency.

It's rich coming from the member—because she represents a party that carved into the greenbelt 17 different times, making it look like Swiss cheese, so I question their ideals on the environment. Even their own leader, Steven Del Duca—and she knows this—railroaded his own conservation authority's recommendation so that he could put in a private pool.

When it comes to the interests of Ontarians and, of course, protecting the environment—this government has a legacy of protecting the environment, whether it's the living legacy fund, the Oak Ridges moraine. George A. Drew's Conservative government created conservation authorities in 1946.

We're continuing to focus on conservation authorities and the environment, which we mention in our environment plan—unlike your party, which doesn't even mention them in your environment plan.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question this morning is for the Premier.

The city of Hamilton, mayors across Ontario, provincial watchdogs, citizens' groups like Environment Hamilton, and thousands of Ontarians across the province

have raised concerns with schedule 6 of Bill 229. This will gut the ability of conservation authorities to protect our wetlands and our watersheds. And yet, the MPP for Flamborough–Glanbrook has called these legitimate concerns “just a lot of noise from special interest groups.” Does the Premier support these types of comments?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Barrie–Innisfil for reply.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Our focus is clear. Our conservation authorities are featured in the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which lays out a framework for how we are protecting the environment and are only strengthening and improving our conservation authorities by delivering on something that the Auditor General pointed out in her report, which is the lack of transparency. We had conservation authorities across this province that were building up wetlands, something that I know members opposite would disagree with. This was a common standard, proving the record of this government when it comes to the environment and improving conservation authorities, as I mentioned.

It was this government that created the conservation authorities, under George A. Drew, and we won't be taking lessons from the New Democrats, who had several chances to talk about the environment and conservation authorities in their platform. It wasn't there. Then they introduced their Green New Democratic Deal and it had no mention of conservation authorities. So it's interesting that you're curious about them now, but all along this government has been taking action, and we're delivering on goals and accomplishments.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would just like to say that this government is not taking lessons from anyone when it comes to the environment.

With answers like this, all I can say is, thank goodness for the Auditor General, because the Auditor General just issued a scathing report on this government's record on the environment—among other things—saying that you are not giving the public enough time to weigh in on important environmental issues that impact their communities. This bill does exactly that.

The Auditor General, in fact, said that you're not even compliant with the Environmental Bill of Rights. But what we do see is PC donors being awarded development contracts impacting significant provincial wetlands, and ministerial zoning orders that are taking place in protected wetlands.

My question is, how is anyone in Ontario supposed to take you seriously and supposed to trust that you are making decisions for what is best for our environment and not for your donors?

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

To reply? The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Again, when it comes to strengthening this environment, we have a proven record. We're not just talking the talk, we're actually walking the

walk, strengthening our conservation authorities, talking about cleaning up our communities. The member opposite might find it laughable but these are things that matter to people so they can actually be empowered to do something about their environment and practise personal responsibility, something that I know that members opposite don't believe in. If it were up to them they would ban everything in life.

But on this side of the House, every member of our caucus cares about the environment, whether it's the Minister of Transportation with her transportation bill, who is lowering greenhouse gas emissions by getting less cars on the road; whether it's our Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries who is increasing the amount of people who are connecting with nature by improving tourism in our parks. I can name countless examples of members of our caucus who care about the environment, because on this side of the House, it's not just the Minister of the Environment, it's the whole government.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm standing in accordance with standing order 59 to outlay the order of business for next week.

First, let me just congratulate the member for Ottawa West–Nepean and the member for Burlington, and thank all members of the House for their support of those two private member's bills this week.

On Monday morning, a private member's bill standing in the name of the MPP for Thornhill will be debated. In the afternoon, a bill that is yet to be introduced by Minister Sarkaria will be debated.

On Tuesday, December 1, in the morning, Bill 3, a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for Niagara West, will be brought to the House for debate, and that afternoon the bill previously referenced by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. That evening's private members' business will be Bill 227, standing in the name of the member for Nickel Belt.

On Wednesday, December 2, a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Bill 118, the Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act—I know all members have been waiting for that—will be brought to chamber for debate. On Wednesday afternoon, Bill 222, the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act, will be brought forward. Private members' business for that night will be a bill standing in the name of the member for Mississauga East–Cooksville, Bill 230. That evening we will continue on with Bill 222, the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act.

On Thursday, December 3, in the morning, we will be dealing with Bill 61, which is a private member's bill standing in the name of the member for St. Paul's, the Eating Orders Awareness Week Act. In the afternoon, it

will be Bill 213, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. We will then continue on, potentially, with the bill that was earlier referenced.

That evening, we will be dealing with a motion brought forward by the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

We will also be attempting to find time by working with the member for Toronto–Danforth and the member for Parkdale–High Park. Through no fault of his own, he was unable to proceed with a private member's—I believe it was a bill or a motion, ballot item number 38. We will be working closely with them to find time when he can be here and present. Again, through no fault of his own—I apologize if I've stated that incorrectly—so that he can proceed with a motion I know is very important to him.

That is the business for next week.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: The member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: If you'll indulge me, Speaker, I hope that the House will join me in wishing our Minister of Education a very happy birthday.

DEFERRED VOTES

2020 ONTARIO BUDGET

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 94, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

The division bells rang from 1141 to 1211.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote has been held on government notice of motion number 94: that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 55; the nays are 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried. Therefore, it is resolved that the House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Motion agreed to.

REAPPOINTMENT OF CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on a motion for closure on the amendment to the motion relating to the reappointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario.

On November 24, 2020, Mr. Calandra moved government notice of motion number 97—now government order 58—relating to the reappointment of Dr. David Williams

as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario.

On November 24, 2020, Madame Gélinas moved that the motion be amended by deleting everything after the first “That” and replacing with the following:

“an all-party committee of the Legislature be appointed to review the proposed reappointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario; and

“That the committee shall have a membership of up to eight members, comprised as follows:

“—four members of the government party;

“—two members of the official opposition;

“—two independent members; and

“That the committee be chaired by the Speaker who is a non-voting member—”

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Dispense?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay.

“That the deadline for indicating committee membership with the Clerk of the House shall be Friday, December 4, 2020; and

“That the committee shall meet at the call of the Chair; and

“That the committee shall present, or if the House is not meeting, release by depositing with the Clerk of the Assembly, its final report by December 16, 2020.”

Mr. Cho, Willowdale, has moved that the question be now put.

The bells will now ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes on the motion of Mr. Cho, Willowdale, that the question be now put.

I will ask the Clerks to once again prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1217 to 1232.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote has been held on a motion for closure on the amendment to the motion relating to the reappointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health in the province of Ontario.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 21.

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

We now have a vote on government notice of motion number 97 on government order 58 relating to the reappointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health in the province of Ontario.

The bells will ring for 15 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will again ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Hold on. I apologize.

Mr. Calandra has moved that an humble address be presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

“We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now

assembled, request the reappointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario as provided in section 81(1.1) of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, to hold office under the terms and conditions of the said act, commencing February 16, 2021, until September 1, 2021.”;

And that the address be engrossed and presented to the Lieutenant Governor in Council by the Speaker.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required on this motion—we have 15 minutes. I’ll ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1235 to 1250.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote has been held on government notice of motion number 97, now government order 58, relating to the reappointment of Dr. David Williams as Chief Medical Officer of Health for the province of Ontario.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 52; the nays are 18.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business this morning, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1251 to 1300.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Guelph has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks concerning the removal of schedule 6 from Bill 229. This matter will be debated following private members’ public business on Tuesday, December 1.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Standing order 66(a) provides that “The Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 63 and 65 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain offices on Thursday, November 19, 2020, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 66(b), the estimates before the committee of the Office of the

Assembly; the Office of the Auditor General; the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer; and Ombudsman Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 64(b), the estimates 2020-21 of these offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Wong): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 3, An Act providing for the development of a provincial framework on hospice palliative care / *Projet de loi 3, Loi prévoyant l’élaboration d’un cadre provincial des soins palliatifs,*

The title of which is amended to read:

Bill 3, An Act providing for the development of a provincial framework on palliative care.

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

Report adopted.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPORTING LOCAL RESTAURANTS ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES RESTAURANTS LOCAUX

Mr. Sarkaria moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 236, An Act in respect of food and beverage delivery fees / *Projet de loi 236, Loi concernant les frais de livraison de nourriture et de boissons.*

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I invite the associate minister to briefly explain his bill.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This act would ensure Ontario’s restaurant industry doesn’t bear the burden of a second wave of COVID-19 on its own. We intend to cap the rates charged by food delivery service apps to restaurants where indoor dining is prohibited.

This legislation will, if passed, provide measured, focused caps to the fees charged by food delivery apps. It would cap the rates charged by food delivery service companies and apps to 20% for each transaction, with no more than 15% for commission and 5% for other fees, in areas where indoor dining is prohibited.

Due to the pandemic, digital food delivery services have become lifelines for restaurants and their employees. It's now more important than ever that we support local, independent restaurants.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order: the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I am seeking unanimous consent that orders for second and third reading of this bill be immediately called, and the questions put without debate and amendment, so that there are no further delays and small businesses can get immediate relief from price gouging on delivery fees.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? I heard a no.

