

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
législative
de l'Ontario

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

No. 4A

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

N° 4A

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Thursday
7 October 2021

2^e session
42^e législature

Jeudi
7 octobre 2021

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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House Publications and Language Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
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111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

ISSN 1180-2987

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 October 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 octobre 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers / Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

YORK REGION
WASTEWATER ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 SUR LES EAUX USÉES
DANS LA RÉGION DE YORK

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 6, 2021, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater /
Projet de loi 5, Loi concernant les eaux usées dans la
région de York.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: As usual and always, it's an honour to take my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin to try to relate some of the context of this bill, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater, Bill 5, to Algoma–Manitoulin. The best way for me to do that is to bring it down to individuals in my riding. That's where I'm going to start this morning, talking about that. I will come back to the bill, so I'm asking the Chair for a little bit of indulgence, because these individuals have been outspoken about the importance of water for a very long time. Their initiatives, as far as what they're trying to accomplish, are really key and important, so I would ask the Chair for your indulgence.

I want to start by talking about Autumn Peltier. Autumn Peltier is a fabulous, bright water protector who has been recognized not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but globally. Her knowledge as a young woman—it dumbfounds me. I'm in awe every time I see what she's accomplished and what she is doing.

I know the government, within the context of this bill and their description, talked a lot about bringing an expert panel group together. I might suggest you reach out to Autumn Peltier, because I think she may have something to offer to your expert panel with regard to what she sees and what she understands and what she believes in, not only for herself presently, but for generations to come. She's a very bright, articulate young woman, and I would encourage you to reach out to her.

Another couple of ladies that I want to talk about are two ladies who took out to raise awareness of the importance of water—not just water, but water within First

Nations communities. Their names are Lue Mahaffey, who's from Thessalon, and Paige Simon, who is from Sault Ste. Marie. Paige's grandmother is from Eabametoong First Nation and her grandfather is from Thessalon First Nation. The two canoed from Shingwauk residential school, the site in Sault Ste. Marie, to the Spanish residential schools.

I don't know if any of you have noticed, but I've been wearing this orange band since I joined them for that paddle. I didn't join them for the entire paddle. I found out about it through my staff and through social media. I joined them the morning when they left from Serpent River to do the last, I believe it was, 14 to 15 kilometres of the paddle. I believe myself to be a very avid kayaker. I even went out and bought myself a new kayak.

Anyways, we took to the waters, and the waters were very nice—there's a lesson that I learned in this and I will touch on that at the end of my story, and then I will get back to the bill. So please be patient with me, Speaker.

I took off with them and I was kind of being the guy in the back, holding on, making sure everybody was progressing safely and so on. Paige and Lue were in their canoe—a beautiful canoe, an “Every Child Matters”-painted orange canoe. They were in the front and just leading everybody onward. We got into some rough waters and, lo and behold, I found out that my kayak wasn't really intended for rough waters; it was more intended for streams and calm waters. Well, I flipped, not just once, not twice, not three times, not four times, but five times. Now, during the times that I had flipped, there were individuals who came over and said, “Hey, Mike, do you need some help?” “Oh, no, no, I don't need help. I've got this.” But it was probably the third or fourth time when I got to a different area where the waters were pretty rough and they were pushing me against some rocks that I had to walk my kayak along the shores in order to get to a safe area to actually, first, empty my kayak, sit into it and then take off again. While I was walking, I hit my shins on every stone under the water that I couldn't see. So anyways, there are a few things that I learned there, Speaker.

Knowing that these girls were doing this for the residential school survivors and the children who had been found in the unmarked graves, it made me think of a few things while I was there in my pain, because while I was walking on shore, believe it or not, I was a little sketchy and scared myself, although I put on a brave face and said, “No, I don't need help.” I thought a lot afterwards about what lesson it was that the Creator was trying to tell me, because he obviously made this opportunity available for me to go out there. What he was trying to tell me is a lesson

in humility. Although I'm a big, burly boy and think I can take care of everything, the next time somebody offers me help, I'll accept it. And the next time that I think about the children who were running away from residential schools, who were swimming away or who were scared, who were hitting their legs on the sides of islands, who were trying to escape the turmoil that they were in, I'll remember that. I'll remember as well how lonely you feel at times, sometimes when you think you've got everything under control and think you know where you're going, but, really, you're kind of lost. I'll remember that.

The lesson that I learned that day, I hadn't shared with anybody until this moment right now. I had told, that morning, Lue and Paige—there were roughly about 20 of us who gathered that were doing the paddle—that every opportunity that I have I jump at when it comes to doing something to raise awareness with First Nations people, because I'm always gifted—and I say “gift” because it's a lesson that you always learn. Well, my lesson was humility that day, and it's one that I'm not going to forget anytime soon.

I want to thank Lue and Paige for having invited me and permitting me to join them. Overall, their cause was to raise \$75,000. They're almost there. They've reached the \$38,000 mark. You can all reach out and buy yourself that T-shirt if you want to help them raise the funds for it.

Thank you, Speaker, for giving me a little bit of latitude to talk about that. It's something that I definitely wanted to raise here in the House, the importance of our waterways.

Now, back to Bill 5. Speaker, it's always an honour to rise in this House and try to bring things back to Algoma–Manitoulin and how they relate to us. People in Algoma–Manitoulin are asking me, “How is the waste water in York region going to affect us?” Well, where water affects one, it affects all.

0910

The people in my riding have a lot of pride for the pristine bodies of water that we get to enjoy. Whether it's swimming, fishing, canoeing, kayaking or just sitting on the dock, people in my riding recognize the importance that clean, well-managed waterways play in our everyday lives.

I'm lucky to have had the privilege of meeting with dedicated organizations in my riding who shared their passion for protecting and rehabilitating streams and wetlands. Here's another suggestion to the government: Although it's not within the context of this bill, when you're putting in this expert panel, I would encourage you—and I want to introduce you to this next group. The group in mind that comes to me is Manitoulin Streams. This is a not-for-profit that is committed to restoring streams, enhancing water quality and restoring fisheries on Manitoulin Island. I often reach out to them for advice on projects or issues that are happening not only on Manitoulin Island, but across the North Shore and across my riding.

In just a decade, Manitoulin Streams has leveraged over \$5 million in funding and completed more than 69 major

projects across Manitoulin Island. This summer, Manitoulin Streams took part in the restoration of the Smith Bay Creek, which goes through the heart of Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory. Part of their work in Smith Bay included restoring stream beds and reducing erosion around critical fish spawning habitat and planting 300 native trees and 300 shrubs, as well as introducing 100 milkweed plants on the river banks.

Manitoulin Streams also does amazing work at engaging local communities in their work. Staff there are present at every community event, ready to share their passion for their work. They take dozens of school groups out every year to show them how they can protect streams and fish habitats. So not only do they do the work, but they promote the work by bringing out the next generation who will actually protect our environment. This is just one example of the thousands of projects that go on on Manitoulin Island every year.

The projects Manitoulin Streams undertakes happen because they are willing to work together in good faith with community members and stakeholders, which is something I would encourage this government to do when they are looking at this particular bill and how they're proceeding. It's bringing everybody to the table, not just the stakeholders or partners, but recognizing the true principles of bringing First Nations to the table as an automatic, not as a, “Oh, this is a checkbox.” But you have to do that. It's a recognition that must be done, not just some, not just select, but all of those that are affected by it.

And that's what is missing from the government's approach here in Bill 5. When the environment minister took this project, it included a responsibility to engage the public on what the Upper York Sewage Solutions will mean for the environment. The government using this bill to indemnify themselves from lawsuits in regard to their “representation” or “conduct” on the project doesn't sit well with groups who were hoping to work together on protecting waterways and the environment. And yes, that is raising eyebrows of people across my riding.

That is not a way to build trust in communities. Decisions like this signal to stakeholders that they may not be given the full story on an issue that is so vitally important to those it affects. The government needs to show to communities that they are going to work out in an open method to address all issues. It is beyond concerning for communities, who have already spent millions of dollars and years waiting for a decision, to have this government giving itself such extraordinary latitude to act without recourse. Speaker, as I said earlier, projects will only be successful when we engage with each other and build that level of trust and understanding that allows for meaningful conversations.

My colleague, the member from Wiikwemkoong—oh sorry, my colleague the member from Kiiwetinoong, and I wish he was here because he would probably have a chuckle at that, raised the issue of the government upholding their duty to consult with First Nations about this project and any project the government undertakes on traditional territories of a First Nation.

It has already been made abundantly clear by the Chippewas of Georgina Island that they will not and do “not give their free, prior and informed consent to use the lands and resources.” Let me read that again: They will not and do “not give their free, prior and informed consent to use the lands and resources” on their “traditional territory for the purposes of the Upper York Sewage Solutions.”

The leadership of the Chippewas of Georgina Island have expressed clearly that Lake Simcoe is an area of significant spiritual and historical importance. There is a great deal of concern that this project would increase the level of contaminants present in Lake Simcoe, affecting the water quality and the sustainability of fisheries on the lake.

For these reasons and others, the project outlined in Bill 5 has raised major concerns with environmental groups, who have expressed many times that the Upper York Sewage Solutions project poses a threat to the environment. These groups have told the government constantly and clearly that any approach adopted for the treatment and disposal of sewage and waste water must not result in increased nutrient loading in Lake Simcoe or Lake Ontario.

This morning—or yesterday morning, I should say—we heard from the member from Barrie–Innisfil and the member from Kitchener–Conestoga about the importance of the fisheries to this government. Yesterday, my office was informed by commercial fishery licence holders that their quotas for lake whitefish are going to be halved for the north this coming November.

I had the opportunity to speak to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga yesterday and I want to thank him for providing me with some information, because certainly the ministry has not been as forthcoming in putting out that information so that we could start a dialogue and start looking at solutions for some of those licensees in my riding. Also, just to give some type of a response to my staff is really key and important, so I actually want to acknowledge that and thank him for that.

We were also informed by MNR staff that the government would start closing the lake whitefish season in November starting in 2022. When I spoke with these operators, they were dumbfounded. The government had caught them completely off guard, informing them of this change with just over three weeks to make accommodations.

The owners of the licence here in my riding are Purvis Fisheries, which operates off the south shore of Manitoulin Island. They told me they would have to lay off staff to make ends meet because of this decision. They fear that with the increased strain placed on them, they won't be able to hire those staff back again in the next year.

The fact that such an important economic and cultural pillar of the Lake Huron region doesn't warrant extensive engagement and consideration is extremely concerning. Commercial licence holders have been trying to meet with the ministry to get a full explanation of this decision, with no result.

I bring this issue forward because within the context of this particular bill—again, we're talking about waterways

and the importance of consulting and bringing individuals together—I repeatedly heard this government talking about this expert panel that is going to be brought together, with no details as far as who that expert panel is going to be, the timelines, or whatever. How I'm relating this to the issues that are going on presently with the fisheries on Manitoulin Island and along the North Shore is exactly this point: The words are coming out of this government, but the details—the meat—is not in the context of this bill.

I want to say clearly to the people of Algoma–Manitoulin, as you're listening to this debate, you will continually hear this government talking about a select committee, an advisory committee, processes and timelines and investments, but I need to stress to the people of Algoma–Manitoulin that this bill is explained in one sentence, and here it is: “The minister's decision-making on the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking is suspended and all actions by the regional municipality of York related to that undertaking are prohibited.” The bill is comprised of five sections. There are four sections on page 1, and here—that's it. There is nothing in here to demonstrate the willingness of this government to come and listen to how the engagement process is going to take place or what scientific evidence they're going to be bringing to the table and be considering. It's not in here.

0920

I heard all day yesterday about these select committees, but it's not in here. They say, “Oh, it's going to come through regulations.” They're not in here either, Speaker, so you cannot blame Ontarians at this point in time for having their doubts about the direction this government is going in, because essentially all this bill does is protect the government from any decisions that have happened, could happen or will possibly happen. That's what Bill 5 does, and that's all it does.

So when I'm standing here—and again, it is always an honour to take my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin, and I try my best to relay the issues as I see them, and how it will have an impact on the good people, I stand here and I try to bring their voices forward. There are a lot of other things that I would like to raise right now, but it would probably be ruled out of order or not within the confines of this bill.

Again, I want to thank the Speaker for giving me the opportunity to talk about Autumn Peltier and to talk about Lue and Paige at the beginning. But I'm asking this government—I'm pleading with you—that when you are debating the bill or you're bringing that bill forward, it would give you a lot of credibility if you would provide that within the context of the bill, so that people could actually sink their teeth into it. What's missing from your bill are the details that you claim that this government is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: If you look at the bill, it does have to do with environmental assessments, and as we know—environmental assessment 101—it's evidence the ministry has to look at or has to review. Now we're

expanding that, to be actually even better, to also consult with First Nations communities, so it does achieve the purpose that the member is speaking about. I know his fellow colleagues have said they're not supporting this environment bill, but will he support this environment bill?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, I want to make it very clear: I will support initiatives and legislation that would actually do what it claims to say that they're going to do. I will work with this government in order to achieve better environmental projects. I will follow the science. I will listen to individuals like Autumn Peltier. I will engage not because they are referred to as "stakeholders" or "people of interest;" I will sit, acknowledge and, as I said, discuss with free and prior consent with First Nations how we proceed with projects such as this one.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. I think you've managed to turn kayaking from an individual sport to a spectator sport.

My question this morning: This government keeps presenting or trying to pass this bill off as a bill that's about the environment, but there's nothing in there. It doesn't mention the environment. In fact, it's probably more about protecting the government than it is about protecting the environment, about protecting Lake Simcoe or Lake Ontario.

So my question to you is, why would people in the province of Ontario believe anything this government says when they're walking around with a one-page bill, saying it's going to protect the environment, when there's absolutely nothing in it? This government has a poor, abysmal track record when it comes to the environment. What would you say to the people in Ontario who are looking for our government to protect the environment, to take climate change seriously, especially the young people today who are so concerned about this?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from—from—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas. My God; I heard that said so many times yesterday afternoon. My friend, by the way, I have many nicks on my shins to remember, and I won't soon forget that kayak trip.

That's exactly what people are expecting from—whether it's a Conservative government, an NDP government or other governments, they're expecting for governments to provide the vision to go forward. They're providing them to let them know that we will have your back, we will make sure that we have the best scientific evidence, we will make sure to engage with individuals. That's what people are asking for.

There is so much of a dark cloud over politics as a whole—not just in this province but across this country, and globally as well—and we have to step up. We have to be better. We have to engage. That's one of the reasons why I decided to step up and become a public servant: to

get that explanation and make sure that we can connect with people once again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: I disagree with the opposition colleague here, talking about, "This government's not looking at anything environmental," when our government, every step we did, I think we are trying to preserve the environment—not like any other plans which are just, "Pollute as much as you can, but pay us some money."

I think the approach this government took to protect the environment—and my question for the colleague who did the speech earlier is, after 10 years or more from the time this project was introduced, don't you think, in 10 years, there are many factors that get changed, and we have the right at least to figure out: Is everything still the same? Better technology, a cost difference, a better solution—any of that? We are not saying that the project is not going; we are saying that we need some time to do the right study.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member for asking the question. Again, I have to go back to the government's record. When you look at what legislation they have presented inside the House and who it actually benefited, have some of their decisions benefited the environment? Has it benefited developers? Have those actions to benefit the environment gone through expeditiously and quick? Or have we seen more and more evidence of MZO that are being approved by this government to help developers?

I don't have to restate that. The province—you at home see the evidence yourselves. I will say to the member that we need to move forward with the best scientific evidence. People in this province deserve a government that will actually do that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Jeff Burch: I thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his presentation. He spoke about the issue of transparency and mentions that there was some difficulty getting information from the ministry. We have a verbal commitment to an expert panel, but there's nothing in the bill about an expert panel. In his experience, does this bill pass the sniff test when it comes to transparency and consultation?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member from Niagara. No, it does not pass the sniff test. Again, for the last two days, that's what we've been talking about. The government has been highlighting a couple of—other than waste water in the York region, they've been talking about everything else but what's in the context of this bill, which is not a heck of a lot. Because within the context of this bill is, basically, a government that is looking to protect what could have and what could and what might happen. This is what this bill does. In essence, that's what this bill does.

So look it up, folks. Look it up at home. Read it for yourself. Grab a look at it. If you have any questions, you can reach out to my office or any of the MPPs. But essentially, that is the bulk of what this bill is doing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member opposite for sharing your personal story. You don't have to plead with our government. Our government—part of our plan and commitment is to really do exactly what you have been asking.

As an MPP for Richmond Hill and a municipality in York region, I am pleased that our government, if the bill is passed, we will pass the York region environmental assessment application and give time for the advisory panel to provide the government with advice on the options to address the waste water servicing capacity, exactly what we have been asking.

0930

The panel will bring together experts in a variety of areas, including land use planning and waste water infrastructure. It will also consult with the people, as you've asked, from First Nations and provide recommendations to the people who are the key stakeholders. So your concern will—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Response?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to tell the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin: There is a majority Conservative government, so it's not if this bill will pass; it will pass. The government will get its way and it will get through.

I want to go to the member who just finished speaking and thank her for her question.

Can she point out to me where, within the context of this bill—if it's in the explanatory note, if it's on page 1 under sections 1, 2, 3, 4, or on page 2 under section 5—is the expert panel that you are talking about? It's not within the context of this bill, and I just finished saying that for the last two days, I've been hearing about this expert panel.

I've made, actually, some suggestions this morning to the government in regard to who you might want to invite or be a part of this expert panel: community leaders, municipal leaders, First Nations, stakeholders, organizations that have a vested interest in these waters.

Again, what page is it on?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We don't have time for another back-and-forth.

Further debate?

Hon. David Piccini: It's always an honour to rise in the Legislature. I would just like to start by thanking the incredible ministry team at MECP and the incredible staff at the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks for all of the work that they do for Ontarians through the pandemic and each and every day, and, of course, the incredible people of Northumberland-Peterborough South, who elected me here.

Speaker, I'm pleased to rise before the Legislature today to again speak in support of Bill 5, the York Region Wastewater Act. I introduced this bill in the Legislature on Tuesday.

Yesterday, my wonderful colleague the member for Barrie-Innisfil provided the honourable members with an

excellent review of the proposed act. She and the speakers who followed shared with this Legislature our government's commitment to ensuring the project is done right for the people of York region, ensuring that our decision-making and that of the municipalities can be based on the best and latest science, the latest data and the projected needs of a growing community. They also shared our commitment to environmental protection, which is a core part of any infrastructure that is created in Ontario. Our high ethical and environmental standards are a big part of what makes this such an exceptional place to raise a family and to grow a business.

I think of some of the incredible projects under way today: one of the largest freshwater cleanups of its kind on Lake Ontario; a day of action on litter; continued investments into waste water monitoring and waste water infrastructure, just to name a few.

In fact, it's our government that has launched the first-ever climate change impact assessment, to build resiliency against the impacts of climate change and better position our municipalities for the next decade and years ahead.

At its core, that is what this bill is about: better positioning municipalities for planned growth and supporting the growing needs, so that moms and dads in this great province can have the dignity of a roof over their heads and the ability to raise a family.

As Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, these commitments that we make to the environment are commitments I take very seriously. In my ministry, our efforts to protect Ontario's air, water and land and to reduce litter in our communities and greenhouse gas emissions are all driven by a commitment to sound and evidence-based decision-making, which is exactly what this bill seeks to do.

We are supporting clean tech and innovation—new solutions that change the game for generational challenges that we face today.

Speaker, I'd like to begin with a few words for this bill on York region, which is why my colleagues in this Legislature know—this region is one of the fastest-growing communities in Ontario. Consistent with its unique mix of urban centres and farmland, York region has a diverse economy that ranges from high tech to agriculture, including a large portion of the Holland Marsh. As part of the greater Toronto area and the Golden Horseshoe, the economic engine driving the province, it's not surprising that the region is experiencing significant growth, with the population forecasted to grow from over 1.1 million people today to more than two million within 30 years. That's almost double the number of people we have in the region today.

The regional municipality of York understands that municipal planning is a long game. They understand the need to start planning well in advance to meet the needs of the residents. In anticipation of the infrastructure needs associated with such a rapidly growing population, York region has been planning to meet its future waste water requirements for more than two decades.

The investments originally led to the proposal of a new facility that would be connected to the York-Durham

sewage system shared with Durham region. It is a series of pumping stations, force mains and over 120 kilometres of sewer pipe that service the municipalities of Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Aurora, Markham, Vaughan and Pickering.

Under the proposal, waste water would be treated at the existing Duffin Creek Water Pollution Control Plant in Pickering. That plant currently treats more than 80% of the waste water generated by homes and businesses in York region. The regional municipalities of York and Durham jointly own the plant, which discharges treated effluent into Lake Ontario.

To look at the wide-ranging issues involved in York region's project, the Minister of the Environment at the time required the region to undertake a full environmental assessment of the proposal, including an assessment of alternatives to the proposed infrastructure.

The proposal provided by York region in 2014 calls for a new waste water treatment facility to be built in the town of East Gwillimbury. It would treat about 40 million litres of sewage per day. York region refers to this facility as a water reclamation centre and its process would involve four levels of treatment for waste water, including microfiltration and reverse-osmosis waste water treatment technology. This is leading-edge technology and its use in the Upper York Sewage Solutions project would be a first for Canada. The project also involves off-setting programs for phosphorus to reduce phosphorus through a variety of stormwater measures, such as retrofitting existing stormwater management ponds through the Lake Simcoe watershed.

The Upper York Sewage Solutions environmental assessment application has been the subject of consultation since its submission. Of particular note, Speaker, there have been lengthy discussions, or a lack thereof, over the last decade with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation. They have significant concerns about this proposal, and they and the residents of all regions impacted by this project need to be confident that their water resources are protected now and into the future by good decisions, based on the best and most up-to-date information. Looking at the outdated information this is riding on, I and our government do not believe they can have that confidence.

As we know, Speaker, this dates back into the early 2000s. In 2009 and 2010, the then minister at the time decided to change the terms of reference with zero consultation with Georgina, with Chief Big Canoe and her community. I had the opportunity to speak with her yesterday, and I think an important commitment we all in this Legislature must make and continue in the very real discussions we're having around reconciliation today is to meaningfully engage not just at the ninth hour, but from the beginning. I made that commitment to the chief. I've only been in this portfolio three months. It's an important commitment I take as minister and that we take as a government. To proceed without this level of public confidence would be a great disservice to the people of York region and to the stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, that have very real questions and concerns.

Madam Speaker, what I've just shared with you and the data behind it was left to go stale by the previous Wynne-Del Duca government. They had the application, sat on it so long, and made that change in 2010 with very little to no consultation. It's been stale for a decade, Speaker. Our government will not compromise on our commitment to fixing this wrong.

My predecessor, the honourable member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, introduced the York Region Wastewater Act, 2021, on June 3 of this year. We know it's clear in this past decade that any solution is significantly complex and it requires further examination. If passed, Bill 306 would have put a hold on the Upper York Sewage Solutions environmental assessment. The pause would have provided more time for information to be collected—current information that would give an accurate look at the situation on the ground, and science- and evidence-based decision-making. I recognize, as does Parliamentary Assistant Khanjin, the work that has been done by staff at the regional municipality of York, and we thank them for that. They are skilled and dedicated professionals who are determined to find the best solutions to meet the needs of York residents, and I speak on behalf of the government of Ontario for our appreciation in their efforts.

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Madam Speaker, I will again say that the situation that was allowed to drag on by the former Liberal government necessitated the bill that we are debating here today. As we can all see, the York Region Wastewater Act, 2021 is brief and to the point. Its intent is simple: It proposes to pause the York region's nearly 10-year-old environmental assessment so that we can gather up-to-date information on environmental, social and financial implications of any waste water solution for the region.

In my just three months on the job, I've seen incredible solutions, worldwide and within Canada, that must be looked at. It must be looked at because we owe that to the people of York region, we owe it to the people of Ontario and, most importantly, real and meaningful engagement and a dialogue is needed to be had with the Indigenous communities in the surrounding area.

Protecting our water resources, now and into the future, is a top priority for the government, and certainly for myself and my ministry, and listening to some of the comments, I think it's important to underscore a few things, Madam Speaker. As I said, the intent and clarity of this bill—it's very clear. But members have also brought up what must the government do to protect source water protection. Well, it's this government that launched one of the largest freshwater cleanups of its kind, Pollution Probe in Lake Ontario. I would encourage the members opposite to visit my community, for example, and the harbour in Cobourg—or forget mine, any other community along Lake Ontario—and see the litter traps. See the source water microplastics, the partnerships with our research institutions and the incredible work being done by scientists in this province to study source water pollutants.

If that's not enough, maybe look to our budget 2020, which these members voted against, which included

historic commitments to water monitoring. And what really, really concerns me—listening to the member from Hamilton, knowing the discharges that are happening in her own community, why would that member vote against commitments that this government is making to monitor discharge, and investments we're making to improve infrastructure? Because we know that protecting Ontario's water resources now and into the future matters, and we know that we must rely on the best technology. We must engage in robust consultation. That's what we're doing with this bill. If passed, this bill will lay the framework, and this government will establish an expert advisory panel to dig into the options and their associated bodies of water and advise on the best possible solutions. I look forward to the expertise they will bring in a variety of areas, including land use planning and waste water infrastructure.

The panel will assess the sustainability and efficiency of the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking and any alternatives, including consideration of the use and optimization of existing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I apologize for interrupting the minister, but pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. Please continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I will invite the minister to continue, should he so choose. You have the floor.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to continue.

I look forward to this panel engaging with municipalities, key stakeholders and potentially impacted Indigenous communities. Protecting the water, as I said, is the goal of this project, so impacted Indigenous communities must be key contributors on this path forward. As I mentioned, the government is aware and listening to the concerns of the Chippewas of Georgina Island. The panel will want to hear from this community so that we can ensure their input is reflected in options for the path forward for this project. And I want to say, consultation with First Nation and Métis communities is a key part of environmental assessment applications we process as a government. We take the duty to consult very seriously, and respect Aboriginal treaty rights, established and asserted.

Our government's work to provide the strongest possible community, water and waste water protections, as well as stringent water quality safeguards, is absolutely essential to protecting our incredible water legacy going forward. Ontario is known for this over the world, and no body of water is more important to life in York region than Lake Simcoe, which features as a major site of significance for this project.

Lake Simcoe is the largest inland lake in southern Ontario. The lake provides drinking water for seven communities and generates millions in annual revenue from agricultural activities. More than 450,000 people live in the Lake Simcoe watershed as of 2017, and the population is expected to grow significantly by 2041. The Lake Simcoe watershed is under many environmental pressures—most notably, high levels of phosphorus and chloride pollution in streams and rivers as in the Holland Marsh.

For decades, the runoff of phosphorus from fertilizer used on farms in and around Lake Simcoe has been problematic for the area, and as a government, our actions to care for the lake are being guided through the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan—which I encourage all members of this place to look at—which focuses on the lake's water quality, reducing pollutants such as phosphorus, caring for natural heritage and addressing the impacts of invasive species and other emerging threats. I'd especially like to thank Parliamentary Assistant Khanjin for doing incredible work as an advocate for Lake Simcoe and engaging the communities in and around.

As a result of our collective actions over the last 30 years—because this is not a partisan issue, this is a focus of successive governments. We understand the value of Lake Simcoe, and we're working to take decisive action to protect that body of water. Because of actions of this government and previous governments, we've seen levels of dissolved oxygen in the deep water of the lake continue to increase, which indicates improved water quality. The amount of algae has also decreased over time, leading to improved water quality. Signs of naturally reproducing cold-water fish continue to be observed, a positive step towards restoring and sustaining a cold-water fish community.

But even with these encouraging developments, we recognize that much more work needs to be done. When the environmental assessment applications were submitted in 2014, phosphorus loads were 71 tonnes per year, much higher than the goal load of 44 tonnes per year as set out in the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan. As of the last minister's 10-year report on Lake Simcoe, released in 2017, those loads had risen to 131 tonnes per year. The ministry is now working with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority to calculate the 2018 to 2020 base-load levels.

Our government has a strong commitment to helping protect Lake Ontario. It's a changing aquatic environment, and there is a need for current facts and figures. Looking south, Lake Ontario—which you, Madam Speaker, I know, know well—is at the heart of countless communities in southern Ontario that we have the honour of representing, and is core, of course, to our province's water legacy.

As a government, we recognize our enormous responsibility as a protector of Lake Ontario. We are backing up this recognition with a comprehensive Great Lakes strategy, which sets the province's economic, social and environmental priorities for the Great Lakes basin. The current strategy incorporates Great Lakes priorities from

across 14 ministries, with a focus on sustainable development, creating climate change resiliency and protecting water, species and green spaces.

We've seen a historic commitment to expand the green-belt. We've seen, as I mentioned, clean water projects in the litter bins across Lake Ontario. We've seen the climate change impact assessment—all done under this government. And we are partners in the ninth Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality and Ecosystem Health.

The Canada-Ontario agreement, also known as COA, sets out specific actions that the federal government and Ontario government will take as we work together to restore, protect and conserve the Great Lakes. In fact, it was just two nights ago, I was speaking with former environment minister Jonathan Wilkinson. Perhaps he may, this month, continue in that role. But we share in the commitment for the Canada-Ontario agreement, which marked its 50th anniversary.

The ninth COA agreement outlines new and ongoing actions to safeguard the world's largest freshwater lake system. This includes improving waste water and storm water management—I've already outlined some of the fiscal commitments this government has made to do that; managing nutrients; reducing plastic pollution—again outlined in my speech; restoring native species and habitats; and increasing climate resiliency—again, another thing I outlined with our climate change impact assessment.

This agreement also includes a new focus on protecting Lake Ontario, supporting nature-based recreation opportunities and strengthening engagement with First Nations and Métis in the implementation of the agreement.

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I hope all here today can see what's at stake. You can't drop a pin on a map for York region's waste water management. Whatever the solution, it will impact not only development and growth in York region but the infrastructure, creeks and lakes downstream, each with its own characteristics and sensitivities.

Lake Simcoe and Lake Ontario are jewels of this province that we all enjoy. The species and communities that call their shores home deserve any decision that impacts them to be sound, well-researched and based on current information that Ontarians can be confident in.

We heard members from the opposition say yesterday that they don't want us to pause, they don't want the best data, they don't want us to look at new and emerging solutions. From one member in particular, we heard the message loud and clear that they just don't want it in their backyard, where their votes come from. I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that we owe it collectively to the people we represent—something I take seriously in this ministry; it's no longer just the people of my community, but all the people of Lake Ontario, Lake Simcoe and this great province—to get the best possible solution forward for the people of York region. That's why this panel, as I said, will lean on expert advice and will be done in a 12-month period. It's part of our broader strategy to ensure

the quality of life in Ontario communities and that Ontarians can continue to count on the best possible protections for their health, prosperity and quality of life.

This act is short, but it will have a long-lasting impact on York region's ability to meet its waste water servicing needs. By pausing the EA for the Upper York Sewage Solutions project, we are enabling everyone to take a step back from the plan that was left to fall flat, that was left stale by the previous government, and looking at proposed options with a fresh eye and in the spirit of a renewed and engaged discussion, a very real discussion, on reconciliation with Indigenous communities, a strong scientific lens that takes into account the widest possible range of impacts on the local environment and the economy, as well as ensuring that social needs are met in the region.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to stand before this Legislature to encourage all of my honourable colleagues in the strongest possible terms to support this important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question to the Minister of the Environment: I am incredibly proud to be the official opposition environment critic in this province. That's why I wish that this bill was actually about the environment, but it is not. Nothing in this bill mentions the environment.

Instead, we can only look to your government's abysmal track record when it comes to the environment. Your first act as a government was to cancel renewable energy projects and pass legislation to indemnify yourselves, just like in this bill. You ripped out charging stations from the ground. You kneecapped conservation authorities and their ability to protect our waterways. You issued an MZO to build a warehouse on a protected wetland. You voted down a motion to declare a climate emergency in this province. You have absolutely no credible climate plan.

We need a Minister of the Environment every day, not just on litter day. Will you please withdraw this one-page bill and bring something forward that protects the environment?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder to all members that you direct your comments through the Chair and not to the members on the other side. Response?

Hon. David Piccini: I didn't hear one solution offered in those regressive comments. I heard a shot taken at my proud colleague, the PA and member from Barrie—Innisfil, because that member is void of solutions—not a single solution, not a solution for the people of Hamilton. Well, we've got one. We're monitoring waste water effluents into Lake Ontario. We're increasing the stringent water monitoring and we're asking municipalities to work with us on that. We've invested in the budget, into improving waste water infrastructure. I didn't hear it—in fact, it wasn't supported—from the member opposite. We have engaged in the largest freshwater cleanup of its kind—again, void of any solution from that member.