PETITIONS

ABORTION IMAGES

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of the Viewer Discretion Legislation Coalition. It reads:

“Call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to Block Disturbing Anti-Abortion Images.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas an anti-abortion group, the Canadian Centre for Bio-Ethical Reform, is distributing unwanted flyers to people's homes and displaying placards on major streets in London featuring horrifying and graphic images of aborted fetuses;

“Whereas regularly displaying graphic images on our streets and in our homes is traumatizing, difficult and misleading for women, children, and other vulnerable members of the community;

“Whereas the display of these images at crowded intersections creates a hazard and distraction to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians;

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

“To support calls for an injunction based on the need to prevent a public nuisance, and should it not be possible to proceed with an injunction, to develop and bring forward legislation to prohibit the use of such graphic and disturbing images on flyers dropped in people's mailboxes or exhibited on placards used in the street.”

I fully support this petition, will be affixing my signature and delivering it to the Clerks.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to thank the 105 petitioners who signed today's petition. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“—Scarborough Chinese Alliance Church (youth and seniors programs) 139 Silver Star Boulevard;

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

“—Scarborough Chinese Baptist Church (youth and seniors programs) 3223 Kennedy Road;

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

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

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

“—Scholars 101 Education Centre (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3320 Midland Avenue, unit 120;
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“—Positive Tutorial School (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3300 Midland Avenue, unit 211;

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

“—Tamarack Day Care Centre, 3315 Midland Avenue;

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

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

I endorse this petition, and I affix my signature to it.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This petition is called “Time to Care Act—Bill 13.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the LTC Homes Act ... for a legislated minimum care standard to provide an average of

four hours per resident per day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition to save eye care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and will send it to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: The petition I have is entitled “Time to Care Act—Bill 13.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, will be affixing my signature and delivering it to the Clerks.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas municipalities in Ontario should have the choice to determine their own electoral processes;

“Whereas municipalities govern many of the most immediate aspects of our lives every day, and are best positioned to decide if ranked ballots are the most appropriate for their communities;

“Whereas many Ontario municipalities have already made significant investments to proceed with ranked ballot elections, which includes London, Toronto, Cambridge, Barrie and Kingston;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Bill 232, Local Choice for Local Elections (Ranked Ballot By-Laws), 2020, allowing Ontario’s 444 municipal councils to pass a bylaw adopting a ranked ballot election for the election of members of their councils.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition, I will sign it and give it to our usher today.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition entitled “Time to Care Act,” and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I couldn’t agree more. I will affix my signature and send this petition to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, as you can see, the “Time to Care Act” is a very important petition. That bill needs to get through this Legislature. So I’m going to read the “Time to Care Act” petition from Sandra Forbes from Trenton; she also feels the same way.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, sign it and pass it to the usher to deliver it to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member for Ottawa–Vanier have a point of order?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Yes, Speaker. I was waiting for the petitions to be over.

Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent that the orders for second and third reading of Bill 236 be immediately called, and the questions put without debate and amendment, so that there are no further delays and small businesses can get immediate relief from price gouging on delivery fees.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? I heard a no.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MAIN STREET RECOVERY ACT, 2020 LOI DE 2020 VISANT À REDONNER VIE AUX RUES COMMERCANTES

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

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Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: It’s an honour to rise today to lead off third reading of the Main Street Recovery Act, and I would like to recognize that I’ll be sharing my time with the following members: the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, the member from Markham–Unionville and the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Our government introduced this piece of legislation on October 7. Today, we will not only discuss the elements of this legislation but also update the House on the great response we have seen so far. The items we have brought together in this bill will strengthen small business recovery, bolster strategic supply chains and open up new opportunities for businesses well into the future.

We all recognize that small and main street businesses are truly the backbone of the Ontario economy. I myself am the proud son of two small business owners. I

understand what businesses mean to the people who run them, the communities they serve and the economies they support.

As we are too aware, this pandemic has wrought devastating effects on the health of our people while also posing serious threats to our economy. That’s why, as we rebuild, our government is committed to do so in a way that sharpens the competitiveness of our businesses and safeguards the people’s health, safety and the environment.

Ontario’s small and main street businesses, we also recognize, have borne the brunt of the challenges, and despite these challenges, they continue to show ingenuity like never before. They’ve shown strength and true Ontario spirit at every turn. Whether by temporarily closing their doors to flatten the curve, physically distancing their employees and customers or transforming their business models overnight, they have gone above and beyond to serve the people of Ontario often at great cost to themselves, their employees and their families. Our government wants them to know that we are grateful for their contributions and inspired by their example.

Of course, no amount of hard work and dedication can truly resist the effects of a global pandemic. So while many small businesses across Ontario have safely opened, none have gone back to business as usual. Main streets all across this province are losing traffic, and it’s putting the livelihoods of our families and the vitality of our communities at risk. It’s something our government takes very seriously and recognizes the significant economic contributions that these businesses make, and we understand their genuine need for support to help them get through this very difficult time.

In 2019, as some context, small businesses employed about 2.4 million people and accounted for about 98% of all businesses across this province. That represents about 36%, or more than a third, of our total employment in this province. That’s why their recovery is so vital to getting Ontario back on track. As the backbone of our economy, these businesses strengthen productivity, link supply chains and give rise to countless innovations.

Beyond their economic contributions, small and main street businesses are uniquely woven into the fabric of Ontario’s communities. Our economy, our way of life and our communities are strengthened by the diversity and output of small businesses across this province.

As businesses take the next steps, our government is paving the way to help them reopen and help them get through these very difficult times. This includes financial support that this government has put forward since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak and this new legislation we’re discussing today.

The Main Street Recovery Act, in fact, builds upon over \$11 billion in support and regulatory changes we swiftly made available at the onset of the pandemic. Since March when the government released the COVID-19 action plan we’ve been delivering:

—up to \$6 billion in temporary relief by deferring taxes;

—up to \$1.9 billion in deferrals for WSIB payments; and

—up to \$1.8 billion to defer municipal property and education taxes.

More recently, Minister Phillips also introduced the second phase in Ontario's action plan, which focuses on protecting, supporting and recovery—to the tune of \$45 billion within these three pillars.

First, we are taking steps to support and protect people from this deadly virus by investing \$15.2 billion. We are building on the earlier relief of \$13.5 billion in direct support for families, workers and employers, in addition to the \$11-plus billion in support. Third, we're removing barriers in recovery and providing \$4.8 billion to support and create new jobs now and into the future.

As the minister responsible for small business and red tape reduction, I understand how government rules and regulations truly affect small businesses. The last thing small and main street businesses need as they look to rebound and recover is outdated, overly obstructive and duplicative rules that slow them down and cost them money. Our proposed legislation contains amendments from three ministries that would support small business recovery by modernizing regulations and making sensible changes to rules and processes to make Ontario work smarter and better for main streets across this province.

If passed, these amendments will help more small and main street businesses adapt to the unique challenges of the pandemic, while allowing them to innovate and pursue new opportunities. At the same time, they would improve upon protections to keep people safe and strengthen sectors that support small and main street businesses across this province.

The first proposal focuses on ensuring 24-7 deliveries to our retailers, restaurants and distribution centres. It builds on temporary changes that we made to ensure shelves remained stocked through the first wave of the pandemic. It also addressed concerns from many small businesses about ensuring that they received these goods in a timely manner.

The second part of this proposed legislation that we're discussing today involves amendments to the Ontario Food Terminal Act. The Main Street Recovery Act's changes would, among other things, expand the Ontario Food Terminal's mandate to allow it to promote more local food. This would support the growth of Ontario's agri-food economy, enabling more businesses to compete and succeed in a crowded marketplace. It would help contribute to a more sustainable economic recovery province-wide by helping to create more homegrown and local jobs.

The final part I'd like to highlight in my third reading remarks is about supporting Ontario's taxi and limousine industry. It's one that has suffered immensely over the past couple of years. Illegal taxi and limousine operators have been an ongoing issue for municipalities across this province. This act that is being proposed, and hopefully passes very soon, would strengthen fines against illegal operators. The Ministry of Transportation would amend

the Highway Traffic Act to increase the fine range from \$500 to up to \$30,000 per offence. It could help increase confidence and bring more traffic to main streets across the province.

On top of this, we are also providing unprecedented financial supports for our hardest-hit businesses. We are providing them—over 60,000 businesses—with a \$1,000 grant to support them in their time of need, to help offset the cost of PPE. I am happy to say that since the launch of the program, we have received hundreds and thousands of applications to help these businesses offset that cost. It's just one part of the supports that we continue to provide these main street businesses.

I'm very happy to have had the chance to bring forward this legislation with the support from the conversations that I have had over the past six to eight months. I've had the opportunity to host hundreds of virtual round tables with small business owners, hearing directly about their concerns and what their needs are. This is one part of our government's plan to help ensure that they get back on their feet. We recognize the financial toll that this pandemic has brought on them, and that is also why, in the past two weeks, we have introduced and doubled funding to those in areas impacted. No matter what the situation, this government will continue to support small businesses across the province and do whatever we can from a regulatory, legislative or financial aspect to help ensure that they get back on their feet.

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Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate all of the hard work that business owners across this province have been putting forward to get through this pandemic, and their ingenuity. To the families that continue to struggle: I want them to know that this government will continue to support them and give them all the tools they need to get through this quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The minister did say he'd be sharing his time. I think the first member to join the debate is the member for Haldimand-Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly appreciate Minister Sarkaria sharing that hour with other MPPs. I haven't seen a reach-out like that very often in the number of years that I've been here. Minister Sarkaria clearly knows business, and he would know, in my riding, the importance of main streets and small business—the importance of these enterprises right across the province of Ontario.

Sadly, so many are in trouble. We're in the midst of a pandemic, an infectious disease that has had a tremendous influence on traffic patterns from the customers that we all depend on. Whether it's the very large employers or the medium-sized to the small to the very small, we're all facing these kinds of challenges. It's something that we, in a sense, really haven't experienced since that mother of all pandemics, the Spanish flu.

I'm so impressed with the moniker for this legislation, the Main Street Recovery Act. As elected representatives, we all know about main-streeting. Main-streeting is just as

important as door-knocking, not only to garner information but—if I could be so, I don't know, practical—to garner votes, as well.

I learned a bit about main-streeting—the minister knows about main-streeting and going in and out of businesses. And I learned how to do this, believe it or not, in southeast Asia in the 1960s. Vietnam was happening. I wasn't in the war, but I was spending an awful lot of time with the military guys who were on R&R. They were programmed for patrol. Patrol starts at 9. We were in Bangkok. Every morning we'd go on patrol; that was just their habit. But they didn't just walk down the street. They didn't say hi to people on the street. You went door by door. You went inside the business and said hi to the person at the front desk. You walked down one side and up the other. They looked at everything. They talked to the customers, and they talked to the employees.

I've used that myself. That's main-streeting. By the time you walk out of that store, you've got a pretty good idea of whether that business is successful and where they are coming from, and I see that kind of intel in this legislation. This is legislation that draws on the considerable consultation that has been done by the minister and so many other people, and it is so important to get this right during these unprecedented and, I would say, stratospherically stressful times.

People are going bankrupt. We know this. They are looking for hope. They're looking for action on key words like “recovery” and “rebuild.” We see these components in this legislation that will empower people to make it through the winter and come out in the coming year in a much healthier position. It's something that would be of value for start-ups, for young people getting into the business. It's obviously very friendly legislation in that regard and, again, can truly live up to its moniker as Ontario's Main Street Recovery Plan.

We know some of the data in here. It's providing \$60 million in one-time grants of up to \$1,000 for an eligible small business, and establishing this recovery network: 47 small business enterprise centres that help them deal with government, whether it be local, provincial or municipal.

Communication is so important in business. You can no longer go to a board of trade meeting or a chamber of commerce meeting. In our business, the transfer of ideas and information is so important, hence the importance of what's referred to as the Digital Main Street squads to help businesses get involved in assessing what they need, creating websites, getting on social media with respect to communicating with their customers, their competitors and attracting more business.

There was made mention of the Ontario small business recovery webpage to provide one-stop shopping to provide support. That hits home for me. When I set up my operation—this was a couple of decades ago—we heard about the World Wide Web. My staff were real keen on this. We had no idea what to do. We couldn't find anybody who knew how to set up something like that. We found a kid in grade 9 at Simcoe high school. We hired him. He set up my website, which I use today, and he did a fantastic

job. When he finished, I think he said, “Well, you can keep the five bucks, if you want.” We may have paid him more than that; I can't remember. But, again, ideas and information and new technology—we were in a bind back then.

So many businesses now are lost. Many of them have gotten by without being adept at so many of the tricks of the trade. I've talked to people now trying to set up websites. They're getting quotes of \$500, maybe over \$12,000, and it's taking them months and months to connect—so again, this fantastic idea of Digital Main Street squads.

There's another initiative, a \$57-million program to help something on the order of close to 23,000 businesses create an online presence and generate jobs for more people.

Speaker, I know there are other people who have been in business who are really keen on speaking. I'm going to end here.

As a guy who uses public transit—and I used to use taxis; I'm afraid to get in one now. But there was made mention of some changes there and to up the fines. I think that's quite heartening as well.

I'm going to end there, Speaker.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: It's a pleasure to speak to the House today in support of the Main Street Recovery Act put forward by the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Our government is committed to supporting business and job creators. Well before the pandemic, we had taken swift action to increase Ontario's position as a strong business environment on the international stage and taken steps to make it easier for businesses to deal with government and comply with regulatory requirements. This is still important work, but the public health measures and restrictions implemented because of the pandemic have resulted in many more challenges for businesses.

I represent Mississauga–Streetsville, which many of you know is part of Peel. Along with Toronto, Peel is in the lockdown stage of our reopening framework. Moving regions into more restrictive stages of reopening is not an easy decision to make, but we must take necessary measures to limit community transmission of COVID-19 in order to keep schools open, safeguard health system capacity and protect the province's most vulnerable populations.

As with the first lockdown, businesses cannot go through this alone, nor should they. Our government will not let that happen. We have taken many steps to help businesses during COVID-19, including having provided over \$10 billion in provincial tax deferrals, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premium deferrals and other business supports.

We've provided more than \$900 million in urgent relief to small businesses and their landlords through a new program, the Ontario-Canada Emergency Commercial

Rent Assistance Program, and we introduced temporary regulation changes to better support businesses.

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These changes were widely varied and included: enabling trucks to deliver supplies 24-7 to areas across this province; allowing municipalities to quickly pass temporary bylaws for the creation and extension of patios; permitting 24-7 construction for critical infrastructure; allowing bars and restaurants to include alcohol with takeout or delivery food items; and extending electricity rate relief for businesses.

These were actions taken in the middle of the pandemic. As we continue to fight against the second wave of the virus and look towards our long-term recovery and growth, we need further action. Our main street recovery plan will help us do just that, building on our actions from the March action plan, fall budget and the recent Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020.

Our main street recovery plan was designed based on over 100 virtual meetings, round tables and discussions with owners, workers and economists. It draws from across government and builds on more than \$10 billion in urgent economic relief provided through the COVID-19 action plan, as I had mentioned before.

The plan includes the Main Street Recovery Act, proposed legislation that would both help modernize rules to help small businesses and introduce new programs to help our businesses, like the \$1,000 main street recovery grant, to aid with the purchase of personal protective equipment.

Our proposed legislation contains amendments from three ministries that would support small business recovery by modernizing regulations and making sensible changes to rules and processes to make Ontario work smarter and better for main street. If passed, these amendments will help small and main street businesses adapt to the unique challenges of this pandemic, while allowing them to innovate and pursue new opportunities. At the same time, they would improve important protections that keep people safe and strengthen sectors that support small and main street businesses province-wide.

Regulations are necessary—necessary to protect our health, necessary to protect our safety and necessary to protect our environment. We are not against regulation. We are, though, against regulation that is duplicative, unnecessarily burdensome and simply outdated.

As the minister explained earlier, our efforts to reduce red tape follow five guiding principles:

(1) We must protect health, safety and the environment. Our government will only ease regulatory burden in a smart, careful way to ensure that health, safety and environmental protections are maintained.

(2) We must prioritize issues that are most important, even if they are difficult. We are carefully assessing which regulations cost people and businesses the most time and money, while looking for innovative, modern ways to ensure these rules are as effective and efficient as possible.

(3) We must do what we can to harmonize rules with Ottawa and other provinces wherever we can. Rules and

regulations should not vary widely between Ontario and other provinces or the federal government. We are targeting duplicative red tape and aligning where we can to make things easier for people and job creators.

(4) We must listen to the people and businesses of Ontario. We want to hear from people about what we can do to remove red tape and create the right conditions for businesses and communities to prosper. Government doesn't have all the answers. We rely on input from the people and organizations who have first-hand experience in dealing with a particular topic.

(5) Most importantly, we must take an all-of-government approach to regulations and problem-solving. Once and for all, we need to end the silo approach and recognize that regulations don't fall under one ministry; they span across many, or even the entire government. This is why we're taking a highly coordinated approach and making sure everyone in government is on the same page when it comes to our red tape reduction strategy.

Ontario's taxi and limousine industry is one sector that faced challenges before the pandemic, such as unlicensed activity and ride-sharing platforms. Illegal taxi and limousine operators have been an ongoing issue for municipalities across the province and for airport authorities such as the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, which looks after our country's busiest airport, Pearson International Airport in Mississauga. All of my Mississauga and Peel colleagues have met many times with the GTAA, as a team and independently, each time hearing about the problem of illegal and unlicensed taxi or airport limos that pose risks to passengers. We call these "scoopers."

To act as a strong deterrent to illegal operators, the Ministry of Transportation would amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the fine range to \$500 to \$30,000 per offence for transporting passengers without the required licence, permit or authorization. I know many members in this House travel to Toronto to be here in the Legislature, and I'm sure we've all been approached by scoopers at some point or other.

This update would help support the recovery of a regulated industry. Even though our airports may not be as busy now as before the pandemic, taxis still provide essential services in getting people across Ontario where they need to be. We must prevent people from skirting the rules, and take action and deter behaviour and operations that pose risks to the people of Ontario.

Another key action we are proposing through this bill that I would like to touch on is making permanent the temporary regulatory change that allows deliveries to retailers, restaurants and distribution centres to occur 24-7. We all remember the empty shelves that retailers across the province faced at the beginning of the pandemic: canned goods, pasta, rice, flour and, for some reason I still don't quite understand, toilet paper. Our supply chain was not at risk, but people were worried, and when they saw empty shelves, they worried even more.

Our suppliers were able to keep up with production, but couldn't get goods to store shelves as often as they needed

until this change was made. Making this change permanent would support economic recovery on our main streets by helping much-needed goods reach businesses as efficiently as possible. It would keep supply chains moving, supporting businesses across all sectors. Businesses will be assured that they will have the supplies and materials they need, and consumers will be confident that retailers will have what they need.

It also has other benefits. Previous pilots have demonstrated environmental benefits through reduced emissions and rush hour traffic.