Before you stand up in this place, you have a duty to the people you represent, a duty to the people of this

province: Work together, bring forward solutions and don't just nag and rag on people on this side of this House trying to make a difference for their communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All members are reminded, politely, to address their comments to and through the Chair, full stop. Thank you.

Further questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, science and best practices are at the core of every decision this government makes. For the environmental assessment at the heart of this decision for York region, this means building a panel of experts who will be bringing their significant expertise to examine the needs of the region, needs that continue to evolve and grow as population and development expand.

Could the minister share with me the role that the government envisions the York region waste water advisory panel will play?

Hon. David Piccini: That was an excellent question on what we envision this panel to do and where they will go. So leaning on expertise in land use planning and expertise in waste water and scientists who have expertise in water quality and water management—and leaning on their expertise, again in a defined time period, because we know we can't lag and we can't have a decade of inaction like we saw under the previous government. We've got to move swiftly and quickly on this.

That's why we've given this panel a 12-month window in which to look at alternative solutions, one that will engage both the communities of Durham that you and I have the honour of representing, the communities of York and Indigenous communities in the renewed spirit that we see across this nation to engage in the very real, challenging, difficult, but important discussion that we're having—renewed discussion—with Indigenous communities. We're going to lean on their expertise in that 12-month duration, and I look forward to the work that they're going to do.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: I rise today with the spirit of Sheila DeCorte, who is a water walker from Thunder Bay. We live by the greatest Great Lake, so our commitment to the water in our constituency and our passion about keeping it pristine is very, very deep-rooted.

My question to the minister today is one that I think is very important that we understand. This bill, purported to be one that we want to have a clear understanding of moving forward to keep water safe—in this bill, though, we do not have that transparency. If we had the assurances that this advisory committee, that is not in the bill, was in fact going to be one that was robust, there might be something. So please explain why the details are not in this bill.

Hon. David Piccini: Two important points to that question. And I thank the member for the work that she does and enjoyed hearing about the important commitment that she has for Kakabeka Falls and some of the things we discussed over the summer.

A few things: The government has provided substantial investments for the ICIP program for water and waste water to improve the water quality in Indigenous communities. We've provided over \$10 million to improve transparency around monitoring and public reporting of sewage overflows that I mentioned earlier. This bill is the legislative tool that we need to use to put a pause on the environmental assessment.

I've also, as I mentioned, put forward a panel that has a 12-month duration and will be composed of experts to provide high-quality advice to this government, utilizing the latest technology and solutions, leveraging what we've seen worldwide, with a jurisdictional analysis of the latest technology to guide planned growth for York region and Durham region, and one that engages all communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I thank the minister for, actually, some vision that we finally hear on the environment in this Legislature. Certainly we don't hear any other visionary ideas.

You had touched upon the terms of reference and how that was obviously changed and how we need to go above and beyond and not just rely on our great experts, like Sarah who works in the environmental assessment unit—I'm sure she's watching—but many others. But we're going above and beyond—and why it's so important to go above and beyond, and to even go above and beyond the duty to consult, to engage even more with the First Nations communities.

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you for the shout-out to the incredible staff at MECP. I think, as we look at these solutions—and I understand; I'm three months into this role—and speaking with the incredible staff in the ministry and looking at some jurisdictional analysis of what they do with waste water worldwide, that necessitated this legislation today, which takes the stale approach from the early 2010s—one, to be frank, that wasn't open and transparent and one that led to significant concerns.

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When I spoke yesterday with Chief Big Canoe, I was open and honest, in the things I did know, in the things I didn't, but appreciate what she'd said. I heard her message loud and clear: Continue that engagement and continue it through, not at the ninth hour. I think the regressive delays from the previous government necessitated this bill today which is going to, as I say, pause the EA assessment, but then we're going to have that panel and their important advice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Joel Harden: I listened intently to what the minister had to say this morning. A question for him, based upon what you said, which—I'm happy to hear about the ongoing discussions you're having with Indigenous leaders in the province around this particular project. Yesterday in debate, I brought forward the story that is breaking news back home in Ottawa about the remediation of Victoria Island, Speaker, that is being done through a

shared governance model with Algonquin leadership; in fact, the first time ever an Algonquin-owned company, Decontie Construction, is going to be involved in a major infrastructure project in the city of Ottawa.

My friend the member from Kiiwetinoong mentioned yesterday in debate as we discussed this that Indigenous folks in this province are not stakeholders. They are the original keepers of this land. So I would love the minister's reflection, as you want to go above and beyond, which I think is a laudable goal: Would you entertain that idea of having them beyond being stakeholders, beyond being members of an expert panel, but helping Ontario make sure this project is in keeping with our commitment to the water?

Hon. David Piccini: Thank you to the member opposite for that very important question. Yes; in short, the answer is yes. On this panel that we've put forward, we stipulated there must be an Indigenous member on the five-person panel, and I think it's because we share in the need for robust engagement. I have, in fact, reached out via letter to your colleague who you mentioned who is an important champion for Indigenous communities, an important partner—as you said, not stakeholder, but partner.

I know in conversations with Chief Hare that there were some concerns with respect to the legislation that was proposed. But what we agreed on together was that we can link arms, my ministry, and I've offered to the member opposite to have a seat at the table with us with Chief Hare on finding solutions for going forward. We've instructed OCWA and Walkerton to do important water consultation, to do important water training, and have seized them with the fact that you've got a working partnership with Indigenous communities. Thank you for the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: In regard to Bill 5, as a long-time resident of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and having served as a local councillor for the city of Stoney Creek for two terms and being vice-chair of engineering, I can attest that the world of water treatment is not a simple one and it's not an exact science. Hamilton is a good case study of the dos and don'ts of water treatment and city development, and I believe that the people of York region could learn a little from Hamilton's history about the challenges that they may face that they may not have taken into consideration yet.

Before I begin, I would like to thank and give appreciation to the many hard-working professional waste water treatment operators in Hamilton and the rest of our province who help to ensure our water is clean and safe for drinking in this type of world. I know it's not an easy job and many of the challenges posed by legacy infrastructure can lead to situations that are less than ideal for their purpose.

To speak to the purpose of waste water treatment, I see it as twofold: (1) to ensure that when a local resident turns on their tap at home, clean good-tasting water is available at all times; (2) to ensure that all water that passes through

the treatment facility is returned to the water table cleaner than when it entered.

While nothing can ever be guaranteed in life, certain unfortunate events must be questioned when they go wrong. I will refer to a recent event in Hamilton that did not represent the normal operating procedure of our waste water treatment but nonetheless resulted in the failure of my second rule for water treatment. A CBC Hamilton article posted on October 5 just a few days ago was entitled "Unknown Quantity of Untreated Sewage Released into Hamilton Harbour." Most Hamiltonians are aware of the reputation our city has across the province as being an industrial town with polluters and unexpected accidents when it comes to water pollution. That being said, the residents of my community are beginning to wake up to the reality that these types of events are more commonplace than once thought, and there's a growing resentment towards these failures and threats to our safety and well-being.

The article explains that during a significant rainfall event this previous Sunday, waste water was unfortunately discharged into Hamilton Harbour without treatment. The city of Hamilton went on to say, "At this time, the volume of waste water discharged is being calculated." In other words, they don't even know how much untreated water was sent flowing into Lake Ontario. To make the point even more drastic, the water that was released from our water system was not just rain runoff from our streets and roads, it was a combination of untreated sewage from our homes and businesses that was released from sewer overflow tanks at Royal Avenue, Main and King streets, Greenhill Avenue, the Red Hill Valley pipeline, Pleasant Avenue, Edenbridge Court, Wellington Street, Wentworth Street North and Strathearne Avenue North. Apparently, this dangerous and disgusting event was the result of equipment failure. We are being told that this equipment is being repaired. But the people of my riding are wondering when the next failure will occur. The last time something this bad happened was in 2015. And these are the incidents that we are all aware of; I'm sure that there are many more that aren't reported. That doesn't sound like a good track record to me.

It doesn't sound like there has been a lack of funding to Hamilton water treatment either. According to the city's website, \$340 million from the federal and provincial governments to the Woodward waste treatment plant upgrades represent the largest investment in the city to clean up our harbour. While I could admit that much of these investments are still being implemented, I am left with the feeling that the technical errors of the past are still going to be the realities of our future.

My other colleagues have been bringing forward their concerns about Hamilton's legacy and continued issues with the water treatment in the House for some time now.

Words and names familiar to everyone who is a resident of our community such as Sewergate and Randle Reef trip off the tongues of Tim Hortons patrons and Starbucks customers alike every day.

While it is easy to point out the failures of our waste water system, it is harder to discuss the reason behind the

problem in general: development. Hamilton has been a densely populated municipality since the founding of this great nation. Industrialization and urban intensification resulted in major problems that needed to be addressed in 1854. A major cholera outbreak resulted in 550 people dying from this disease in our city. This water-borne illness quickly became a priority for the city of Hamilton's first water treatment facility in 1859.

To imagine what lies beneath the streets of the older parts of our city is truly interesting and, at the same time, horrifying.

Wooden, clay and lead sewage pipes; coal gas lines; copper wire from the 1880s—it is truly a hodgepodge of underground human ingenuity, but it's also a testament to how good people are at making a mess and sending it downstream for someone else to deal with. Sometimes when we send our problems downstream, it is noticed immediately by our neighbours or by our wildlife, but more often than not, it's felt by our children and grandchildren.

By the 1860s, drinking water had become widely available to the booming city. Waste water was sent into the bay largely untreated. As times changed, so did our local water system.

Now, in 2021, barring the events noted earlier, the vast majority of the water entering Lake Ontario is cleaner than when it entered our system.

With that being said, Hamilton still has a major legacy of both industrial and municipal water pollution. Randle Reef, for example, was and still technically is the largest single source of concentrated industrial waste in the Great Lakes basin. With recent efforts to surround the area with steel walls and earth caps, the leaching of dangerous chemicals into our water table has been reduced. This has been achieved at great cost, and there are also concerns for the future, as we are simply passing the buck to future generations who will be responsible for the site's inspection and maintenance.

The price that is often paid on the path to development is a compromise with the environment. Would the people of Hamilton, and Ontario more widely, have been better off without good jobs provided by our industrial sector? I, for one, am a living testament to the benefit of good jobs the steel industry can offer. The question is whether or not the environmental price we have paid for our industrial, commercial and residential developments has been too high. Many in Hamilton would agree that we have paid too high of a price and that it continues to cost us, when we read about sewage spills that go on undetected for years or when we see a headline that basically says that our system wasn't designed to deal with above-normal rainfall levels. We discuss the impact climate change will have on our lives in the future while it is forcing utility workers to choose between raw sewage in the lake or flooded basements in the city today.

I say all these things as a warning to those of us in less-developed parts of the province, during our pursuit of better lives with an ever-growing population. We have to make sure that when we decide to dig the foundations of

new communities, business parks or industrial sites, we consider the impact it's going to have on our environment.

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The people of York region are asking themselves a question right now. As a growing region with interested investors from around the world, the leaders of York region have to listen to the warnings from the past as well as the warnings from the present. The proposed site for the Upper York Sewage Solutions treatment plant in East Gwillimbury with its effluent discharge plan to flow into East Holland River is located in an area that currently has around 24,000 residents. This sparsely populated region will potentially become the end of the line for nearly 47 million litres of effluent water as it's released into the Lake Simcoe watershed every day. I repeat: 47 million litres into the shallow Lake Simcoe watershed.

Residents and concerned groups have asked very relevant questions about the proposed water outflow, and they have yet to hear back on what will be done to prevent untreatable pharmaceuticals and microplastics from being included in the large volume of mostly clean water.

These concerns and others affect more than just the immediate areas around East Gwillimbury and Keswick; a little further east you will meet the people of Georgina Island First Nation. Based on a petition they have set up on which they have received over 35,000 signatures, they note concerns about historical and ongoing environmental concerns that have been on the agenda of the Ministry of the Environment and have yet to be properly remediated. In this case, the people of the Georgina Island First Nation refer to the lack of attention by the ministry to Thane aluminum smelter site, which has been out of operation since 1997 but has been left instead as a contaminated and toxic industrial site after its closure.

Speaking as someone who has spent most of his life working in steel mills and knowing what chemicals are used in the steel-making process, I can only imagine what remains at this former aluminum smelting site. There is little doubt that the local watershed is being negatively affected by the site's leachate and there is little surprise that previous governments, up to and including the present, have done nothing to clean up this mess.

To not take the experiences and knowledge of the people of Georgina Island First Nation into consideration when discussing the new water treatment facility is a disservice to the First Nation community and a disservice to all people who call the Lake Simcoe watershed their home. To have first-hand knowledge on an issue affecting a lake and to not be included as part of the environmental assessment process goes to show who the ministry is concerned about with this project. It goes to show this project may not be in everyone's best interests and it is an insult to the people of Georgina Island First Nation, the great environmental stewards of this land, and they have practically been ignored.

I will end today by reminding everyone present and anyone listening that what we are dealing with here is the result of a major change to the landscape and watershed of this province. Lake Simcoe is a world-class tourist

destination and also a traditional fishing ground for the First Nations. It may seem like an endless expanse of water to some, but, to me and others concerned about that project, I see a shallow and fragile ecosystem that needs to be protected as soon as possible.

Changes to water temperature, water volume, current, pH levels and salinity can fundamentally change the way fish and other wildlife behave. Changes to any system are often irreversible, and I can only wonder what a city like Hamilton was like before we showed up and bulldozed that paradise. We bulldozed it.

Hamilton's first water treatment plant was initially designed to accommodate the needs of 40,000 people and now has to keep up with 600,000 people. It is a bit of a chicken-and-egg situation, and if you build it, they will come. A new and scientifically modern water treatment plant feeding into Lake Simcoe would entice developers into the area resulting in new housing developments, new stores, new infrastructure and, in many cases, these are good things, but they must be done with an open ear to those who have a stake in these developments and who stand potentially to lose a livelihood or a way of life when a sleepy rural community becomes a bustling commuter hub, and I have not seen any plans to deal with heavy industry or mid-industry that will move into that area eventually and how they will deal with those discharges—interesting.

There is only one chance to get things right when the bulldozers and work crews begin to pour the concrete foundations of this region's future. It is my hope that the former Minister of the Environment's words are properly heeded, when Minister Yurek said, "This government wants to ensure that we have the most up-to-date information on the environmental, social and financial impacts of alternatives to provide waste water services appropriately." There is a lot at stake here and with the number of historical, ongoing environmental—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. The member will have time to finish his remarks the next time this bill is called.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch, Speaker. Anishinaabemowin, along with Cree, Inuktitut, Mi'kmaq and Dene, are a handful of Indigenous languages that are not currently endangered. Right now they are listed as vulnerable, according to United Nations language assessment criteria.

According to Anishinaabe language keeper Shirley Williams, we need to be doing more for Indigenous language education. In her words, she says, "The residential school system almost destroyed the Anishinaabe language and the Anishinaabe" ways of learning. "If we are going to move past the ... harms of the residential

school system and towards reconciliation..., Indigenous languages need to be supported and we need to write and speak in the language as much as we can. We need to respect and accept each other's dialect and encourage each other to learn and speak the language. We need to love our Anishinaabe language no matter how it is said. We all belong because the Creator gave us all" our languages. Meegwetch.

POLICE SERVICE DOGS

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: During the last session of Parliament, I rose to speak about efforts to raise money for Ottawa's police service dog program. I am pleased to rise today to provide an update on the progress of some of the new puppy recruits that were sponsored in memory of detective constable Bruno Gendron. Labrador retriever siblings named Blue and Liberty have recently turned six months old. They are both making great strides in their training as they get more comfortable in public situations and learn to stay calm while meeting new friends.

The training is facilitated by National Service Dogs in Cambridge, Ontario, who have previously donated a facility dog named K9 West to the Ottawa Police Service. The memorial fundraiser covered the cost of training these puppies who could one day go on to help children with autism, veterans or first responders with PTSD, or help at police stations or courthouses like K9 West.

One of the program's mottos is that each dog has their own unique path to greatness. Best of luck to Blue and Liberty as they continue down that path.

GUN VIOLENCE

Ms. Suze Morrison: Gun violence in the Regent Park community is reaching epidemic proportions. A few weeks ago, I joined my community for a march to end gun violence. It was organized by several groups, including Mothers for Peace, which is a local community group that helps mothers who have lost children to gun violence. Local leaders, like Sureya Ibrahim, who is one of the co-founders of Mothers for Peace, are telling us that enough is enough. They want to know, how many people will die before these shootings stop?