The amendments would limit municipal authority to regulate noise in connection with the delivery of goods to retail establishments; restaurants, including cafes and bars; hotels and motels; and distribution facilities, except, of course, in sensitive areas. Keeping in line with other actions we have taken during the pandemic, we will give municipalities the authority to tailor these sensitive areas to the needs of their communities, based on criteria, limits and conditions based on, of course, consultation.

The proposal before us would help to modernize and harmonize Ontario's patchwork of often outdated noise bylaws, in keeping with our third regulatory principle. It would keep goods moving to small and main street businesses, keep trade flowing and strengthen significant supply chains across sectors.

The two proposals mentioned above are just a few of the ways we are helping local communities and businesses recover from the pandemic. Combined with programs like the PPE grant, relief outlined in our budget—Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover—and other legislation, we are moving forward on our path to recovery and providing small and main street businesses that are the backbone of our community and our economy the supports and tools they need to weather the storm and make it through this pandemic.

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Speaker, we have come a long way, but we know that the current situation is far from over. We will continue to listen to the people and businesses of Ontario and continue to put forward legislation, programs and regulatory changes to support them.

I encourage all members of this House to support our businesses—and, by voting in favour of this bill, they are supporting our businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next member to speak is the member for Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: It is a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 215, the Main Street Recovery Act. Our government introduced this act on October 7. Today, we will discuss the elements of this legislation, outlining how the items we have brought together will strengthen small business recovery, bolster strategic supply chains and open up new opportunities for businesses well into the future. We will also address the actions our government is taking to support the rebuilding of main streets across the province through our main street recovery plan, of which this legislation is a cornerstone.

First, some context about the situation we find ourselves in: As we are too aware, the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought devastating effects on the health of our people while posing serious threats to our economy. That's why, as we rebuild, our government is committed to doing so in a way that sharpens the viability and competitiveness of Ontario businesses, while safeguarding people's health, safety and the environment.

Ontario's small and main street businesses have borne the brunt of COVID-19's economic burdens. They are facing their greatest challenge in recent history, as the pandemic has temporarily undercut their business model and much of their value proposition. In this temporary paradigm, small is becoming a barrier; personal service is posing a liability; and bricks and mortar are being seen as a weakness.

And yet, despite these challenges, small businesses have persisted. They have shown strength and true Ontario spirit at every turn, whether by temporarily closing their doors to flatten the curve, physically distancing to keep employees and customers safe or transforming their business model overnight.

In my riding of Markham–Unionville, I'm thankful to all small businesses for doing their part to stop the spread of COVID-19. But most importantly, I am thankful for small businesses that, during this uncertain time, continue to think of and support our most vulnerable, our front-line heroes, our retirement and long-term-care homes.

For example, Eric Tappenden, the owner of Chapel Ridge Funeral Home in Markham–Unionville, back in April, generously donated \$7,000 worth of PPE to four long-term-care homes, three senior residents' homes and Participation House, and, to this day, continues to donate to our care homes and non-profit organizations.

Small businesses have gone above and beyond to serve the people of Ontario, often at great cost to themselves, their employees and their families. Our government wants them to know that we are grateful for their contributions and are inspired by their example.

Of course, no amount of hard work or dedication can resist the effects of a global pandemic, so while many small businesses across Ontario have safely reopened, none have gone back to business as usual. Main streets all over the province are losing traffic, and it's putting the livelihoods of our families and the vitality of our community at risk. It is something our government takes very seriously, and we will not rest until we shore up our small businesses through this second wave and set them up for success beyond it.

In 2019, Ontario's small businesses employed about 2.5 million people and accounted for 98% of all businesses in the province. That represents about 36%—more than a third—of our total employment. It's why their recovery is critical to Ontario's recovery. As the backbone of our economy, these businesses strengthen productivity, link supply chains and give rise to countless innovations. Eventually, many of them grow into the game-changing companies our province is known for worldwide.

Beyond their economic contributions, small and main street businesses are uniquely woven into the fabric of Ontario's communities. They anchor neighbourhoods, support sports and cultural activities, and bring our friends and family together to eat, shop and play. Our economy, our way of life, our communities are strengthened by the diversity and output of small businesses. Ontarians across the province count on them for reasons big and small. Today, these same small businesses are counting on all of us, and as they take their next steps to recovery, our government is paving the way for all avenues to be open to them.

This includes the financial support we made available on first learning of the COVID-19 outbreak. This new legislation we are discussing today, the Main Street Recovery Act, in fact builds on the \$10 billion of support and regulatory changes we swiftly made available from the onset of the pandemic.

Since March 2020, Ontario's COVID-19 action plan has been delivering: up to \$6 billion in relief by temporarily deferring taxes for 100,000 Ontario businesses; up to \$1.9 billion to allow employers to defer Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payments; and up to \$1.8 billion to defer municipal education property tax payments.

In addition, we partnered with the federal government to deliver Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance, making more than \$900 million available in urgent commercial rent relief. To reinforce that support, we also paused evictions for commercial tenants eligible for rent assistance through this program.

As we have entered the second wave of the pandemic, the federal government recently announced plans to replace this assistance plan program with the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy. It's expected to provide rent and mortgage support until June 2021 for qualifying small businesses and organizations affected by COVID-19 so that they can maintain their physical premises now and into the future.

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Since the beginning, we have made Ontarians' health and safety our top priority while also supporting workers and business owners to survive through the worst of the crisis. To provide relief for local restaurants and businesses impacted by these public health measures, we are now making \$600 million available to them to help offset fixed costs, including property taxes, hydro and natural gas bills. As we work together with doctors, health experts and people all over Ontario to turn the tide in this region, our government is committed to stand by the businesses affected by these new restrictions. We want these small businesses and others across Ontario to be able to keep the lights on through the worst of this dark period. We also want them to look forward to a brighter future ahead.

Through more than 100 virtual meetings, round tables and discussions since the start of this pandemic, we have been in constant contact with small business owners, employees, entrepreneurs, economists and associations.

We have listened to the heartbreaking stories from entrepreneurs and family businesses who have sacrificed so much to make their dreams a reality, only to face devastating setbacks brought on by COVID-19. We have heard their calls throughout this pandemic to support their recovery and lay a stronger foundation for future growth. It has resulted in countless meetings across the government to identify innovative legislative and regulatory changes that would help businesses to weather this storm and emerge prepared for new opportunities on the horizon. We are proud to have taken more than 200 actions to reduce red tape, saving businesses money and time to invest in job creation and expansion.

Speaker, the pandemic has compelled us to use all the legislative and regulatory tools at our disposal to help businesses recover and reposition themselves in an increasingly digital and rapidly evolving economic environment. As our province comes together to fight against COVID-19, the Ontario government will continue to support our small businesses every step of the way.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It is a privilege to rise today and speak before the House on the Main Street Recovery Act. I want to congratulate the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction, Minister Sarkaria, for introducing this bill to help and support our small businesses during these unprecedented times. I think Minister Sarkaria deserves huge credit and applause from all of us, as he is actually really, really fighting for small businesses in this province. So thank you very much, Minister Sarkaria, for that.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the cornerstone of our economy, and our government recognizes the challenges faced by these businesses. That is why this act will be so crucial in ensuring that these businesses can make it through these challenging times.

I would like to share a story here, Speaker. Back in July or August, the Premier and I visited a small business. They basically manufactured candles. During these unprecedented times, they pivoted towards making hand sanitizer. I think it's a true Ontario spirit story here, that businesses started to support one another but also the people of this province, and did their very best and continue to do so during these unprecedented times.

But the Main Street Recovery Act will help businesses like these and countless others across Ontario through this unprecedented time. Our government has been working collaboratively, taking a team approach to the larger pieces of legislation. Ministries are working together to support the people and businesses of Ontario. Today, as part of this approach, we are here to discuss legislation aimed at protecting public health, safety and the environment. The proposed Main Street Recovery Act will uphold and improve these important issues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House of the five guiding principles that direct our efforts to reduce red tape. The first principle is to protect public health, safety and the environment. We have carefully tackled regulatory

burdens to ensure that health, safety and environmental protections are maintained or enhanced.

The second principle is to prioritize the important issues of public health, safety and the environment. We have assessed the regulations to determine what cost businesses the most time and money while finding ways to ensure rules stay effective and efficient.

The third principle is to harmonize rules with the federal government and other jurisdictions. We have targeted duplicative red tape and created alignments where possible with other jurisdictions to eliminate steps that cost job creators time and money.

The fourth principle is to listen to the people and the small businesses of our province. The people and businesses of Ontario are going above and beyond to make sure that they support each other but also are expecting us to have their back. I personally believe Minister Sarkaria has our small businesses' back, and I'm sure he will continue to do the great work to provide them the support they need. We have committed to hearing and listening to people and businesses to learn how we can remove unnecessary obstacles.

And the fifth principle is to take a whole-of-government approach. We have taken a coordinated approach to reduce red tape and deliver smarter government and higher economic growth. Main street businesses are dealing with health and safety concerns because of this pandemic and practical issues with cash flow. Regulatory burdens have not made it easier and do not reflect the realities and experiences of today. That is why smarter regulations are needed, so businesses can use their time and resources to focus on safely reopening their businesses. Having Ontario move towards modern regulations while leveraging technology means we can empower our businesses to focus on their recovery. That is what the Main Street Recovery Act will do.

There are some great proposals that will act address. First, changing to 24-7 delivery times to retailers, restaurants and distribution centres permanently: I know, Speaker, that this will bring an excellent service to businesses in my community of Mississauga East-Cooksville and across Ontario. By bringing forth this change, we are addressing the supply chain issues we saw during the first wave of this pandemic. We are also recognizing that as our province changes and develops, we have to change with it. This legislation helps goods reach businesses more efficiently and effectively by expanding delivery hours. There will be increased safety for employees and customers. And as demonstrated through pilot projects, there is a benefit in the reduction of traffic to the environment through reduced greenhouse gases.

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The second change that I would like to speak to is the amendment to the Ontario Food Terminal Act. This key piece of the legislation will help support local agriculture and food businesses by giving them additional support to compete in a very competitive market.

Another part of the legislation that I believe will be very important is the proposed change to the Highway Traffic Act. This change will help address the illegal taxi and

limousine operators who have troubled our municipalities and airport authorities. This change will bring about more considerable fines for illegal operators and increase Ontario's travel security.

I just want to share a personal story over here. I myself was once a victim of the airport limousine service. I was coming back from Vancouver, and the flight had been delayed. I arrived in Toronto at, I think, about 2:15 in the morning. At that time, what you are seeing is the bed you just want to go and sleep on; I don't know how it happened that I somehow ended up in a limousine that I later realized was not actually the authorized airport limousine service.

I know that after that I heard several other stories of how these illegal operators were operating at the airport, so I think this will definitely help our legal operators doing business at the airport. I think sometimes you don't realize until you have personally experienced something. I can definitely say, 100%, that this is something the minister and I had a chat about one time, and now I'm really happy and excited to see that. We also heard from GTAA about this. I think they will be really happy once this bill is passed.

The small and medium businesses that make up main streets are the heart and soul of this province. This proposed legislation will help these businesses operate safely, increase their revenue and improve the supply chain. This plan is made for our small businesses to give them the help they need to recover. In addition to the legislative changes, there are funding increases for programs and services to address the current issues and realities of this difficult time. The main street recovery grant provides small and main street businesses up to \$1,000 in immediate direct funding to help offset costs associated with PPE.

Just about a week ago I reached out to some of the restaurants in my riding and a few other businesses, sending them the link where they can go and apply for this \$1,000 funding and received some very positive feedback from businesses appreciating that this government and the minister truly have their back. Premier Ford has the backs of the businesses. This \$1,000 is something that will definitely help them in procuring PPE not only for themselves and their employees, but also for their customers. I think it's a great idea, and definitely I'm hearing some very positive comments and feedback on this grant.

The Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network will link the 47 small business enterprise centres into the new Small Business COVID-19 Recovery Network. This network will offer specialized resources, advice, planning, information and tools for the businesses and entrepreneurs in their communities.

Finally, our partnership with the federal government to introduce the Digital Main Street program is helping almost 23,000 small businesses build and improve their online presence while providing nearly 1,400 jobs to talented students.

Our government has remained committed to ensuring the health and economic well-being of this province. I'm proud of our government's commitment on this, too, Mr. Speaker.

The Main Street Recovery Act is an important piece of a larger puzzle that we are building to help meet Ontario's needs during this difficult time. We have listened to those needs and delivered on what we heard small businesses and main street businesses need to recover and emerge from the pandemic stronger.

As I always say, Mr. Speaker, we are all in this together. Thank you to every minister of this government who is going above and beyond and working around the clock. Thank you to the Premier who is almost working 24-7. And thank you to all my colleagues on this side who have been out there listening to businesses, listening to their constituents, getting their feedback, understanding their issues, and then bringing that feedback back to the table and giving it to different ministries, making sure that we come out of this crisis stronger than ever before and for continuing to make our province the economic engine of this country once again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We've heard from the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction and four members of his team on this bill.

Now we have an opportunity for 10 minutes of questions and responses from members on both sides of the House.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I'd like to thank all my colleagues across the way for their comments. I listened intently to your discussions of small business. I think all of us as MPPs have been speaking to our small businesses, and I like the description of "main-streeting." I didn't know it had a title, but I guess we all do it.

The thing is, though, when I'm going into some of those businesses, they say that they're hanging on; they're struggling. You spoke of the resilience of small business and the spirit of Ontario, and I couldn't agree more. But they are very concerned that, next year, because we're heading into eight months of this and they've been struggling for eight months—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pose your question, please.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: All right. What I would like to ask is, what are you going to do for those businesses that we know are going to go bankrupt?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I thank the member opposite for that question. Look, we recognize that this pandemic has had a significant impact on businesses to date. This government has put forward unprecedented supports, whether it is through the \$60-million main street relief grant that this specific piece of legislation also speaks to; whether it's the Digital Main Street, helping 23,000 businesses with grants of up to \$2,500; and in areas impacted, up to 90% tenant-directed relief for those businesses impacted.

But in this Legislature, at the same time, we have budget legislation that is going forward that is going to save businesses 14% to 16% on their energy and electricity costs. We have legislation going forward that is going to

lower the cost by over \$450 million on property taxes to help those businesses recover even stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question goes to the member from Whitby.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you, Speaker, and through you to the minister: This government has a long-standing commitment to the skilled trades and doing whatever we can to support the skilled trades and close the skills mismatch that has existed in this province for the better part of 16 or 17 years.

One of the initiatives is a digital portal for the skilled trades and apprenticeship system overall. We've done that because we've heard from those who would want to use a digital portal about the value of being able to access those services online.

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Speaker, through you to the minister, can the minister speak specifically to the feedback he's hearing from the broader community about the value of this portal now and in the future?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member for that question. It's a very important question. When we speak to the digitization of processes to get businesses online, that is one of the significant changes that we have seen during this pandemic—the shift in behaviours. And our government responded, as the member directly opposite has mentioned.

Just through the Digital Main Street program, we'll be able to help approximately 23,000 businesses pivot online. And we recognize that, in the month of April, we had record-breaking online sales—close to \$3.9 billion of sales.

When we look at businesses, whether it's the skilled trades or other businesses like those in the member's riding, who I had a chance to speak with multiple of times—and I have to say, the member takes a very active role in engaging the business community, so I had the opportunity to speak with many of them. They also recognize the significance—

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

The next question.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: When I talk to businesses in Beaches–East York, they're actually quite frantic and very concerned about their ability to survive. They are looking for very specific things that are not in this bill or any other bill that the government has put forward. They're looking for direct supports, and they're actually looking to be able to stay open, because they have put measures in place that make them safer, if anything, than the Walmarts of the world and the big box stores that are allowed to stay open.

I'm wondering what the minister has to say to businesses that are desperate not to go under right before the holiday season.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This government has put forward unprecedented supports to get businesses through this very difficult time. Just last week, we doubled funding to \$600 million for those businesses that have

been impacted by the restrictions that have been put forward: 100% of their property taxes, 100% of their hydro and natural gas bills will be covered by this government—direct payments. On top of that, those same businesses can apply for up to 90% rent relief. The program was just released this past Monday.

We recognize that these are very challenging times for these businesses, but we're going to continue to put forward supports. This piece of legislation that we're speaking to right now, there is \$60 million available—\$1,000 grants to businesses across this province to help offset the cost of PPE. We know that this is a very tough time for these businesses, but this government will continue to invest in those businesses, help them get through this very difficult time, but also ensure they have the supports on the other side to get through this and remain competitive.

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

Ms. Jane McKenna: Shelagh, one of my constituents, just asked me a question, because I said that you were debating this today. Her question to you is: How does this recovery package differ from recent recovery packages announced by the government?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to thank the member from Burlington for that great question. This package is different from the other packages because we truly need to innovate at this time of need.

One of the commitments we made in this legislation, for example, for those involved in the hospitality and restaurant industry, there's a commitment to permanently allow those restaurants to deliver alcohol with takeout orders. That has been a significant source of revenue for some of these businesses. On top of that, we're taking the ability to allow trucks to deliver, whether it's to pharmacies or grocery stores, 24-7, because we know shelves need to remain stocked through this entire period.

On top of that, this government is committed to not only financially supporting businesses, but using methods through regulation, as we introduced today as well as legislation that's going to cap delivery fees on food delivery service apps to help those same restaurants get through this very difficult time.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: St. Catharines and municipalities all across Ontario have invested thousands of dollars on their main streets and their downtowns to make sure that they revitalize them and that people shop, eat, wine, dine and go to their local markets in their downtowns.

Businesses need financial assistance. They need help. They need help from this government. I would appreciate it, Speaker, if the members on the opposite side would listen to the small business owners from St. Catharines: the Terras, the Pizza Jerry's, the Georges, the Penny's, the restaurants, the small bookstores, the shoe stores, the ones that sell pet supplies. I need you to listen to these people.

They are real. They have put all of their family money into their businesses.

Will this government please, please commit today—not that you're going to be giving them PPE to keep their doors open. That doesn't help them. They need financial assistance. Will this government commit today to putting in place something that will financially support these small businesses that are hanging on by a thread?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I want to highlight the duplicity between the members opposite and what just happened in this House a couple minutes ago. The member from Ottawa–Vanier put forward a unanimous consent motion that would have immediately put into place legislation that would have capped delivery fees for restaurants that have been hit hard across this entire pandemic. The members opposite had an opportunity to push forward that legislation so it could receive royal assent on Monday, but they refused.

I appreciate the member from Ottawa–Vanier recognizing that this is not a political issue. Supporting small businesses should not be politicalized. I'm very disappointed in the members opposite for not supporting that unanimous consent motion, and I was just as disappointed last year when they refused to support a 9% reduction in taxes to those same small businesses.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I'd just like to start by acknowledging the member from St. Catharines and the member from Beaches–East York, who were talking about their communities in the way that we see happening. I have to say, all the grandstanding in the world on behalf of this government isn't going to make this meagre bill look any better.