Far too many people in our community have been taken too soon or been touched by gun violence in their lives. Many of them are young people who deserve to feel safe as they grow up in their community. Most recently we have lost Thane Murray, who was a beloved youth worker in Regent Park. His loss has just had a tremendous impact, particularly on the young people in the neighbourhood.

People are reeling and they're asking why, after years of promises from government after government to respond to this crisis, these reckless killings are still happening. People are rightly concerned about the impact that hearing gunshots right outside their homes and losing friends and losing mentors is having on children in our community. No child should have to live through that trauma.

All levels of government must step up and tackle the root cause of gun violence today. We need substantial

investments in poverty reduction. We need to see more resources and opportunities for youth, mental health supports and anti-poverty measures like improvements to affordable housing and education. It's time for governments to listen and our communities to take real action to end gun violence.

SOUTH COMMON COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: Just this week, I spoke about the government's dedication to upgrading the infrastructure of our province, a commitment which we have upheld even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the Minister of Infrastructure, I recently had the pleasure to announce more than \$45 million in provincial funding to support the reconstruction of the South Common Community Centre and Library in my riding of Mississauga–Erin Mills. When I was elected to represent our community, I made a promise to every single constituent. It was to listen to their concerns and advocate for the progress of Mississauga–Erin Mills. I believe announcements like this are the perfect example of the promise being kept.

1020

The South Common Community Centre has been essential to the lives of many in our community, from our youth to our seniors and all in between, and it has been a cornerstone of Mississauga–Erin Mills.

This funding will be used to build a new community centre that will have indoor and outdoor fitness spaces, an aquatics centre and a new gymnasium. This historic investment will help improve the well-being of the constituents I represent for decades to come.

By investing in local projects here in Mississauga and across the province, our government is helping to strengthen and protect communities, create jobs, and contribute to our province's economic recovery and growth. As the COVID-19 pandemic has clearly highlighted, investments in the health and wellness of Ontarians are more critical than ever. And as our brilliant vaccination program is helping to protect Ontarians from COVID-19, we are working to secure a bright future for the youth of our province.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Madam Speaker, Monday's throne speech offered absolutely nothing new to help Ontarians. And for families of children with autism, the message was loud and clear: The Ford government's underfunding and lack of support for children with autism will continue.

This government promised to eliminate the autism program wait-list. Shamefully, it has ballooned to 49,000 kids under their watch. Families are left in despair.

On the national news, we all saw Stacy Kennedy, who was forced to camp out in front of Premier Ford's constituency office to try to get answers for her son Sam.

In my riding of Dundas, the Nedoborskis and their little daughter Zoe are facing a devastating wait for services. Instead of help from this government, they are left on their own. As Zoe's mom, Mary, said, "You're using your Visa card instead of your health card...."

And Hamilton mother Nancy, who fought for her twins to access therapy after going into debt to pay for speech therapy, said, "I've watched countless families in our community be forced to end therapy prematurely with no plan and no hope. We live in constant fear."

It is way past time for the government to fix this atrocious mess. So on behalf of all these kids and their families, I implore Minister Smith and Premier Ford to stop leaving tens of thousands of kids behind, stop leaving them languishing on the wait-list, and provide the support that they desperately need now.

LAND USE PLANNING

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yesterday, I tabled a motion to declare a housing affordability and climate emergency. These two connected and critically important issues—the government actually failed to even mention them in the throne speech. We must immediately recognize these issues for what they are: emergencies that require urgent action.

Speaker, I invite the government to work across party lines to implement policies that create a massive expansion of affordable housing; 15-minute neighbourhoods; and a freeze of urban boundaries, to reduce sprawl and permanently protect prime farmland and wetlands, the lands that feed us and protect us from flooding.

I once again call on the government to cancel Highway 413.

Instead of building highways that supercharge sprawl and pollution, we need to build livable communities where we can walk, bike and take a transit ride to work, shop and learn.

And we need to eliminate homelessness by funding the permanent supportive housing projects proposed for Guelph and in communities across Ontario.

Speaker, it is clear: We can grow our economy and improve people's lives if we have the political will to take on the housing affordability crisis and the climate emergency.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to express how proud I am of our government for taking urgent action to provide coverage for a life-saving drug for cystic fibrosis patients. Trikafta is the latest and most effective treatment for CF, and because of our health minister's rapid response, it's now covered under our publicly funded drug program. Within days of clearing all the federal regulatory hurdles, our health minister initiated funding.

CF patients and their families have fought tirelessly for access to Trikafta. One of those advocates is Tammy Strong, who I introduced in the Legislature prior to the pandemic. Tammy and her husband have two daughters,

Mikayla and Madison, who both struggle with cystic fibrosis.

Tammy sent me an email shortly after the funding announcement to say that her family is celebrating this decision. She thanked our health minister for moving at lightning speed to fund a drug that will improve the lives of Mikayla and Madison and the 1,500 other individuals in Ontario who live with CF every day. Tammy says this drug will literally change her daughters' lives; it will give them a future. But it comes with a hefty price tag: \$300,000 per year per patient. When her daughters first heard that the drug was approved, they were reduced to tears.

Because of the immediate action taken by our health minister, CF patients now have access to a drug that will ensure they will live longer and healthier lives and have a brighter future.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to talk about class sizes. I want to urge this government to once and for all step up for our kids and our classrooms. At 26 weeks, Ontario's schools were closed longer than any other jurisdiction last year. That's because this government took a piecemeal plan that put savings and saving money ahead of the safety and well-being of our kids.

As bad as it was, we and all the families out there had hoped that the government would learn from last year's lessons and apply them today, but it turns out that was wishful thinking. Every single day I hear from families across this great province whose children are in classes that are larger than they were pre-pandemic, leaving absolutely no room to safely distance and less time for one-on-one support.

In the Toronto Catholic District School Board, students have been forced to combine into supersized classes to meet ministry funding restrictions, resulting in teacher layoffs and parent protests in the streets. A motion is going to the board tonight. It's going to call for immediate funding assistance from the ministry to help reduce those class sizes in hot-spot areas.

So today, on behalf of students, of parents, of education workers across this province, I am calling on the Premier and the Minister of Education to stop cutting funding for our schools, lower class sizes and invest in keeping our kids safe.

CYPRUS INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark the 61st anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Cyprus on October 1. Since becoming independent, the people of Cyprus have worked hard to build their country's economy and have seen their democracy flourish.

Cyprus is a member of the European Union, working together with other European countries, building peace and prosperity across the continent. Yet Cyprus remains

painfully divided, with the northern part of the island organized as a separate state, recognized only by Turkey.

I had the opportunity to visit Cyprus before the pandemic and I saw the division of the country, but also how people in an independent Cyprus have built a thriving nation, as they hope to one day see their island reunited.

We honour the Canadian peacekeepers who sacrificed to maintain the peace in Cyprus and the 29 who lost their lives. Cyprus is a fellow member of the Commonwealth of Nations and has established its high commission to Canada under His Excellency Dr. Vasilios Philippou.

Cypriot Canadians have made and continue to make a tremendous contribution to our country and province, to our culture and our prosperity. The Cypriot Federation of Canada is a leader in the community.

We extend our province's gratitude to all who share this great heritage and whose accomplishments, struggles and sacrifices continue to solidify Ontario's position as a province renowned for our commitment to tolerance, diversity and multiculturalism. To all the people of Cyprus and to those of Cypriot descent here in Canada, may we join together in honouring this anniversary for a Cyprus that will always remain free and independent.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Aris Babikian: For a long time, Scarborough has been ignored and left behind. Due to the hard work and the commitment of the government's Scarborough caucus members, this has been changed. Scarborough is finally getting the attention and the care it deserves. Our government is laser-focused on improving the quality of life for our residents.

1030

On July 28, I joined my Scarborough colleagues at the Birchmount hospital in Scarborough–Agincourt to announce the investment of \$26.832 million to SHN under the Ontario financial stability and relief fund. This is in addition to the \$4.718 million under the Health Infrastructure Renewal Fund. This funding will help SHN to provide high-quality care to the residents.

The health and safety of Scarborough–Agincourt is my top priority. Our government will leave no stone unturned to provide first-class health care to residents of Ontario. The renovation of the current 11,000-square-foot emergency department at the Birchmount hospital, and expanding it by 14,000 square feet, is another substantial commitment to enhance Scarborough–Agincourt residents' health. The building of the Bridletowne Community Hub after 12 years of delay is more evidence that I am committed to help turn the tide and address the needs of Scarborough–Agincourt. I am proud to have participated in the July 28 funding announcement to help SHN recover from the financial demands COVID-19 imposed.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the best is yet to come for the residents of Scarborough–Agincourt and Scarborough.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition has a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This morning, I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 959 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 since we last paid tribute to victims of the pandemic, on June 3, 2021.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is for the Premier. We all know that PSWs and nurses have been the front-line health care heroes throughout this pandemic, but they work in absolutely terrible conditions that none of us would want to be working in.

Yesterday's announcement, frankly, neglected these heroes. The pandemic pay bump for PSWs expires at the end of this month. My question to the Premier is, why won't he say yes to a permanent pay increase for Ontario's PSWs, the heroes of this pandemic?

Hon. Doug Ford: I want to thank the opposition for that ridiculous question because we've been there from day one for the PSWs. They voted no for four hours of extended care. They voted no to give them a bump of \$3. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that I've said from day one that PSWs are overworked and underpaid, and we're going to make sure we make them whole. They're always going to have that bump. We will make it permanent.

But I've got to ask the opposition, Mr. Speaker, why every single thing we've done, no matter if it's increasing ICU beds to 3,100 beds, increasing the health budget by billions of dollars, it was no, no, no. Everything's no, without a solution, from the Leader of the Opposition. We're a party of yes. We're supporting the PSWs. We'll always have their backs.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, PSWs know very well who's been fighting for them all along. But here we are again. Every few months, PSWs have to wait and see if this government will do the right thing, but this government has never done right by our PSWs. Let's not forget they couldn't even access PPE at the beginning of this pandemic—in fact, well into it—and people who are PSWs actually lost their lives as a result of this government's negligence. The least this Premier could do is stop threatening that they will have their pay increase clawed back every couple of months, because that's what they're living with right now.

Why is it so easy for this Premier to say yes to his buddies and no to permanent pay increases for PSWs?

Hon. Doug Ford: Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, we invested \$270 million yesterday. We're investing \$4.9 billion that the opposition voted against. They voted against that four hours of care. They voted against 27,000 new PSWs and nurses. We're the first in the country, the first in North America to have four hours of care.

We're the first to go in there to make sure that the environment is a lot better by making sure the filtration systems are clear. We're putting air conditioning into every single long-term-care home across the country. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? It's no, no, no with the Leader of the Opposition.

Do you know what the Leader of the Opposition does? She uses PSWs as a bunch of props. We care for the PSWs. That's the difference between the opposition and our government, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The truth is, in fact—and PSWs know it, family members know it and residents know it—that this government has no intention of getting to four hours of hands-on care until 2026 or later.

Let's be real about what's going on here. Recruitment and retention of these workers is not going to happen without PSWs knowing that the government actually has their backs. In fact, here is what SEIU Healthcare, the union representing the front-line PSWs, says: "Absent in today's"—yesterday's—"announcement is any action to improve the abhorrent conditions of work that" still "exist within ... Ontario's long-term-care homes. The time to stop protecting the greedy interests of the big nursing home chains, who simply want more discretionary spending, should have ended long ago." I agree wholeheartedly with these remarks, Speaker.

The question to the Premier is, when will he actually say yes to PSWs and give them that permanent pay raise instead of boosting profits for his buddies that run long-term-care homes?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I don't know why the Leader of the Opposition won't take yes for an answer. I think the Premier was clear. But she wants to quote some union leaders, so let me do that for her.

This is Jerry Dias, president of Unifor—you may have heard of him: The minister's "announcement is a step in the right direction in helping long-term-care workers provide residents the adequate care that they deserve."

This "announcement moves us closer to achieving a minimum of four hours of care." That's from Naureen Rizvi, the regional director of Unifor.

"We are encouraged"—this is Candace Rennick; she's the secretary-treasurer of CUPE in Ontario; you know them—"to learn that this government is finally taking the necessary step of enshrining the four hours of hands-on care commitment into legislation. This is an important and long-awaited step."

We will look for the Leader of the Opposition's support for that part of the bill to come.

Finally, "it is crucial that the government acts fast to ensure the safety of our most vulnerable citizens and the front-line heroes.... We are glad to finally see a government that is following up on its words and doing something." That's Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Restart the clock. The next question?

1040

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier—but I can tell you, we await with anticipation the details of this government's plan. Let's hope it takes the profits out of long-term care.

My next question, however, is on the autism issue. Ontario families are still waiting desperately for autism services for their kids in this province. The throne speech didn't even deign to mention helping children and families with autism. The wait-list for help continues to grow, and it has now reached over 40,000 children waiting for services.

Why didn't the Premier even mention autism in the throne speech, and why are so many families still desperately waiting for services for their children?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa West—Nepean, parliamentary assistant.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you to the leader of the official opposition for that question.

Of course, our government is extremely proud that we took action to double the Ontario Autism Program's budget from \$300 million to \$600 million. On top of that, Speaker, our government has been working to implement a new Ontario Autism Program that was designed by folks from the autism community—people with autism themselves, clinicians, researchers, agency directors. All of them came together on our Ontario autism panel to provide recommendations on this new program that we are in the process of implementing. In the new program, families will have access to an expanded set of core services, including ABA therapy, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy and mental health services. This is the first time that families, through the OAP, will have access to this expanded list of services. I'm extremely proud of the work that our government is doing to reform this program.

I'll be pleased to speak further in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the families who have children with autism are certainly very, very concerned

about this government's lack of action. The Premier continues to say no to helping them to ensure that their kids get the services they need.

In fact, we all saw when a mom named Stacy Kennedy camped out at the Premier's office for six days. That was after four years of not getting services for her kid's needs. Stacy's words: "The system is broken and it needs to change." The former child and youth advocate actually—finally, somebody came to help, because the Premier didn't. He showed up to help, and she was very grateful about that. Only after Irwin Elman, the former child advocate, showed up to help Stacy did the Premier bother to even speak to her. But they didn't help her. She still is without help for her child.

Moms like Stacy deserve better.

When will the Premier ensure that parents don't have to camp out at his office to try to get some attention for their children?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Of course, our hearts go out to Stacy Kennedy and her son Sam. We want to make sure that all families with children with autism, like Stacy and her son Sam, are getting the support they need. I know that the Premier, Minister Fullerton and myself have all had a chance to speak to Stacy about some of the reforms that are under way to the Ontario Autism Program.

To expand a little bit further on this expansion of services that is under way, Speaker: Families, as I mentioned in the previous question, are going to be able to access core services. On top of that, families are also going to have access to a number of other pillars through the new Ontario Autism Program. They'll have access to foundational family services, which we launched last year to help families support their child's learning and development at home. They're going to have access to early intervention services to help young children access services at critical points in their development. And they're going to have access to urgent and complex—

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

The final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families with children with autism need supports now, not sometime in the future. They've needed them for years and years and years.

I've got to say, in the last campaign, this Premier promised families they'd never have to come to Queen's Park again. No, apparently now they have to go to his office to try to get some attention. That is not acceptable.

The problem keeps getting worse, and this government has made brutal cuts to autism. In March 2019, in fact, the wait-list was 20,000 people, Speaker—20,000 children waiting for service. Now it's 40,000-plus children waiting for autism services in this province. Families are desperate. Moms are camping out at the Premier's office. In Stacy's words, and I agree with her wholeheartedly, it is "scandalous."

Why is it always no for families like Stacy's, for children with autism, from this Premier, but it's always yes for his buddies?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Of course, as a brother of a young man with autism, I know how important it is to

make sure that we are delivering these services. My family has been fighting for these services for over 25 years. And that's why I'm incredibly proud to stand in this chamber with a government that doubled the Ontario autism budget to \$600 million. Today, three times more children are receiving support than at any point under any previous government in this province. That means 37,000 children are now receiving support through existing behaviour plans, childhood budgets and interim one-time funding, including the children who are currently being moved into the new Ontario Autism Program—a world-class program that will make Ontario a leader in autism services worldwide.

Speaker, there is still work to be done. We are on our way. We've got a solid plan designed by the community for the community, and we're going to continue to implement that plan.

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Energy. More than three years ago, your government ran on a promise to lower gas prices for people living across the province, including those living in the north. In my riding, the town of Espanola saw gas prices as high as \$1.479 per litre this week. This was also the average price of gas in Sudbury; White River, \$1.579; Manitowadge, \$1.539. Gas prices across the province are reaching a 10-year high, and in the north we are still paying the highest price for gas in this province.