You know, main street needs recovery; that's absolutely true. But it certainly needs more than these small, penny-pinching, frittering-around-the-edges measures that this government is putting forward.

Before I get into the actual suffering that's happening with main street businesses—mom-and-pop shops across all of our ridings—I just want to talk about how we understand, and it's a matter of common sense, that there would be no economic recovery without an effective COVID-19 health response. It makes perfect sense. The very fact that we are now in lockdown is literally because of the failure of this government's COVID-19 response. We've been warning for months now that if you didn't spend the money, if you didn't take measures, we would be in a deeper and a longer lockdown that would delay the economic recovery and cost people their jobs and cost the province of Ontario businesses. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Here we are.

Let me take a moment to acknowledge—so thank you to the Auditor General, because now we can understand that we don't have an effective economic response because of the failure of this government's efforts to address COVID-19. Some of the highlights show, as we said, that this has put the province into a longer, deeper, more devastating second wave, and it didn't have to be this

way. The auditor uncovered a pandemic response plagued by delays and a lack of preparedness, and driven by politics, not public health.

The auditor uncovered a pandemic response that was, as I said, plagued by delays. We see the evidence showing that this is a government that didn't increase testing capacity, and the auditor's report suggests it's because this government didn't want to pay hospitals to do additional testing. The fact that this is a penny-pinching government makes perfect sense in this bill and in the budget bill that is also before the House right now. The government didn't spend the money to ensure a safe return to school or cap class sizes at 15, and now we know that well over 4,000 students, teachers and education workers have gotten sick with COVID-19 and an education worker has died in this province—an entirely avoidable death.

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But most shocking of all in terms of a COVID-19 response that would support main street business is the failure of the lab capacity. The findings from the Auditor General say that 119,000 Ontarians who had COVID-19 were not tested because of this government's ineffective testing regime. That really speaks just to their lack of interest in spending money to keep the people of Ontario safe.

In my riding, Mr. Speaker, businesses had to close down because of the inability for them to get testing in a timely manner or these incredible delays in getting the test results. These were businesses that were trying to keep their doors open, trying to keep their employees employed, trying to serve their community, and they had to wait and wait and wait before they could resume their business because they couldn't get effective testing.

Thank you to the Auditor General. Really, she has just confirmed what everybody in my riding has been saying, that this is a lacklustre, too little, too late response not only to keep people safe but to save main street. And really, the fact this bill is titled "save main street"—the title speaks to the urgency to save main street, but the actions in this bill do not reflect the urgency that we're seeing out there.

And you don't have to take it from me; you don't even have to take it from the advice from the Auditor General, but what I would like to say is, CFIB is now so angry and disappointed with this government. The CFIB has said, "On behalf of Toronto and Peel's independent businesses, it appears we are not ... in this together."

CFIB goes on to say Premier Ford "said that ... the rules are unfair, but that he acted ... on the medical advice." And then he goes on to say, "Did the medical advice recommend shutting down all non-essential retail, including big box stores?"

So Mr. Speaker, again, thanks to the Auditor General we know two things. We know that this government, the Premier, was not acting on medical advice. It's clear that the command tables, the bloated reporting system, the money, the millions of dollars that this province decided to spend on consulting fees, is evidence that instead of listening to the medical experts in this community, this government was listening to insiders and their consultants.

The member from Davenport said this morning—I thought it was such a wonderful point—why did the Minister of Education have to spend millions of dollars on a consultant when we have made-in-Ontario experts in education who were prepared to provide advice? There was no need to hire an American consulting firm and pay them millions of dollars to develop a return-to-school strategy that clearly is not working. So, yes, the first thing we know is that this government appears not to be acting on medical advice but political advice.

And, second, instead of acting on advice from medical professionals, it would appear that this government, given the fact that they thought that it was okay to keep big box stores open—people can shop till they drop in big box stores, but mom-and-pop shops have to close up. But do you know what we learned now? Guess what? It appears that this government is acting on advice from lobbyists from big box stores, because this government—it's a matter of record that the registered lobbyists to this government were former PC employees, PC insiders and operators. One, Melissa Lantsman, was Premier Ford's war room director, and a second, David Tarrant, was Premier Ford's former executive director of communications. So if people are wondering, as we are, why it's okay for big box stores to stay open but small businesses have to shut their doors, I think you need to look no further than who is influencing this government.

CFIB clearly is not happy with this government, but I would also suggest that the five convenience stores a week that are closing their doors are not happy. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, five convenience stores a week are closing their doors in this province, at the same time as this government gets up and crows about all they're doing for small businesses. If they actually got out of this building and went into small towns and small communities, they would see that they are boarded up, that small businesses are closing. And they've been desperately asking for help from this government, patiently waiting, doing all the responsible things to close their doors to keep people safe, and yet again, with this bill before us, Bill 215, and with the government's budget bill, the message seems to be clear to small businesses across the province: You are on your own.

Here's something I want to say: \$1,000, Mr. Speaker. Can we just start there, with \$1,000? That is what this government is offering small businesses—that qualify, by the way, because there are some that won't qualify—\$1,000 for PPE. I have to say that that is just salt in the wound for small businesses.

In my riding, there is a wonderful small business, run by a dedicated, responsible entrepreneur. It's called the Ancaster Sports Centre. This is a very large facility that has year-round sports for all kinds of families and kids. They run soccer fields—they have two soccer fields. They have squash. They have a fantastic fitness centre. They're doing everything they can to follow the guidelines and to stay open because families rely on this. Sports teams want to continue to make sure that their kids get this opportunity. But he is struggling with confusing and conflicting

guidance. He has a 60,000-square-foot facility, which is large, and he's trying to get straight answers as to how many people can be in these two separate buildings. He struggled to do the right thing. He's still having a hard time getting the actual advice that he needs.

In addition to that, I would just like to let you know, Mr. Speaker, that a one-time cleaning for this facility—just one time, to do the right thing, to go above and beyond the guidance—cost this small business owner, the Ancaster Sports Centre in my riding of Ancaster, \$4,000. And this government is offering them \$1,000 if they go through the steps to apply, and maybe they qualify or maybe they don't. So this is really—what can I call this? This is just a meagre offering for the kinds of struggles that are facing small businesses in the province.

We hear from all of our businesses across the province. They have said, "We'll do the right thing. We will invest the money to keep our businesses safe, to keep our employees safe and to support our community." But they have been looking for help from this government.

We know that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs heard an inordinate amount of deputations from small businesses across the province, got an inordinate number of written submissions, and that continues. And what I want to say is that, really, what they were asking for is not in this bill, not in the least. People were asking for direct support.

I find it kind of ironic that this is the Premier who, while he was campaigning, said, "We're going to put money in the pocket of the little guy." Well, here's what I have to say: The little guy could sure use the money in their pocket right now. Here's your opportunity. You know, promises made, promises kept: Here's your big opportunity. Step up and put some actual cash infusion into these businesses. But the government at every turn has failed to do that.

But, thankfully, I would like to assure the businesses in my riding that if you manage to stay open, if you manage to find insurance in this province, if you manage not to be gouged, if you manage to afford your hydro bills, which are only going up in this province—if you manage to do all of that, the government has a thousand bucks for you. So thank you very much.

This is all while this government is sitting on billions and billions and billions of dollars. This is money that should be in the field now. It should be in the field now. If we don't save main street now, with real, meaningful supports, the recovery will just be years and years and years down the road. The opportunity is now, and this government is losing that chance. It's also galling, and people understand this, that 97% of this money, the \$9.3 billion that the government has yet to spend—most of that, 97% of that, came from the federal government.

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Mr. Speaker, it has been made clear that this is not a government that listens to health experts, it's not a government that's listening to small businesses, and it's certainly not a government that's listening to CFIB. But what we also have is a government that's not listening to what goes on at committee. We have all these people who

took the time to come to committee, to share their struggles and their stories, and the government puts forward a bill that seems to not have—it's like they didn't hear what people had to say.

What we do here in this Legislature: The government proposes bills. Ontario's official opposition, the NDP—it's our job to hold them to account, and it's our job to do things to improve bills, to make legislation better, because we represent our constituents, we know things. We want only to improve the legislation in this place—and so that's what committee is for.

When this bill came to committee, as I said, Ontario's official opposition, the NDP, and the independents put forward a number of amendments that would have only made this bill better.

I want to start with an amendment that was put forward to ensure that mom-and-pop shops were not, as they are now, treated unfairly and at a huge disadvantage. This amendment that was put forward was to ensure that "supermarkets, grocery stores, discount and big box retailers to which that regulation applies may open only for the purpose of providing groceries and essential supplies to the public"—basically, ensuring that big box stores didn't get the advantage that had been given. The government turned this down.

There was another amendment that was put forward speaking to the meagre \$1,000 that the government put forward for PPE. Not every business can qualify, so it was moved that home-based businesses and other businesses that don't have a storefront or independent contractors could qualify for this \$1,000 for PPE. The government turned that down.

This is simply a matter of fairness and equal access and equity. If this bill is truly about main street, then it needs to address the fact that these orders that are giving big box retailers an unfair advantage over small stores need to end in this province. It makes perfect sense to me and most of the people in the province. But this government took the opportunity to turn that down.

They don't listen to the medical experts. They don't listen to people at committee. They don't listen to groups like the CFIB. They don't listen to the opposition. They don't listen to their own MPPs.

When we were at committee, we heard the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, MPP Tangri, talk about her experience with illegal taxi drivers and limos. We heard it here today. They put forward a motion to address this that was one line long. We thought, "Well, let's make this better. If they really mean it, let's put some teeth into this." So we proposed an amendment that I would like to mention was the identical language that was tabled by MPP MacLeod, who is now the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, who then recognized how unlicensed and uninsured taxi and limo drivers were making the roads less safe. We agreed, so we put forward a good amendment, a substantial amendment, an amendment that would make clear that this bill was meant to do—that it would have some teeth. That was turned down.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to close by saying that there really isn't much to oppose in this bill because there's not much here.

We are disappointed, as we have been through the entire course of the government's response to COVID-19, that at every turn they choose to shortchange small businesses in the province of Ontario. It's just a matter of choices. The government has all the power and they have all the opportunity to make their choices. So we know that this government basically chooses winners and this government chooses losers. For example, in this case, Walmart is a winner, Cosmetica is a winner, but the mom-and-pop shops across this province, in my riding, are not in that category. They have to struggle along and wait to see what this government might dole out to them if they manage to keep their doors open for another year.

Again, this is while this government is sitting on \$9.3 billion. All of this money could be saving main street. That's the name of your bill. So why don't you put your money where your mouth is and actually support businesses, not down the road, but support them now?

I think, Mr. Speaker, it's also important to acknowledge that small businesses are family-run. They're entrepreneurs. They're hard-working. But they employ the bulk—I think it's something like 90% of the jobs in this province are created by small businesses.

Let's talk a little bit about those employees in these businesses. For these employees, there's no protection from this government while they're struggling to pay the bills. There's no protection from this government that they don't face evictions. These are employees that work in small businesses. There's nothing here to protect them. Rather than support them with the billions of dollars that sit on the sidelines, I'd like to again emphasize that this government chooses to spend \$6.5 billion every year to subsidize a for-profit hydro system. So now, people who work in small businesses, the residents of the province, get to pay their hydro bill twice: They get to pay it on an increased tax bill because of the subsidies from this government, and they get to pay it now on hydro bills that are going up. The hydro bills aren't reduced by 12%, as the government said; they're going up.

So let me just say, Mr. Speaker, people in this province know it in their bones that they are on their own. This government keeps putting forward these bills with big names and promising titles, but when it comes down to action, when the rubber hits the road, this government delays and defers, while businesses in Ontario are closing up and people are suffering. They need help now from this government, and they're not getting it with this bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions and responses to the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I thank the member opposite for expressing herself, but I also want to express myself how small businesses in my riding have been so appreciative of what we are doing.

We do have the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction coming to our riding, explaining

the different details. I'm so thrilled that small businesses, especially in Richmond Hill—there are a lot of small businesses. They are very thankful for what we have done. They understand what we have done so far, but not paid 100% of what they need because we are just a manager. We take the money from taxpayers, and we manage our money in the best way. They agree and approve of it, and they appreciate it.

One thing I would like to ask the member opposite, too: Small businesses, especially, are trying to be very innovative. They're trying to learn how to do e-commerce. I just want to check with the member opposite: The things that we have put together, the digital advice that we are encouraging in them, do you find that useful to small businesses in helping them at this difficult time?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill. I'm happy to hear that everything is great in your riding of Richmond Hill, but it's not for me in Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. And, yes, businesses need all the help they can get, and absolutely there are ways that small businesses can innovate and move to online, but right now, businesses are struggling just to keep the doors open.

It's the expression: How do you change a tire when you're driving down the road? That is what's happening. Businesses are just trying—trying—to keep the doors open. So applying for your grants and going through all the hoops to get this \$2,500 to digitize main street may be helpful for some businesses, but what I want to say is that businesses in my riding are falling through the cracks, and programs here and programs there that are all across ministries make it very difficult for small businesses that have time constraints. They don't have the time to sort out all your programs. If you provide them direct supports, liquidity, cash supports, maybe they could stand back, take a breath and look at ways they can innovate their businesses, but right now, they're struggling just to survive.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You mentioned the word “insurance,” and I know that's a big cost when it comes to doing business. Most recently, I had a visit from a London cab company. Of course, when Uber broke through and started operating in our cities, the cab companies took a big hit and so of course their insurance rates have gone up.

I just wondered if you could talk a little bit about how insurance rates are hugely expensive now, and more specifically to the auto sector when it comes to cabs, and what we can do to help small businesses thrive during the COVID.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for that question, member from London–Fanshawe. Yes, we bring up the cost of insurance on this side of the House all the time, and the Premier gets up and says, “Oh, I'm so mad at those price-gouging insurance companies. I'm going to have a talk with them.” Guess what? The talks aren't working because, in Brampton, they have the highest insurance rates in the province, possibly the country.

There are businesses in my riding that cannot get coverage for expenses that they had, and they can't get ongoing coverage, and if they do get coverage, the rates have doubled, tripled. We heard the member from Niagara Falls say that a business in his riding—their cost went from \$6,000 a year to \$20,000 a year.

Absolutely, this is an overhead cost that they are struggling with, and this government has failed to take the opportunity to put action to their words. The Premier can talk about price-gouging, but we need action, not lip service.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Could the member opposite speak to whether or not she believes the Green Energy Act made hydro more or less expensive for Ontario ratepayers?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The province of Ontario needs a competitive hydro system. It's fundamental for economic recovery. A competitive hydro system and competitive hydro rates are what made Ontario the economic engine of Canada. So absolutely, we need to ensure that people have a reliable and effective hydro system.

This government ran on the promise of fixing the hydro mess, but under their term, two and a half years into it, this is just getting messier. They continue to subsidize hydro at \$6.5 billion a year, and that cost is going up. The cost is borne by taxpayers now, and ratepayers. It's even worse than before.

So absolutely, we need to understand what is driving costs in hydro. You said you were going to the bottom of the hydro mess, so step up and take care of it. People know their bills are going up, and you promised to reduce them.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm just going to say again that small businesses in Beaches–East York are screaming. They're absolutely screaming. This is the month in the year when they make their greatest profits. This is the month that decides whether they can survive or not. Right now, they're on track to not survive, and they're beside themselves. The CFIB and the BIAs are calling for something that is not in this bill. Can the member please describe for the members opposite what it is that they need, in a nutshell?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for the question. We're nine months into a pandemic, so it's not like it's new. It's not like the government didn't know that this was going to be a problem.

Small businesses, as you have said, have done everything. They've availed themselves of loans that were made available to them. They've added debt on top of debt. They have maxed out lines of credit. They have maxed out, in some cases, their credit cards, just trying to make payroll.

I believe we all know that the margins in small business are so slim. They don't have the cushion, they don't have the reserve that they need, but they've managed to struggle along, and now what they're asking from this government is some form of direct cash infusion. Right now, credit is

difficult because it's a high-risk environment. They need liquidity from this government. They need some hope from this government.

The idea that if you make it through the year—at the end of the year, if you manage to keep your doors open, we might have some tax deferrals for you—is not cutting it for small businesses in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, the member for Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Would the member opposite have voted for the Green Energy Act if she was an MPP at the time?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate that the member is actually trying to actually make a point. This is what the people of the province of Ontario see, that this government is so busy playing politics, so busy trying to make a point that's got nothing to do with the bill that's before them while doors are being closed. This is why people are disappointed with this government. Do you think that that is what people want to hear from me right now, what I would have done in a hypothetical situation, had I been an MPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. I think the member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas has the floor. I think I recognized her to speak. I don't think it's fair that she should be peppered with comments across the floor from the other side while she's trying to answer the questions that you've posed. Isn't that fair?

Start the clock. Member for Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate that. And I do appreciate your ongoing efforts to help maintain decorum in this place. It hasn't been an easy job for you. I know that periodically I don't make your job easy, so I understand that. But I thank you for your efforts.

I just would like to end by saying to the member that, for example, in your riding, there are restaurants that would like you to stand up and ask questions about their business. They don't want to hear you standing up and asking what I would have done about a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the fact that they're trying to keep their doors open. You know that. Are businesses in your riding doing so well that they expect you to take time asking hypothetical questions? I don't think that's the case. Betty's Restaurant, for example, would probably prefer you ask questions about what they need to do to keep their doors open.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member opposite is—she talks about supports for businesses, and we talk about the rate that COVID is hitting and how we have to pivot and we have to act quickly. Well, this government created the jobs and recovery act, and of course the Main Street Recovery Act. We just passed another bill this past session in terms of the budget, and the members opposite voted against it. It's rich that you're talking about supports for business, yet each and every time you could

actually support them, you're voting against. They need support now, Mr. Speaker. Will the member at least support these measures so they can get supports now, as she said in her remarks?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: As I said, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing much to oppose in this bill because there's nothing much in it. Sure, we'll support this, because we will support businesses, small businesses in the riding getting anything that they can.

What we don't support, Mr. Speaker, is this government taking the opportunity to slip into the budget and bills that were supposed to be about COVID recovery clauses that have nothing to do with the economic recovery, like schedule 6 of the budget bill that's before us. It attacks conservation authorities and will gut their ability to protect wetlands in this province.

We will not be ashamed to say to this government, you're using COVID as a cover to slip through changes that the people of the province of Ontario don't support. It may be important for litter day in your riding, but I know in my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, people are very concerned about wetlands and watershed areas, and that's what they want to protect. They see a government that has rolled back environmental protections but at the same time is doing nothing substantial to help—

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I have not spoken to this bill yet. I'm very happy to take this opportunity to do that, especially on behalf of the numerous small businesses in my riding of Ottawa–Vanier.