What is the government doing for the people living in northern Ontario to end price gouging at the pumps?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member will know that one of the first actions that we took when we came into government was to take away those extra taxes on the people of the province of Ontario that were causing gas prices to go up. Again, it was the opposition that said no. They wanted those gas prices to continue to go up. They wanted the people of the province of Ontario to continue to pay higher prices for gas. We said that was wrong.

We support those industries, Mr. Speaker. We know how important the oil and gas sector is to the economy of the province of Ontario, how important it is to the economy of the entire nation. That is why we support initiatives to expand exploration. That is why we have explored options to increase supply to the people of the province of Ontario. But on every single measure, it is the opposition that votes against it, that works against it.

We will continue to work for the people of northern Ontario and we will continue to work for those enterprises across this province that rely on this industry, Mr. Speaker, because it's good for Canada, it's good for Ontario, and it's good for jobs and economic growth.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Back to the Minister of Energy: Winter is quickly approaching and northern families are

facing higher prices for everything from home heating to gasoline to groceries. Not only are prices hitting highs in the north, they are rising across the province. Yesterday in Toronto, the average price of gas was \$1.449 per litre, which is a record high for the GTA. This government has our bill, the Fairness in Petroleum Products Pricing Act, which would allow the Ontario Energy Board to regulate the retail and wholesale markup of petroleum products in Ontario.

Families in Ontario literally cannot afford the price of more talk without action. Will the minister commit to working with the official opposition to pass this legislation so that we can give a break to hard-working families across this province?

Hon. Paul Calandra: You know what will help hard-working families across this province? What will work for hard-working families across this province is continuing to support a government that reduces their taxes.

1050

One of the first things that we brought forward here in this place was to fight the carbon tax. We said at that time, and continue to say today, that a carbon tax will cost the people of the province of Ontario, would cost Canadians on everything—whether they went shopping, whether they went to drop off their kids at soccer games, that that would cost people massive amounts of money. And we are seeing it every single day, the cost of the carbon tax to the people of the province of Ontario.

You want to help the people of the province of Ontario? The NDP want to help? Stop saying no. Start saying yes to helping hard-working Ontarians. Help us fight a carbon tax. When we said it would cost Ontarians, we are now seeing the impacts of those costs on every single thing that Ontarians do. So we will continue to fight that federal carbon tax. It is not the right approach for the people of the province of Ontario. And I ask the member to join us, not only for the north but for all—

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

The next question.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question here is to the Honourable Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Minister, in my riding, I hear first-hand about the challenges smaller employers face when it comes to keeping people safe and staying open throughout this pandemic. They've done an exceptional job throughout COVID-19. Will the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development please tell this House how we're supporting these businesses and helping them keep everyone safe?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thank you to my good friend the great member from Sarnia-Lambton for that excellent question.

Since the start of this pandemic, our government made a promise to keep all workers safe. Recently, we an-

nounced the hiring of 100 new health and safety inspectors, which brings the total to 507, which is the largest in provincial history. I should add that that is no thanks to the opposition members, who voted against this very important measure in the beginning of the pandemic. They voted against inspectors to keep workers safe when Ontario workers needed them the most.

Our government will always stand up for protecting the hard-working men and women of this province. We remain focused on keeping everyone safe. In fact, since March 2020, we've now completed more than 65,000 workplace inspections, issued over 80,000 orders and stopped unsafe work more than 100 times.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to the minister for that reassuring answer. We've made huge progress by working collaboratively with labour leaders, business and all levels of government. So I'm pleased to hear that this government is going to do even more to support the workers and businesses of Ontario.

Small businesses have been doing the best they can through this pandemic. I can think of many owners across Sarnia-Lambton who have pulled out all the stops to keep their workers and their customers safe. Can the Minister of Labour please tell us how his ministry is providing main street with the resources they need?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Thanks again to the member from Sarnia-Lambton for that important question. I want to thank, on behalf of Premier Ford and our government, all employers, especially our shopkeepers and merchants, for stepping up during this incredibly difficult time to keep our economy going and preserving the dignity and livelihoods of the workers you employ.

I know many of these entrepreneurs don't have large HR departments like big corporations do. That's why I'm delighted to share that we have introduced a new, free online tool to help employers build custom safety plans for their workplaces. This portal will help hundreds of small businesses with confidence that they're following the latest health and safety measures for their workers and customers. I encourage everyone to try out the tool for themselves at ontario.ca/covidsafety.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians still have concerns about the statistical curiosities over in the PC caucus. Dr. Moore said that too many people are saying that they're exempt from vaccines. There are supposed to be only two reasons someone can get a medical exemption, and the exemptions are supposed to be few and far between: 1 in 100,000, not 1 in 35.

We asked yesterday if the Premier would commit to reviewing those exemptions, but the only response we got was a shrug. It appears that people can get exemptions for anything and no one is ever going to evaluate this.

Isn't the Premier worried that people are going to take his silence as permission to break the rules? I ask the Premier to please give us a response.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I think I answered this clearly yesterday.

Obviously, somebody who requires a medical exemption will approach their medical professional to give that exemption. I think the Chief Medical Officer of Health has made it clear what those exemptions are. I don't think it is for members of provincial Parliament to be deciding if somebody should be getting a medical exemption or not. I trust that the medical professionals are the best suited to be doing that work.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, in Saskatchewan, Scott Moe fired one of his MLAs for not telling the truth about their vaccine status. Here, though, the Premier said it's fine for folks not to tell the truth; you just need to have an exemption for it.

As MPPs, we're supposed to provide leadership. We're supposed to set the tone. The people of Ontario look to us for guidance. But instead of showing leadership and saying no to people who think the rules don't apply to them, the Premier seems to be saying yes to special rules for PC MPPs. This is what happens when there's no province-wide system for validating exemptions.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing and ensure that everyone across Ontario is playing by the same rules when it comes to vaccine requirements and exemptions?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I think we've been very clear. I know the Premier has, the Minister of Health has, and everybody on this side of the House has been very clear in that we think the best way to fight the pandemic is to be able to get the vaccines in your arm. We've showed remarkable progress on this. I think somewhat close to 87% of Ontarians have received one dose; a little over 82% have received a second dose.

But there are those individuals who require a medical exemption. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has advised what those exemptions should be.

I'm now just hearing for the first time that the NDP would seek to fire individuals who have valid medical exemptions from their jobs. That's not something we are going to do.

We'll continue to work with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, as we have done throughout this pandemic, to ensure that we have the best vaccination rates in the entire country and to make sure that we continue to support all of those people who are impacted by the pandemic.

But to be clear, we are not going to have a system in place where somebody with a medical exemption is fired from their job because the opposition has asked for it.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

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

I do have to say, it's really hard for families to listen to the answer on the Ontario Autism Program given that the wait-list has gone from 23,000 to almost 50,000.

Speaker, last week the government announced that COVID-19 vaccinations will become mandatory for everyone working in long-term care. While that's welcome news, it comes months too late. We knew last spring that we needed to do this to protect vulnerable residents, and yet, inexplicably, the government waited too long. That allowed the disease to spread, outbreaks to happen and people to die.

For months now, Ontario's nurses, Ontario's doctors, Ontario's hospitals and Ontario's families have been asking to make vaccinations mandatory for all front-line health care workers in every setting.

Why is it that this government has to be dragged screaming and kicking to do the right thing, to keep people safe from COVID-19?

Speaker, through you, will the Premier do the right thing and make vaccines mandatory for front-line health care and education workers?

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I do understand the member from Ottawa South's interest in making things look worse than they may be. But what we all know—and through the great work of our front-line health care workers, our public health officials and Ontarians everywhere, Ontario has some of the lowest infection rates per 100,000, not just in Canada, but across North America.

Nonetheless, back in July, even though Ontario long-term-care homes also had the highest vaccination rates for staff, we did start to monitor on a home-by-home basis. In consultation with my colleagues, we decided that although vaccination rates were at 90%, there were some outliers. That's why we made the choice, following the data, looking on a home-by-home basis, to expand vaccinations and ensure that we put the safety of our long-term-care residents who are at risk at the top of the priority list.

I'm happy to report at this opportunity that we also have 86% of eligible residents now with a booster dose in Ontario long-term-care homes.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are consistently taking the steps to protect long-term care—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, I'm certainly not going to minimize outbreaks happening, people getting sick and people dying, and I don't think the minister should be doing that.

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I understand that the Premier believes that making vaccinations mandatory is going to come at a political cost; I think he's wrong. That's why, this afternoon, I'll be introducing legislation to make vaccinations mandatory for all front-line workers in health care and education, in all settings.

I'm doing that because I think families deserve to know that the person caring for their loved one in a hospital or

at home, that that person's been vaccinated; or that the person who's helping their child in school, that that person's been vaccinated too; or the child care worker who's in the child care centre, that that person's been vaccinated. I think that that's all reasonable. It comes down to protecting those people who are most vulnerable to COVID-19: seniors and children under 11. That's the cost.

So, Speaker, through you, what will it take for this government to do the right thing and make vaccinations mandatory for all front-line workers in health care and education, I ask you again, Premier?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you for the question. Our government's top priority from the beginning of this pandemic has been the health and safety of all Ontarians, and that's why we introduced the vaccination program that we have, with some of the highest rates of vaccinated people in the world, not just in Canada. We're continuing with that. We're on our last-mile strategy to get to 90% on both first and second doses.

But the reality is that the people in our long-term-care homes are the most vulnerable. They are the ones where we have seen breakouts happen, where we need to make sure we can protect them. That is why the Minister of Long-Term Care has created a mandatory vaccine policy, to make sure those people are safe and to introduce the third booster dose.

But rest assured, should we see a similar situation unfolding—and we're watching this very carefully on a daily basis—we won't hesitate to introduce it elsewhere. Right now, though, the top priority is people in our long-term-care homes. Those are the people that we need to protect. We saw that the third booster dose was recommended for them. They are receiving the booster dose and we will continue to protect—

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

The next question.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on Ontario workers and small businesses. For the past 18 months, business owners and workers have made tremendous sacrifices to keep our neighbours and communities safe. The people of Ontario have rallied together to get through this unprecedented crisis and, throughout, our government has been there for Ontarians. Can the minister please update this House on what steps our government is taking to support businesses and workers through this last mile of the pandemic?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the member. Our government is making the necessary investments to support the people of Ontario during this crisis and into the future: investments like the \$51 billion in our COVID-19 action plan, which included \$23.3 billion to protect the

economy and the good-paying jobs in Ontario; investments like the additional \$50 million into the renewed Ontario Together Fund, with a focus on supporting home-grown manufacturing and innovation to combat COVID-19—this will provide goods critical to the health, safety and security of Ontarians beyond the pandemic.

Our government is doing what it takes to protect the people of today and into the future. After 18 months of fighting this pandemic, we owe the families, we owe the businesses the stability. Certainly, unlike the other parties, this is exactly what our government is delivering.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Minister. We've come a long way since the early days of the pandemic, when the first cases of COVID-19 were identified here in Canada. Our government has never hesitated to do what was necessary to fight this pandemic, putting the health of the people of Ontario first.

With more and more Ontarians stepping up to get vaccinated, and as we turn our attention to the future, can the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade update the House on what our government is doing to ensure an economic recovery for individuals and families in my community of Oakville North–Burlington and in every part of the province?

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Families can rest assured that our path to recovery will be fuelled by economic growth, rather than tax hikes or spending cuts. As we look beyond the pandemic, our government is working for the people of Ontario to ensure that we remain the economic engine of Canada.

We've already taken steps by reducing the cost of doing business in the province of Ontario by \$7 billion each and every year. That includes lowering the WSIB premiums by over \$2.4 billion without reducing benefits.

We allow same-year writeoffs for equipment, and that reduces the cost of business by a further billion dollars annually.

We took action to fix the Liberals' hydro mess by lowering industrial and commercial hydro rates by 14% and 16%, respectively.

Our plan is working. Large-scale auto investments in places like Windsor, Oshawa, Oakville and others are proof that we are unleashing Ontario.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Good morning, Speaker.

Remarks in Oji-Cree.

My question is to the Premier. Vision is key for development in children, as over 80% of children's learning is based on vision. Dr. Sabri, a pediatric ophthalmologist at McMaster Children's Hospital, tells us more than a third of Indigenous children have far-sightedness—more than three times higher than non-Indigenous children. Research also shows that Indigenous children experience very high levels of astigmatism and uncorrected refractive error.

Right now, parents across Kiiwetinoong can't get their children the eye care they need because this government won't negotiate a fair deal with the optometrists.

Will this government fund the optometry services that our kids need and deserve?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

You're absolutely right. Children across the province require the services of optometrists, as do many seniors. That's why we were extremely disappointed that the optometrists have chosen to withhold publicly funded, or OHIP-funded, services for children and for seniors. This is something that is very unfortunate because we are not withholding services. The government is not withholding these publicly funded services; it's simply that the optometrists have decided that they are not going to provide them.

We are ready, willing and able to return to the mediation table to discuss the issues that optometrists have. There is no question that they were not fairly dealt with by the previous government, but we are ready to remedy those wrongs. We are ready to go back to the table with them, to negotiate a fair deal, to listen to what they have to say, and we are asking for the optometrists to please come back to the table so we can do just that.

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

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Meegwetch to the minister for her response.

Children need your help. We know that eye care is health care.

In Kiiwetinoong, doctors have shared with me their concerns about the high incidence of eye disease and the extra care needed in the region. People in Kiiwetinoong are among the sickest in Canada.

Elders and seniors right across the north need regular eye care exams because of the diseases they have. Because of COVID-19 and now this, they have been waiting for two years now.

Why does this government say no when it comes to ensuring everyone can access the essential eye and vision care they need?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Our government is actually saying, yes, we want to come back to the table.

We recognize that Indigenous children, children across Ontario, need access to eye care. They're back in school. Many of them require glasses, for example.

We also know that there are seniors who have cataracts and other vision problems and they need to be served.

That's why we're asking the optometrists to please come back to the mediation table. You can't negotiate if there's only one party there. We are ready to go there. We have agreed with the mediator's requirements for considering going back into mediation. We want to do that. We want to address the issues of the past, which we have, with the payment of the \$39 million. We want to go forward, starting with an 8.48% increase, retroactive to April 1, and we want to discuss the overhead issues that

the optometrists wish to discuss. So we are ready, willing and able to proceed. We're asking the optometrists to please come back to the table.

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AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Avec le discours du trône de cette session présenté par le gouvernement cette semaine, on peut voir que ça va mal à shop. Pas une mention de la Laurentienne. Pas une mention de la modernisation de la Loi sur les services en français. Mais, le plus insultant, le gouvernement n'est même pas capable d'insérer un mot en français dans le contenu—un mot. Au moins on peut confirmer que le premier ministre n'a pas d'ambitions fédérales.

Monsieur le Président, le gouvernement peut continuer de répéter ses points habituels, mais la réalité est qu'il n'a absolument rien fait pour les francophones de l'Ontario, sauf les attaquer. Comment ce gouvernement conservateur peut-il nous dire qu'il fait des avancées lorsqu'il n'y a aucune substance à ses actions, justement, vides comme son discours du trône?

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

L'hon. Paul Calandra: Merci à ma collègue pour cette question. Mais ce n'est pas vrai; nous avons fait beaucoup de travail pour la communauté francophone. Quand vous entrez dans cette Chambre, vous pouvez regarder le nouveau drapeau francophone ici dans la Chambre.

La ministre des Affaires francophones a fait beaucoup d'investissements pour la communauté francophone. La ministre du Tourisme, elle a fait beaucoup de travail pour ce secteur. La ministre de la Santé, elle a fait une annonce pour le « Montfort hospital ». Le ministre de « long-term care »—beaucoup d'annonces, monsieur le Président.

C'est toujours une communauté très importante pour ce gouvernement; elle reste une communauté très importante.

And unlike the members opposite, we will continue to make the francophone community a very important part of Ontario. We know that they are important for economic growth and an important part of what makes this province great. Unlike the previous government, which said a lot but did nothing, we will take actions for that community.

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

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Ça fait trois ans et demi que le gouvernement conservateur nous promet une modernisation de la Loi des services en français—trois ans et demi. Promis, promis. Attendez que l'élection approche, et là, on vous lancera des bonbons. Un vrai cirque. Après trois ans et demi d'attente, c'est mieux d'être la huitième merveille du monde.