This government is of course bragging about millions of dollars in investment, but given the needs of Ontario's main streets, it doesn't seem to be enough. This has been said before: It doesn't go far enough.

The proposed one-time grant of up to \$1,000—up to; not necessarily the full, and that's if you qualify as a small business—would only apply to those in service sectors with more than one employee and fewer than 10. This leaves out tens of thousands of small businesses.

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While I agree that we should be supporting small businesses with the unexpected and often unprecedented cost of sourcing PPE, this program does not go nearly far enough. The funding is insufficient and the eligibility is too restrictive. For instance, workers in many personal service businesses, like hairdressers and barbers, are independent contractors instead of traditional employees. These businesses are being adversely affected and their livelihoods are at stake. They take risks daily to provide services in close proximity with clients. They should be eligible for funding to help with the supply of PPE and other equipment.

Even with the shortcomings of what is in this bill, what is clear is that the government hasn't been listening to the real urgent needs of small business. This bill lacks the direct support to struggling small businesses to help with liquidity and help them to survive.

In fact, the Ottawa Coalition of Business Improvement Areas has reached out to me to say, and I will quote from their message:

“The bill is called the Main Street Recovery Act and it deals with:

“—unregulated taxi in Toronto;

“—noise bylaw in Toronto;

“—exemptions for big warehouse stores to be able to get deliveries any time of day;

“—changes to the Ontario Food Terminal.

“Not main street recovery items!”

That was remarked by people in my riding.

Les propriétaires de petites entreprises et les milliers d'Ontariennes et d'Ontariens qu'ils emploient ne sont pas impressionnés par les miettes qui leur sont offertes dans le projet de loi 215. Les petites entreprises ont clairement indiqué ce dont elles avaient besoin en termes de soutien pour traverser la pandémie.

Au cours de l'été, le Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques a entendu des heures de témoignage de centaines de petites entreprises et d'autres organisations pour aider à éclairer la réponse de ce gouvernement provincial. Je me demande si le gouvernement écoutait, parce que je ne vois rien de ce que les petites entreprises demandaient réellement dans ce projet de loi.

Des restaurants et d'autres organisations nous ont dit qu'en raison de la pandémie de la COVID-19, ils ne sont pas assurables. Leurs tarifs montent en flèche, ou ils se voient refuser carrément une couverture. Mon bureau reçoit encore beaucoup de plaintes concernant le manque d'appui du gouvernement.

We also heard from restaurants that the province needs to regulate commission fees charged by third-party food delivery services. While Ontarians are being encouraged to order takeout and support local, the costs associated with these apps are prohibitive and amount to price gouging. So I'm very pleased that the government has moved forward with Bill 236, which will allow small businesses to get relief from price gouging on delivery fees. My colleague the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell had called for this numerous times since May and for once I would agree that this is a bill that should move swiftly.

For months, small businesses have called for rent relief, real direct support that works and that doesn't leave anyone behind. There's not much in this bill that small businesses have asked for, but there's plenty that they haven't, including schedule 1, which would revoke the power of the city of Toronto and other municipalities' authority to regulate noise bylaws permanently, even after the pandemic subsides.

On that point, I want to bring to the attention of the government the regular complaints that I get from residents like Lisa Legari, who wrote to me again this week, stating, “I have heard that the province gave permission for extended hours to the construction companies due to COVID. And this is why there is blasting allowed from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Rideau Street. I

am trying to work from home and my whole house is shaking from the blasting. My senior mother lives on Rideau Street and can't go outside. This truck traffic and constant blasting is unacceptable."

Also, there's nothing in this bill that would help entrepreneurs who are women or Black, Indigenous, or persons of colour, many of whom are self-employed without a storefront. Ontario deserves a government that is serious about the welfare of those who live and work here.

Finally, the government's move to allow big box stores to remain open while our small businesses are forced to close is not only a disadvantage to main street businesses, it is a threat to their very survival.

Les faibles mesures proposées par ce projet de loi ne correspondent pas aux besoins réels des propriétaires de petites entreprises. Il est loin d'être à la hauteur de ceux qui ont du mal à joindre les deux bouts alors que la pandémie se poursuit. Pour beaucoup, ce sera trop peu, trop tard, et à mesure que de plus en plus d'entreprises ferment leurs portes de façon permanente, ce sont les familles, les communautés et l'économie de l'Ontario qui souffriront plus longtemps.

The weak measures proposed by this bill are out of touch with the real needs of small business owners. It falls far short of the mark for those that are struggling to make ends meet as the pandemic continues. For many, it will be too little, too late. And as more businesses close their doors permanently, it's Ontario's families, communities and economy that will suffer for longer.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the member for Ottawa–Vanier?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member from Ottawa–Vanier is, could she name the number of manufacturers that she has in her area that have been affected by COVID-19? If she would just name approximately how many she has.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm sorry; I didn't hear the question. Can you mention the subject?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): You can repeat the question if you would like.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member opposite was if she could name the number of manufacturers that she has in her riding, approximately.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I don't have the exact number. I know that we have several BIAs. It has to be at least in the several hundreds.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Miss Monique Taylor: I was down in my office listening to this debate and ran up here just in time for questions, because I have to ask the member—and I'll lay some groundwork. I've been talking to businesses in my riding about PPE and the concern of it only being two to nine employees and how that left so many out, and they are small businesses.

So I heard the member earlier ask twice for unanimous consent to pass this bill second and third, no holds barred, just let it go, and then I'm listening to her debate and hear

her complain about the same issue of PPE. Why would the member want it to pass without putting forward amendments when she knows there are problems with this bill?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order, order. Let's let the member for Ottawa–Vanier reply to the question that was posed to her.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite maybe didn't understand the subject of the unanimous consent I was seeking this morning, which was about the bill that will allow price gouging to stop for small businesses on delivery costs. That was the unanimous consent I was seeking, not otherwise, because this is a single measure that would provide immediate help to small businesses. It's something that we've been asking for for months. My colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has been asking for it this since May. I'm just really happy that the government is finally responding to this demand, because it's a direct, simple measure that would provide direct and immediate help.

I'm very disappointed that you didn't agree to do that. There were no downfalls for us to all agree to move this one forward quickly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member opposite is—she was elected after the Liberal government had introduced their job-killing electricity price scheme with the bad green energy deal. I wanted to ask her, if she had been elected earlier, would she be able to help all those businesses that she had talked about by voting against the bad green energy deal, which led to skyrocketing job-killing electricity prices that we're trying to stop today?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: We can talk about the measures that are being put in place. What I'm saying is that they are insufficient. I think there's a lack of innovation on the behalf of the government to try to make a real difference. What I said is that it's not enough. It's too little. It's too late. What I'm hearing from businesses is that they need more help. They need help to stay open, and what's on the table right now, what's in this bill, is doing nothing to help them remain open. The measures are too restrictive. They don't help all the businesses.

There were other things that could have been done. We could have looked at providing them help for the insurance that they're not able to access anymore. What we're saying is that this bill is just too little, too late.

1510

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I listened to the member's remarks, and I wanted to ask her about the \$1,000 grant for PPE. I have some businesses in London—Beertown said they invested \$125,000 in outdoor heaters. They're looking at a restaurant patio covering that would cost \$70,000. Dolcetto, an Italian restaurant in southwest London, installed \$20,000 worth of glass and changed the HVAC

units. I understand from the restaurant association that a typical restaurant has invested around \$20,000 in protective equipment since the pandemic began.

I'd like to hear the member's thoughts on the adequacy of the \$1,000 PPE grant for some employers that is being offered by this government.

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you for the question. You are correct. In reality, if we look at the costs of that equipment that was really hard to access to begin with, they are very costly. We're talking here about small businesses that probably don't have a lot of overhead and a lot of available funds to be able to pay for all of this.

It's very clear that the funding is not enough. There is unclarity about who qualifies, because it's up to \$1,000 and it's only if you qualify. Businesses in my riding are still wondering how they can get that money. The information is not readily available on the website. Some of them just don't know how to get to it. This hub needs to be made more available and needs to be expanded. It's clearly insufficient, because these are very expensive materials when they are available.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to build on one of the comments that was made, a question that was made, perhaps erroneously, by the member earlier from Hamilton Mountain. She raised a very valid point, I think, which is that in the legislation that we're debating, we want to move this through quickly and provide supports. Frankly, I agree

that there's always going to be more that we have to do to support small businesses. I know that that's what our government is going to continue to do. That's why I think the legislation that was brought forward was very important to cap that delivery charge.

I'm just wondering if you could speak about perhaps why the NDP would have wanted to oppose that. I recognize that that might be a challenging question, but to me, it just seems very common sense to support that type of legislation. Do you have any idea why that might have been the case, that they didn't want to support it?

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Thank you for the question. Since this morning, I've been asking myself the same question, because I don't understand. I have overheard the members say, "It's all about process." Process should be followed when we need transparency. Process should be followed when there is uncertainty about the support of Ontarians, about the community, about a measure that's being proposed by the government. But when there is something as obvious as direct help that is being provided to move it quickly, I think that this is a valid reason, maybe, to skip a lengthy process.

I can't really speak to their very reason, except that I think they were very quick at just saying no, without really considering the impact of that answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions? All right. Thank you very much.

Report continues in volume B.

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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 / Greffière: 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