Monsieur le Président, quand ce gouvernement va-t-il agir? Juste avant la campagne électorale?

L'hon. Paul Calandra: Nous avons commencé immédiatement la mise en place de ressources pour la communauté francophone. Les enjeux dans la communauté francophone sont les mêmes que les enjeux

dans le reste de la province. Elle veut une économie forte, et nous avons fait des investissements non seulement pour tous les Ontariens, mais pour la communauté francophone.

Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the Minister of Francophone Affairs initiated a very important investment opportunity specifically for francophone businesses. When I look at the member's own riding, the Minister of Tourism made sure that there was \$92,000 for the Festival de la Curd de St-Albert, \$48,700 to Groupe Convex in Prescott-Russell and \$10,000 to the Optimist Club.

It's not just about putting up the francophone flag and recognizing it as an official symbol of the province of Ontario—that's important to the community—it's about doing the right thing for—

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

TOURISM

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Speaker, as we know, the tourism industry continues to be among the hardest-hit sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses that have contributed to their communities and regions for years have faced the toughest 18 months of their lives. Pre-pandemic, these tourism businesses were major contributors to the economy by creating jobs and bringing visitors to their regions. Many continue to fight to stay alive.

Through you, Speaker: Can the minister please tell us how the government is working to ensure that these key tourism businesses are able to not only survive the pandemic, but recover and get back to being key economic drivers in our communities?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to thank the member for Ottawa West-Nepean for his very thoughtful question. He has been a strong champion for heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries in our city of Ottawa.

The third-largest sector in Ottawa is this sector. That's why we have made significant investments with Ottawa Tourism, investing over \$6 million this summer in order for them to have business-to-business relationships around the world, assist them with marketing, and of course, making sure that they have the opportunity to hire really incredible staff to get back to business.

Of course, there is no doubt the hardest-hit sectors come from the heritage, sport and tourism sectors, because they are high-touch, they are high-volume, and they have dealt with the brunt of the public health restrictions. But we're getting back to business. We've invested \$100 million in four different tiers, with massive flexibility for many different tourism attractions, including airlines and entertainment. We have invested over \$50 million in festivals and events across the province of Ontario. And we've put out almost \$100 million in small business grants.

We're back in business, but we have a long road ahead, so I'm excited that this member from our party is asking the critical questions about how we can best support those tourism operators across the—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you, Minister, for that response. This funding is welcome support to key tourism businesses across Ontario, including in our hometown of Ottawa. Speaker, the minister and I had the chance to visit with many of these businesses in Ottawa this summer when we did a tour of the ByWard Market, and I know that these businesses need support so they can once again take their place as an economic driver in their communities. However, we know that the Ontario tourism industry is built on a number of different-sized tourism businesses, and so through you, Speaker, I'm wondering if the minister can tell us how the government has supported all tourism businesses suffering from the impacts of COVID-19.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The member is right; we had the opportunity to tour and rediscover Ontario in our own hometown. I also had the opportunity to travel for the last 16 weeks across this magnificent province, looking at some of the most incredible assets that we have, whether it's natural or art galleries or our museums or even some of the tourism attractions. I actually did treetop trekking with the Attorney General, and that was quite frightening.

One of the things I mentioned, as I said, is we have invested \$100 million into a tourism recovery fund for for-profit businesses, and just this week, every member of this Legislature was able to announce, in their own communities, \$46 million to community building fund applications and successful recipients who are not-for-profit, who are just as critical to the well-being and the social well-being of this province, including the art gallery of Ottawa and, of course, the minister responsible for children, community and social services—the Diefenbunker in her riding of Kanata–Carleton. I'm very excited, Speaker, that we are working with our tourism and travel agents and organizations across this province, so that when we can come back, we come back much better.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, this government's failure to implement vaccine mandates in health care and education is hurting patients and students in my community.

Diane Sims is a palliative care patient who relies on multiple home care visits each day. Because of her fragile condition, Diane's doctor recommended that only vaccinated workers come into her home. But her home care agency was unable to make this happen. Diane's husband is now forced to provide her care.

Speaker, with vaccine mandates finally in long-term-care homes, more unvaccinated PSWs will move to home care, putting more patients at risk. When will this government implement vaccine mandates in home and community care, to protect vulnerable patients like Diane?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. This is a situation that we're analyzing on a daily basis. As you know, we have one of the most successful vaccination rates in the country and in

the world, and we have introduced some mandatory vaccination requirements for entering into certain settings. As a result, since the last-mile strategy was announced on August 24, approximately 365,700 first doses and approximately 525,900 second doses have been administered. So more and more Ontarians are stepping up to be vaccinated. We have started with the long-term-care homes because long-term-care-home residents have been uniquely and disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and since we are seeing some outbreaks, we are taking these steps right now with our most vulnerable citizens in our long-term-care homes.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, it's not just patients; it's students, too, who are being hurt by an inconsistent patchwork of vaccination policies. The London area student athletic association, Thames Valley Regional Athletics, made vaccines mandatory for players, coaches and volunteers. But since school boards do not all have the same requirements, the TVRA announced that students would not be competing in high-level western Ontario and provincial competitions, stating that "travelling to other locations in Ontario does not support safe regional play at this time." That was the right call, Speaker, but after all that student athletes have been through, it is another blow.

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Why is this government refusing to listen to parents, school boards and education workers who are calling for Ontario-wide vaccine mandates in our schools?

Hon. Christine Elliott: We're listening to parents and educators. We're listening to experts in epidemiology. We are listening to the comments that are made by the people who are knowledgeable in these areas. They have recommended that we commence with the mandatory vaccination of people working in long-term-care homes because the residents are so vulnerable. That's why we've also introduced the third, or booster, dose there.

However, other groups and organizations have the ability to put in place additional policies and procedures based on local context, such as SickKids hospital, which quickly implemented mandatory vaccination to protect children under 11 who are unable to be vaccinated.

This is something that the local medical officers of health are reviewing very carefully in their local units, as is our Chief Medical Officer of Health, and we are following their requirements and their recommendations. That is something that we will do to protect the health and well-being of all Ontarians going forward.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Premier. In 2018, in full campaign mode, the Premier said, "There's billions of dollars being wasted. The party with taxpayers' money is over." Once in power, three years later, the Premier has made sure the party is roaring more loudly than ever before.

Just before we broke for summer recess, the government reintroduced the practice of using taxpayer money, by the millions, to fund the operations of political parties as they please. This was a policy the Premier had vowed to end.

Why does the Premier think it's acceptable to use millions in taxpayer dollars to fund the operations of political parties at a time when many taxpayers haven't been able to go to work or are being fired from their jobs because of this government's policies?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As the member will know, and was very supportive of, there have been a number of initiatives that this Premier has brought forward that would allow for the democratization not only of this place—that has been highlighted in some of the measures I talked about yesterday, whether it was a record number of private members' bills that had been passed, whether it was the new take-note debates.

When you talk about funding for political parties and when you talk about the supports—part of those changes also allow independent members now, for the first time ever in provincial history, to raise funds on their own so that they can fight campaigns equal to political parties. That was a very, very important change. It's something that the Chief Electoral Officer asked for and has been asking for quite a long time.

Mr. Speaker, look at us. As the member for Algoma-Manitoulin often says, we're always bridge-builders over here. We bring people together. Of course, with so many independent Liberals, this was our chance to build those bridges across the aisle and to give the independents the support they need to maybe once in a while do a little bit better in elections than they have.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Mr. Speaker, let's take a closer look. There are only two Ontario MPPs who are not receiving taxpayer money to fund their political operations and their re-election efforts: me and the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

The governing Ontario PC Party now receives \$5.9 million annually from the taxpayer; the NDP, \$5 million; and the Liberal Party, \$2.8 million. Even the independent members from York Centre and Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston receive taxpayer funding for their re-election efforts.

Taxpayers in large numbers are losing their jobs and haven't been able to work for over a year, but Ontario MPPs think it's okay to use millions in taxpayer dollars to fund their re-election efforts.

Will the government immediately put an end to the wasteful spending of taxpayer money to fund the operations and re-election efforts of political parties and independent MPPs: yes or no?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I guess that's where I'll disagree with the member. I don't think that elections and campaigns and giving the members, both independents and those who still belong to a party, the opportunity to approach the people in their ridings across the province—

I don't believe that to be a waste of time. I actually think it's fundamental to the whole point of us being here. That's why we campaign. That's why we work so hard.

I note that the measure did receive all-party support, Mr. Speaker. Look, she mentioned that, for the first time ever, we have independents able to raise funds and campaign and have electoral district associations. That hasn't happened before.

But as I say, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to stop. I know all of us are going to continue to do all that we can to make this a better place, to make democracy work better, and if that means building bridges across the aisle and extending the hand of friendship to independents and even to other colleagues who used to be in parties, we're going to continue to do that because it's in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Chris Glover: My question is for the Premier. The government let more than 25,000 Ontario small businesses go under in the first year of the pandemic before offering financial aid, but that aid that was finally offered excluded many small businesses.

Kyle Sipkens's company, Incirque, is part of Ontario's \$35-billion tourism industry and provides jugglers, stilt walkers and other interactive entertainment for festivals and special events. He says, "I've fallen through the cracks of all Ontario and federal business support programs. I have not received any financial support ... and my business is still excluded from the new tourism ... grants.... We're just looking for fairness."

The new tourism grants the government is offering will still exclude many businesses like Kyle's and provide funding on a competitive basis rather than for all those which meet the criteria. What does this government have against small businesses like Incirque, and why are you creating a Hunger Games approach to deciding which of these businesses will receive the grants and survive, and which you will let die?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I thank the member opposite for his question, but as I referenced with my response to the member from Ottawa West-Nepean, we have just launched this week a \$100-million tourism recovery program with the ministers responsible for small business and economic development and trade. We launched another \$100 million with the Minister of Finance as well. We just put \$46 million out the door this week for not-for-profit organizations. We funded for the first time in Ontario's history the largest festival and events program in the history of this country with \$50 million to over 350 festival and events, which contributed to \$1 billion in the economy. We are making targeted and strategic investments in the tourism, heritage, sport and culture industries in order to help these businesses not only survive but thrive.

I'm sorry for this one particular individual, but we are literally helping millions of small businesses and hundreds

of thousands of not-for-profit organizations in order to contribute to the economic success and viability of the heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries—

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

The supplementary question.

Mr. Chris Glover: Mr. Speaker, the answer doesn't answer about the competitive nature of these grants, so that not everybody who is eligible will receive the grants.

Businesses are also concerned about the federal wage and rent subsidies ending and that the provincial grants have not been renewed. Jeff Crews of BioConnect, a software company operating in Liberty Village, states, "The continuous starts/stops related to COVID heavily impacted BioConnect's recovery." The grants "have allowed us to maintain employment but ending these programs does not line up to the ... reality of opening of the economy. We need these programs to continue supporting Canadian-owned and -operated businesses, such as BioConnect."

The recent Ontario financial advisory report found that this government has received over \$5 billion in federal funding to help small businesses, schools and health services to get through the pandemic. The last round of provincial COVID-19 business funding grants closed six months ago, on April 7. Will you be offering another round of grants to support small businesses such as Jeff's and why the long delay to offer more support?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Thank you for the question. I must begin by saying how disappointed we are that the member and parties opposite chose to vote against providing the last \$1.4 billion in additional support for small businesses. That budget included billions of dollars in supports that have helped families and businesses get through the pandemic. This includes an additional \$50 million for the Ontario Together Fund I spoke of earlier to build up our domestic capacity.

The opposition also did not support the \$2.8-billion investment to connect homes, businesses, communities with broadband, so that businesses can make digital transition. They didn't support our enhancements to the Regional Opportunities Investment Tax Credit, which resulted in total tax support for businesses by \$155 million. Mr. Speaker, they supported none of these grants.

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COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is for the Minister of Health. Vaccinating children aged five to 11 will be a major step on our way out of this pandemic. Pfizer will soon be seeking Health Canada approval for a pediatric vaccine.

The government had the whole summer to plan for a safe return of our students to school, yet we are seeing a surge of cases in our public education system. Parents shouldn't have to worry that sending their kids to school will endanger the health of their families. And they

certainly don't feel that the maximum has been done to keep everyone safe in the schools.

My question to the minister is, what is the government's plan for vaccinating children five to 11?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member opposite for the question.

I can assure the member that over the past many months we've been working with the minister and the Ministry of Health, the Premier, and of course public health agencies and Dr. Moore on a credible province-wide rollout that will give access to the safe vaccine to all families who will want it.

We have had incredible success with the next age bracket, those children 12 to 17, in Ontario. Because of the strong partnership with public health units and pediatric hospitals, we have one of the highest rates of immunization in Canada for young people; in fact, one of the highest rates of immunization for all eligible citizens in the province. We're proud of that. I think that track record could inform the next phase of this implementation.

When the federal regulator approves it, we will stand ready to get it out, working with our school boards, using our schools and other government assets to make it accessible for all families, and encourage individuals to take up the vaccine for their family.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My constituents are worried about the rise of COVID-19 outbreaks in our schools. It's really happening. In fact, Mauril-Bélanger, an elementary school in my riding, has just closed, along with three other schools in Ottawa, due to the spread of COVID-19, and there are several other schools in my own riding that are experiencing outbreaks.

Vaccination needs to be easily accessible as soon as it becomes available. The minister needs to work with her federal counterpart to ensure our kids get vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available. It needs to make that vaccine available in schools. I know you've mentioned that, but I'd like to hear about that plan.

My question is, are you speaking with Health Canada to plan when the vaccine is going to be available, and what is your plan to make it accessible as soon as possible?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I wrote to the federal ministers in March of this year, under the eventuality that Health Canada may approve a vaccine for children as young as five, as noted, asking them to procure sufficient supply and to have a plan to help get facts out to parents around the safety and the efficacy of the vaccine.

What we have done in this province is launch, in partnership with the Minister of Health, 650 school-focused vaccine clinics, which have yielded one of the highest rates of immunization in Canada. To date, over 81% have had a first dose—for our kids 12 to 17—and roughly 73% have had a second dose. That is a great success. We know there's more work to do.

We're encouraging the safe vaccine on a voluntary basis to more families. We've also mandated for education

staff that in the absence of being vaccinated—which is our government’s preference—you will be tested twice a week, and launched an additional rapid antigen testing program just yesterday, on a targeted basis, to make sure our schools are safe, they remain open and kids can learn in this province.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Jeff Burch: Speaker, through you to the Minister of Education: Haley Bateman and her family did everything right. They did their part: got vaccinated, observed all the COVID-19 guidelines.

Just three days into school, Haley and her partner received a notice that there was a COVID-19 exposure in their child’s classroom. A few days later, the entire family was ill. Haley’s children are four, four and five. Their symptoms were not mild and ranged from vomiting, fevers of 104, extreme fatigue and hallucinations.

Haley believes that her children were exposed through an unvaccinated staff member. In an email, Haley said that no one will take accountability for the policy failures that led to her children becoming so ill and “in the end, only children are left with the consequences of the adults in charge.”

Will the minister step up, do the right thing and finally implement a plan for safer schools that includes smaller class sizes, improved ventilation and mandatory vaccinations for teachers and education workers?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Any individual who faces COVID-19, regardless of their symptoms, we send them our very best in their recovery. We realize this has been a very difficult experience for so many individuals.

The Chief Medical Officer of Health has confirmed as recently as yesterday that the protocol—the layered approach—has been very effective at keeping transmission out of schools. He noted that 87% of cases originate in community settings, not within our schools. He noted that our rapid antigen testing program—another layered approach brought in yesterday to high-risk communities—can help mitigate cases from entering the school.

Every single staff member who is not vaccinated—which represents a minority of staff within our schools—is subjected to mandatory, twice-a-week rapid testing. That is the prerequisite for entering our schools. We screen our kids and our staff before they enter our schools.

We’ve enhanced ventilation in every one of our schools—\$600 million, 2,000 projects improving mechanical ventilation and 70,000 HEPA units deployed. We’ll continue to do whatever it takes to keep families, students and staff safe in this province.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: In accordance with standing order 59, I wish to outline the status of business on the return. Let me just wish all colleagues and all the team

members here who work in the Legislature a very happy Thanksgiving.

When we return on Monday, October 18, we will be dealing with opposition day number one, and then Bill 5, the York Region Wastewater Act.

On Tuesday, October 19, in the morning, we will deal with the speech from the throne. In the afternoon, we will continue with the speech from the throne and PMB ballot item number 1, standing in the name of the member for Hamilton Centre. I’m told that that is to be determined, what that bill will be.

On Wednesday, October 20, both in the morning and in the afternoon, we will continue debate on the speech from the throne and PMB ballot item number 2, standing in the name of the member for Ottawa South. I’m not sure which one it will be. I know he might have more than one, but I’m sure he’ll give us notice.

On Thursday, October 21, in the morning, we will begin debate on government notice of motion number 3. We will continue that in the afternoon and we will conclude with PMB ballot item number 3, standing in the name of the member for Kitchener Centre. Of course, that one still is yet to be determined as well.

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 1137 to 1300.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to announce to the House that, pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning vaccinations. This matter will be debated Tuesday following private members’ public business.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AUTISM AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À L’AUTISME

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to proclaim April 2 in each year as Autism Awareness Day / Projet de loi 11, Loi proclamant le 2 avril de chaque année Journée de sensibilisation à l’autisme.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for London—Fanshawe care to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, Speaker.

Autism spectrum disorder is a lifelong neurological condition with no known cause. Since autism exists on a

spectrum, no two people experience autism the same way and therapies and services are generally based on each person's needs.

Proclaiming April 2 as Autism Awareness Day will raise a greater public awareness of autism and help people in Ontario and beyond move past the stigma of autism and towards a greater understanding of the disorder and a greater support for people living with autism.

Autism Awareness Day will reflect the government's ongoing responsibilities to provide ethical, evidence-based and comprehensive therapies and services to each person living with autism in Ontario and to provide caregivers with the support to care for people living with autism in Ontario. Each person living with autism should be provided the necessary supports to achieve the quality of life that is deserved by a respected member of society.

MANDATORY COVID-19 VACCINATIONS
IN THE EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE
SECTORS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA VACCINATION
OBLIGATOIRE CONTRE LA COVID-19
DANS LE SECTEUR DE L'ÉDUCATION
ET CELUI DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to enact the Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations in the Education and Healthcare Sectors Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 12, Loi édictant la Loi de 2021 sur la vaccination obligatoire contre la COVID-19 dans le secteur de l'éducation et celui des soins de santé.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Ottawa South wish to explain his bill briefly?

Mr. John Fraser: The bill enacts the Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccinations in the Education and Healthcare Sectors Act, 2021. The act requires specified education sector organizations and health care sector organizations to require their employees and other individuals that they retain to provide services to be fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine. Certain exceptions are provided for, such as complying with the requirement would result in a contravention of the Human Rights Code. In such cases, the education sector organization or health care sector organization must ensure that the individual's duties do not require direct contact with specified persons and that individuals undergo training with respect to the benefits and risks of COVID-19 vaccinations.

Non-compliance with specified provisions of the act is deemed to be sufficient grounds to make an order under section 22 of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, which may require an education sector organization or health care sector organization to take specified measures to ensure compliance with the act. The bill is also time-limited.

SUPPORTING PEOPLE
AND BUSINESSES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT
À SOUTENIR LA POPULATION
ET LES ENTREPRISES

Mrs. Tangri moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant diverses lois.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Nina Tangri: This bill takes a responsible and forward-thinking approach to burden reduction. We are prioritizing innovation and modernization without compromising what Ontarians collectively value: our health, safety and the environment. Its sensible reductions to red tape would help more businesses to rehire and grow, thanks to lower costs and modern compliance options.

Ontario's people and communities would benefit from a modernized regulatory system that reflects the world we live in, making it easier and less time-consuming to meet obligations and go about our daily lives. This means common-sense changes to long-outdated pieces of legislation.

TIME TO CARE ACT (LONG-TERM
CARE HOMES AMENDMENT, MINIMUM
STANDARD OF DAILY CARE), 2021

LOI DE 2021
SUR LE TEMPS ALLOUÉ AUX SOINS
(MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES FOYERS
DE SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
ET PRÉVOYANT UNE NORME MINIMALE
EN MATIÈRE DE SOINS QUOTIDIENS)

Ms. Armstrong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to amend the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007 to establish a minimum standard of daily care / Projet de loi 14, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les foyers de soins de longue durée afin d'établir une norme minimale en matière de soins quotidiens.

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): Again, I'll invite the member for London—Fanshawe to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This bill is basically a bill that's really important to the long-term care sector, and specifically to families and residents and workers who reside or live in long-term care, and work there. It's so important that we make sure that our loved ones, our most vulnerable citizens, all our family members who reside in long-term care are actually receiving the basic care needs that have to be met. And this is what this bill does. It

enshrines the four hours of care. It's not just a promise, but it actually makes it law that we ensure that all of our loved ones in long-term care and workers have the dignity in the workplace, that we deliver the care that we all expect when we are residing in a long-term-care facility.

CONNECTING CARE AMENDMENT ACT
(PATIENT BILL OF RIGHTS), 2021
LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI
POUR DES SOINS INTERCONNECTÉS
(DÉCLARATION DES DROITS
DES PATIENTS)

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Connecting Care Act, 2019 with respect to a patient bill of rights / Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2019 pour des soins interconnectés en ce qui concerne la Déclaration des droits des patients.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member for Ottawa South care to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a bill that I introduced in the last session. It amends the Connecting Care Act, 2019, to add a patient bill of rights. The bill of rights sets out a number of rights that persons receiving health care services have, including the right to have an essential caregiver. These rights prevail over provisions of other acts or regulations. Applications may be made to the Superior Court of Justice for a declaration that these rights have been contravened and that the court may make any order that the court considers appropriate to enforce the rights.

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The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Introduction of bills.

Mr. John Fraser: This is not an homage to the former member, Cheri DiNovo, but I do remember her introducing a number of bills at the beginning of each session. I just wanted to mention her because I think that's important, that we continue on with the work that we do.

WSIB COVERAGE FOR WORKERS
IN RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES
AND GROUP HOMES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA PROTECTION
À ACCORDER AUX TRAVAILLEURS
DANS LES ÉTABLISSEMENTS DE SOINS
EN RÉSIDENCE ET LES FOYERS DE GROUPE
PAR LA COMMISSION DE LA SÉCURITÉ
PROFESSIONNELLE ET DE L'ASSURANCE
CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Mr. Fraser moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi

de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

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 member for Ottawa South to briefly explain his bill.

Mr. John Fraser: The Workplace Safety and Insurance Act is amended to provide that an employer who operates a residential care facility or a group home is a schedule 1 employer for the purposes of this act.

PETITIONS

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, allow me to put on my prescription reading glasses. You know where this is going.

"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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

"Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

"Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

"Whereas the government's continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

"To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery."

I fully support this petition and am in full favour of it. I hope the government gets back to the bargaining table. I'm going to sign this and give it to one of the pages to take down to the presiding officers.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION
SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank a constituent, Dennis Kalichuk, who's recently retired and is making Ontario a better place and has organized this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas issues of homelessness, mental health and addiction are not being properly and successfully addressed;

"Whereas our police services are being overburdened, our downtowns are beleaguered, our citizens in need are suffering and not receiving proper care;

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

“That the government of Ontario immediately embark on the restructuring and rebuilding of our mental health and addictions care and treatment facilities and philosophies to one that is public-institution-based, and is proper, pertinent, results-oriented and compassion-fuelled.”

I agree with this petition and I affix my signature to it.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to present this petition on behalf of my constituent Laureen Bellio. It reads as follows:

“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 the government only covers an average of 55% of the cost of an OHIP-insured visit, the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists must absorb the other 45% for the over four million services delivered annually under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I am very pleased to support this petition. I’ll be affixing my signature and tabling it with the Clerks.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: This is 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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit...; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure

any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I agree with this and join the many, many signatures on this petition, will sign it and deliver it to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have this petition. There have been hundreds of petitions sent, if not thousands, and phone calls and emails about this topic. It’s 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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Suze Morrison: I have a petition here that reads:

“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

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

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

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

I fully endorse this petition. I will add my signature to it and provide it to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Sandy Shaw: This is just one of the many, many stacks of petitions I have received in my office. I want to thank the folks at Dundas Optometry Clinic for sending them in. And I want to thank the thousands of people in my riding of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas who have signed this petition and who understand the importance of eye health.

The petition is entitled “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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I wholly support this and the thousands of people who have signed it. I’ll put my name to this and send it to the usher.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Chris Glover: I’m happy to read this petition on behalf of Dr. Abraham Yuen of the Richmond University Vision Care optometrists.

“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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Chris Glover: I’m happy to rise in the House today to read this petition on behalf of Dr. Mario Santos.

“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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I’d like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Sheldon Salaba, my optometrist, who has taken care of my eye health and provided me with what I think are some pretty great glasses. Thank you, Dr. Salaba.

I have a petition here entitled “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 the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.” I want to thank the good people of London West who have signed their names in the thousands on this petition campaign. I also want to recognize Byron Optometry, Westmount Optometrists, Old South Optometry and all the other optometrists who have helped gather these signatures. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Spadina–Fort York has informed me he has a point of order that he would like to raise.

Mr. Chris Glover: I’d like to correct my record in Hansard.

On May 19, 2021, during a debate on the government’s human trafficking legislation, Bill 251, I stated that the language of my motion 131 was a proposed amendment during committee hearings for the bill. I want to correct the record that this motion was not put forward as an amendment in committee. The motion, however, was on the government order paper at the time and I believe the government can and should amend their regulations to allow fraudulent provincial fines and OSAP debts to be forgiven on compassionate grounds for survivors—

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Government notice of motion number 1.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Labour again.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I would like to correct my record: It’s government notice of motion number 2.

Interjection.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: We’ll try this for a third time: government order number 2.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 5, 2021, on the amendment to the motion regarding the reappointment of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Now that we have that cleared up, further debate? I recognize the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I hope my remarks go better than my introduction of what we’re debating here this afternoon.

I want to begin by wishing everyone a happy Thanksgiving. I know this will be an exciting weekend for families across the province, for MPPs and their families. I encourage, of course, everyone to do that safely, but it will be great to be back in our ridings on a long weekend.

Speaker, I’m really excited and proud to rise in the House to debate this, to continue the debate. As we all know, this committee is a key part of ensuring our measures continue to protect the people of Ontario from this deadly virus. We have obviously made great progress as a province, but we can’t let our guard down as we face this global challenge. Too many people have lost loved ones due to this terrible disease. Our hearts go out to all of them.

1330

The importance of the work our government is doing, which this committee supports, should be clear. All of us should be proud of what Ontario has accomplished. We pulled together, as the Premier said many times, in the Ontario spirit. All of us are doing our part to keep each other safe, and because of the progress we’ve made, we’re able to continue to carefully reopen. The work is far from done, but we have laid the foundation. From here, we can work together to build Ontario.

Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the people we—all of us in this chamber—are working for, and that’s all of the people in this province. We can’t thank them enough and we’re so proud of how we’ve come together, as I’ve mentioned. Everyone, for example, who stopped unnecessary travel to make sure they weren’t a link in the spread, everyone who has been wearing a mask, everyone who chooses to be vaccinated: Thank you.

Despite the progress we’ve made, COVID-19 continues to impact the lives of each worker across Ontario, their families, their friends and all of our communities. Every person, across every profession, has felt the pandemic; however, there is one group of workers, I think we all can agree, who have felt COVID-19’s impact harder than

anyone else, and they are Ontario's front-line health care workers. First and foremost, we commend them for their service. To all of them: Know that you have our heartfelt thanks.

Since the pandemic began, thousands of front-line workers in many professions have kept Ontario running. They wake up early every morning and they go to bed late. They roll up their sleeves to get the job done, no matter how tough. These people are our heroes. They don't wear capes, but they're leading the fight against COVID-19. Obviously, we would like to mention all of their names individually in this House, not only some of their professions, but we don't have time for all of that. I do want to call out a number of them. These are our health care workers, grocery store clerks, truck drivers, bus drivers, construction workers, power and water workers, postal and delivery workers, emergency personnel and so many more.

Speaker, we owe those on the front lines our gratitude. Ontario couldn't function without them. We rely on them to help take care of our loved ones when they fall ill, to keep food on store shelves and on our dinner tables, to deliver packages when we need to stay home and to help get us there when we need to go to work, to build roads and hospitals or put roofs over the heads of our families. To moms and dads out there, who put in a hard day's work, our government stands with you and we will always be there to support you.

I just want to mention a few of the ways our government has supported the workers we all owe so much to. The very first measure we passed in response to the pandemic was to establish unlimited unpaid leave. We made sure that a worker who stayed home to self-isolate or to care for a loved one wouldn't lose his or her job. It also applies to people subject to COVID-related travel restrictions or who are following the direction of their employer. We also made sure that no sick note is required. The list of people you can take time off to care for, like the list of reasons you can take it, is expansive. This includes taking leave to care for your spouse, parent, child, grandparent, in-laws, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and anyone you consider to be like a family member. We intentionally designed this leave to ensure there was no question: If you need to stay home, you can do so. I'm proud that this measure received the unanimous support of this House, and that Ontario was the first province in the country to bring in this type of legislation.

Madam Speaker, we've stressed from the beginning of this pandemic that anyone who is sick should stay home from work, but we know that for some people it was hard to heed that advice when a day without pay meant it would be harder to pay their bills. That's why we also passed legislation to provide workers with paid sick days. Not only were we the first to protect those who had to stay home, we were also leaders in protecting their income. Workers now have access to a total of 23 paid sick days—the most generous program in the country—and we're fully reimbursing employers up to \$200 to make sure businesses and jobs are protected.

I'm glad to say that workers are using this program. They're staying home when sick or to get vaccinated. We've seen it used in industries like manufacturing and retail, in areas like the GTA, exactly where it's needed the most. And we've been reimbursing employers, on average, within 14 days. Because we didn't put the burden on employers, we're protecting income now and protecting jobs for the future. We're protecting workers and employers.

My ministry has worked to protect workers every single day across Ontario. Ensuring every worker goes home safely to his or her family at the end of the day is our top priority, before, during and after the pandemic. We doubled the capacity of Ontario's health and safety call centre from 25 phone lines to 50, assigned more than 50 employment standards officers to help businesses know what to do, and deployed 30 health and safety specialists to the field to educate workers. That's why we recently graduated and deployed 100 additional inspectors to support health and safety measures. Ontario now has the most boots on the ground in provincial history.

Our inspectors have now conducted more than 65,000 workplace inspections since March 2020, issued over 80,000 orders, and stopped unsafe work more than 100 times. We've worked with businesses and workers, provided advice and guidance, and conducted inspections and enforcement at thousands of big box stores, construction sites and wherever necessary. As a result of our efforts, we see more people in masks, more screening of workers and customers and more businesses with COVID-19 safety plans in place.

Madam Speaker, I'm also proud to say that our government and our ministry have acted swiftly and undertaken many measures to support workers and employers over the past 18 or 19 months. All of us have been impacted by the pandemic. It's changed the way we live, work and connect with friends and family. But the pandemic has had a particularly serious effect on main street and those who work along main street. Speaker, these local restaurants, shops and merchants are the lifeblood of all of our communities and our local economies. Many of these establishments, unfortunately, had to shut down, lay off workers or cut back hours. They had to rethink quickly how they run their business to comply with COVID safety requirements. We've seen examples of the Ontario spirit in their resilience and resourcefulness.

A vital part of our ministry's mandate is to work with employers and labour to create and maintain safe and fair workplaces. That's why, in fact, I personally have met now with well over 200 labour leaders, hundreds of business owners and countless workers since taking over the responsibility as Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development back in 2019. I continue to hear first-hand that employers are struggling. I've spoken directly, even in my own riding, with many shopkeepers and other employers, and of course from those across the province, and I've heard the innovative, creative things they did to keep valued employees on the payroll during the worst of the pandemic.

Many restaurant owners—and I know we've all heard these stories many times—moved to selling things online, for example. Many others transitioned to curbside pickup to support social distancing measures. Takeout and delivery are simple and convenient options and a great way to support local business. It helped them pull through to a point where in-person dining is finally possible again.

1340

I want to take a moment to acknowledge and thank people across the province for pulling together to support our local businesses. It's making a difference, and it's helping to make our province's recovery move forward. I encourage everyone to continue buying local and shopping in your own communities, in those small businesses. For years, they've been supporting our own communities. They've been there for us, sponsoring our kids' sports teams, our seniors' clubs, our local charities and churches and other places of worship. Today they need our support more than ever, and we owe it to all of them and their teams to be there for them.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to mention as well a few ways that our government has been there for main street, for these small shops in all of our communities. In fact, just yesterday, I was at a great small business in Hamilton, Donut Monster. I want to say thank you to Heidi and her staff of about five or six employees who make the best doughnuts I've ever had in my entire life. I know we brought back dozens of them to the office, and I took a number of doughnuts home so my wife, my daughter and I could enjoy them last night. But just to see how this small business stepped up during, obviously, a truly difficult time for Donut Monster—they brought in health and safety protocols. They are abiding by the proof of vaccination, and it's just great to see that there were so many people locally out supporting them. So to Heidi, to Donut Monster and to everybody there: Thank you for hosting us yesterday.

Madam Speaker, we were there to show our support for small businesses across the province and to talk about how next year, the WSIB is reducing workplace insurance rates by \$168 million—truly great news for those small businesses. This really comes at a great time, after a year and a half of struggling to keep their doors open. This WSIB rate cut means that our local merchants will now have more money to reinvest in health and safety training, create new jobs, pay their workers more and support their neighbours in our communities. At the same time, injured workers will continue to receive the same level of benefits and support, which is vitally important.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that our government, over the last three years, has reduced WSIB premiums by about \$2.4 billion or more, and there will be more reductions in the time ahead. But that's a 50% reduction in WSIB premiums. That is very good news for the workers of this province.

We just have to think back to 10 years ago, when the system, I think we all can admit, was on the brink of bankruptcy. But credit to the WSIB, to those employers,

to those workers and governments for turning the organization around, and the leadership at the WSIB. I want to commend Chair Witmer, the board and the leadership there for making a big difference there, and thank them for their service to Ontario.

Speaker, these rate cuts really do benefit workers. I know of one company that received a rate cut last year. They ended up taking that money and gave a cheque to every single worker for \$600. They returned that money to those front-line workers, to ensure that they could enrol their kids in sports or do a donation to a local charity. But to thank them for having an excellent health and safety record—that is the most important thing, so I want to say to all of those businesses, "Thank you." It's been a challenging couple of years, but we're there to continue to modernize the WSIB and ensure that it's there for workers and businesses for generations to come.

I also want to take a moment to recognize a growing business in my area and across Canada, and that is 3M Canada. As many know—I know there are a couple of colleagues from London who I think will echo my comments—3M is headquartered in London, Ontario, and most recently expanded in Brockville, where it's manufacturing N95 respirators and masks for those who need it the most. I want to say, I think on behalf of all MPPs, congratulations to 3M Canada on their 70th anniversary.

Madam Speaker, we've also worked with businesses on health and safety, so not just on the WSIB changes or providing hundreds of guidance documents to businesses. We've helped them in other ways as well.

I remember back in the early days of this pandemic having debates in this House. There were many on the opposite side who, for example, when the pandemic hit, wanted us to close down construction altogether. I'm proud to say that we took a different approach. We reached out to the largest union leaders in the province and to construction companies, small, medium and large. We brought them all together, and to me, this really demonstrates just how important it is for government, labour and business to work together, because we can say that more than half a million people—I think over 70,000 women, in particular—continued to work in construction during this entire pandemic. And it was because we provided those resources. We worked together to improve health and safety on those job sites, and we need to continue always working together for better health and safety for workers in this province.

When it comes to construction, again to improve health and safety during this pandemic, and in cases of hospitals and assessment centres, we allowed construction to operate 24 hours a day on these projects to make sure we had health care infrastructure when we needed it the most. As well, by extending those hours to 24 hours a day, it allowed those construction trades to stagger their shifts, so we didn't have on some job sites hundreds of people working at the same time. They were able to stagger those shifts, which led to a pretty low case count of COVID in construction.

We provided support for all sectors, more than 200 documents in all. Every business had guidance documents

to follow to implement COVID health and safety protocols in their own individual businesses. We translated into about a dozen additional languages, such as Chinese, Punjabi, Korean and many, many others, which I know was helpful in particular to workers across the province. That made it easier for businesses as well and workers, as I mentioned, whose first language isn't English or French to communicate on how to best protect health and safety.

Recently, we added a new online safety plan builder, just one more way we're supporting employers in keeping their workers and customers safe.

I should mention, because I think this is really, really important and we've learned a lot, quite frankly, because of the pandemic, that when our health and safety inspectors go out to farms, for example, across the province—I'm looking at the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He knows, being in southwestern Ontario, that we have a lot of farms with migrant workers. As everyone knows, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is administered through the federal government, but we ended up working with the Mexican consulate, for example, and provided translators when the Ministry of Labour inspectors went out. Obviously, the sector was hard-hit, especially in the first and second waves, but thankfully we saw a huge improvement. It took time, and unfortunately—I do want to send my condolences—we had a few workers who lost their lives, migrant workers, and certainly our thoughts and prayers have been with them during this time.

Madam Speaker, just back to the online tool: We know that, as of today, there have been hundreds of businesses that have taken advantage of this, so they're building a safety plan for those businesses.

Speaker, it's been great to speak to this motion today. Again, I want to end how I started, by wishing everyone a happy Thanksgiving weekend.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: I'm looking forward to the opportunity to continue to debate this amendment to the motion. I would like to start out as well by wishing everybody in my community of Davenport a happy Thanksgiving weekend. I hope it's a good one with family and friends around you—not too many, everybody double-vaccinated. But we're definitely, I know, all in need of some of that family time, so I'm looking forward to it myself.

1350

I did want to remind folks that what we are actually debating right now is an amendment to this motion. The amendment, as I recall, reads—and it was presented by the member from Ottawa South, adding to the motion that basically brings back this committee on emergency management—“that the Premier commit to attending, at minimum, one select committee meeting and answer questions before the committee before the end of the 2021 calendar year.” You wouldn't know that, based on the debate we just heard, but that is what we're supposed to be discussing here today. I think it's a really important topic, actually, and I certainly support that, because it's a simple request. It's a concern that was raised repeatedly by

official opposition NDP members of the committee, as I understand—and I certainly was there for some of this.

During the committee meetings in the past—the committee itself is supposed to be able to have the Premier or the Premier's designate report. In fact, there has never been an appearance by the Premier. That lack of accountability has been noted by the official opposition, by others who are watching, by Ontarians who really do want to hear from the Premier himself about this government's record in the fight against COVID-19. They expect the Premier to be answerable. They expect the Premier to be present in those committee meetings, as it is outlined in the committee's description. The fact that the Premier has yet to appear before that committee is a glaring issue.

It really is a simple request: that the Premier appear at committee once, at minimum—one meeting; we're talking about a couple of hours at most—to be able to answer questions from the committee members, and that that would happen before the end of this calendar year, so before January 1, 2022.

I've got to say, when I'm talking to my constituents in Davenport, one of the things I hear a lot is, “What is this Premier doing? He doesn't seem to be speaking to us. He doesn't seem to be listening to the people of this province. And he doesn't seem to be showing up.”

So here we are, in these committee meetings—and I really credit all of the committee members who have put in some work in those committees, from all sides, but a simple request to have the Premier attend in person has been ignored.

In fact, it has actually been quite difficult to get the Minister of Health to appear, or the Chief Medical Officer of Health; and when they have, it has been very last-minute, with no notice. That also, to me, speaks to a lack of respect for the process, for the committee members and for the people of Ontario, who we are in that committee to represent.

The questions that we in the official opposition—and I'm sure the members opposite, too—bring forward are the questions of the people of this province. They're the questions, they're the calls we receive. It's really important that we are able to get those answers.

While we certainly appreciate the Solicitor General's presence in those committee meetings, it is not going to always be the right fit. We do need to hear from the Premier.

So I really do support this amendment. I think, at bare minimum, asking the Premier to appear for one meeting seems like a very small request, and I can't understand why the government members opposite would not want to support that.

I do want to use this opportunity, as well, while we're here before this long weekend—and we've only been back a few days. I know many of us in the official opposition would have been quite happy to keep meeting, Madam Speaker, because this government, I'll remind folks, anybody watching, pushed the start of the Legislature coming back to October. So while children in this

province, families in this province were getting back to school, for example, for a month, this government thought, “Let’s extend this time away from the Legislature.” I think that’s unfortunate, because while we were certainly all in our ridings doing the work, there is the importance of having this moment, this transparency, this accountability, these questions being asked, the government being required to try to at least consider answering those questions for the people of this province.

So I want to use this opportunity to ask the government, for our small businesses who have suffered because of insurance gouging, for our public schools, our kids, our exhausted educators—and they are exhausted already. I hear from them in tears. It is exhausting. For everybody, all those front-line workers who actually got sick and many who died during this pandemic, please make sure that the mandate of this committee is vigilant. Make sure it’s not a question of just, “Well, we’re doing better than Saskatchewan, and we’re doing better than Alberta.” I mean, that bar is pretty darn low. We need to do better.

Please ensure there is transparency and accountability. A simple, small step like agreeing to allow the Premier of this province, to request that the Premier appear before this committee, for one meeting, a few hours, would give a lot, I think. It would also, actually, I think, be very helpful in terms of giving Ontarians some sense that their government is being responsive, and also that their government is willing to work with other parties, which it has not been willing to do.

I’ve actually had a long career even out of this place—not elected, albeit. I remember a time when parties worked together in committees in a much more effective way, when legislation was really debated. And I actually want to thank the member for Ottawa South for bringing forward an amendment on this floor. We don’t see that very often. I think it’s a really important opportunity for Ontarians to hear us debate actual amendments, instead of having them come before a committee—which may or may not, by the way, be broadcast anywhere. Some of these meetings are not happening. Nobody can watch them at all. It’s outrageous.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: They are.

Ms. Marit Stiles: No, they’re not actually, because I sit on the government agencies committee—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Madam Speaker, I apologize; I don’t like to cross-talk there. But I did hear one of the opposite government members mention that all the committees are actually broadcast. It’s not actually correct, if I may.

In fact, the committee that I sit on, government agencies, was not being broadcast anywhere and was not available on the web, and there was no way to call in. So it was not, in fact. Nobody was able to watch that review—a very important process of the review by government and opposition members of public appointees by this government. So, in fact, there was no transparency there.

We’ve repeatedly asked for that to be addressed, but that’s besides the point.

I think, getting back to the conversation about this pandemic and everything that people have been through, that is the one thing that I certainly hear from people in my community: “I wish the government would just allow everybody to work together, because we need everyone’s voices at the table in this moment.” It’s critical. I think that those doors have been too often closed, and the work of committees, unfortunately, becomes quite politicized, when it should really be the one opportunity we have, my goodness, to roll up our sleeves and get some good work done. So I, again, want to please ask the government to reconsider supporting this amendment. It is absolutely essential.

Again, one more point I wanted to raise, while I have the opportunity: We’re thinking a lot this week about some of the announcements this government has made around long-term care. But we’re still seeing—and this is a good example of where we would like to be able to talk to the Premier. We would like to be able to call the Minister of Health and have the Minister of Health appear and give notice—appear and actually stay for a while—and the Chief Medical Officer of Health, so we can actually ask some important questions on behalf of our community members.

One of my constituents, Mary Oko, is the daughter of a resident of Copernicus Lodge. That nursing home, we found out this week, is going to see a 36% reduction in staff.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Wow.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, because of the low vaccination rates. Just to give you a better sense of what that looks like, that’s 84 of 343 staff. This was already a crisis, but this is a new kind of crisis now emerging. We know that the previous Liberal government dropped the ball in a big way on long-term care. We know, actually, that subsequent governments have really not stepped up. But I think that what we’re seeing in terms of the measures that have been announced so far and how long it’s taken and the inadequacy of that is that we’re still seeing that we’re not moving toward that necessary four hours of care, we’re not moving toward the kind of fair treatment, full-time hours and good, decent wages or be on a decent workday for the workers in those facilities at the rate that we need to be.

1400

I think when you look at what’s happening at Copernicus Lodge, it gives you a pretty good sense of where things may be headed. I want to thank Mary and all of the other family members there on the family council who have worked so hard throughout this crisis to get some attention for the families there at the residence.

We also saw today a CBC story revealing what I think many of us had heard from workers previously, which is field visits by phone, locked-up PPE—all of these issues were flagged by nursing home staff in that first wave. I think when you have nursing home staff already at the breaking point—exhausted, feeling underappreciated, sick, afraid—it’s not surprising that we’re seeing people

leave, in any case, and that we're also seeing this resistance and hesitancy out there. I think the government is not doing their job if we do have that hesitancy, if I may say, because that just simply should not be the case. We shouldn't be in a position where we're losing 84 of 343 staff in a nursing home. It's absolutely unacceptable.

These issues, the concerns that nursing home staff were raising in the middle of a crisis; the measures that have been put in place too late and not enough in our schools, in our hospitals, in our communities; the supports for small businesses who are struggling—many of you here come to Toronto to sit in this beautiful place, and you probably once in a while take a little drive or maybe a walk down to College Street West or Little Portugal or Dundas West, up to Little Italy and St. Clair West—this is my community, and storefront after storefront after storefront is closed. They are empty. The streets are empty, and they're not empty because people aren't wanting to get out now and don't have the freedom to do so; it's because those small businesses are gone and there's nobody moving back, because the rent in those buildings is so high, because insurance gouged them. They just can't make it work, and too often the government supports have not come in time, if at all, despite us in the opposition raising their concerns over and over and over again.

So, Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of issues that we're hearing about in our community. I know members opposite hear about it from their communities. Again, what we are debating here in this moment right now is an amendment to a motion that would just simply say that if we're going to bring back this committee—and I want to just reiterate, in case anybody who is watching doesn't know what we're talking about, we are debating a government motion to revive the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. Basically, because the government prorogued, we have to have this conversation again. But here's an opportunity to do it better, and one of the things we could do is amend this motion to ensure that the Premier actually has to appear just once, just one time, before the end of this calendar year, before January 1, 2022. It seems like not too much for the people of this province to ask of their government, so I do hope the members opposite will consider supporting this amendment. I am happy to.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today. The member from Davenport raised some important issues related to long-term care. I'll speak to that a little bit later. Suffice to say at this point, on that topic—and I will come back to it, though—while the opposition supported the previous government in building 611 net new beds in places like her community in Davenport, the city of Toronto, where her riding of Davenport is, got 60 of those beds. We have over 3,100 new beds currently under development in Toronto and 1,800 new beds being built in the city of Toronto. So I beg

the member to at least speak to her colleagues who were in the Legislature at that time on why that wasn't a priority when they were propping up the previous Liberal government.

But, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity today is to speak about this very important extension of the vital work of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight, and our government's plan to ensure that every Ontarian is protected from COVID-19 and properly supported as our province gradually and safely returns to normal.

Now, as we all know, in many ways, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the ways that Ontarians think about and interact with their government. When the global pandemic made its way to Ontario, as it did around the world, our government was quick to act and to enact crucial public health measures in order to contain the spread of the virus.

Many of us will remember March 17, 2020, which was the day the government declared a state of emergency here in Ontario. The emergency measures included closing non-essential businesses, limited gathering sizes, while ensuring essential services continued to be available for individuals and families throughout the province.

These early measures and that rapid action were critical to minimizing community spread and protecting the people of Ontario, and there were many, many people who worked very, very hard in that regard, and it would be worth recognizing the leadership of the Premier and Minister of Health, of course, the chief medical officer at the time, Dr. David Williams—and I think, in that context, recognizing as well our current chief medical officer, Dr. Kieran Moore, and Dr. Barbara Yaffe, the associate chief medical officer.

These were difficult times, but all of us through all of our ridings know that, more than any individuals, it was the front-line workers who, without real clarity on where this pandemic was going to take us, because all of us were learning at that time, stepped up and took on the very, very difficult jobs of keeping our province and keeping our communities going.

Of course, among those, I would have to start with the very valiant and important and heroic work of our long-term-care workers, PSWs and nurses for certain, but also the people who did the maintenance, the people who did the cooking, the people who ran and supported them through the very difficult times, particularly in the first and second wave, across the broader health sector. Again, of course, we think of nurses and doctors and the medical staff, but we also have to think of the many support staff and the administrative staff who supported our broader health sector, not just our acute care facilities but, of course, our public health officials.

Our public health officials and our medical officers have become, again, among those heroes who had to make difficult decisions and focus on their communities and did so well.

Those who work in the grocery stores and retail establishments, restaurants and banquet halls, on farms and in manufacturing facilities, driving cargo trucks and passenger buses—and it would be worth noting, and the Minister

of Labour, Training, and Skills Development spoke before me, the really important work that continued on construction sites. I think, Madam Speaker, that the importance of that work is something that, when people look back at this period of history, they will appreciate the importance of the work that continued ongoing throughout the pandemic from a construction perspective.

I know in my own community of Ajax, we will soon be opening a new million-square-foot distribution facility—a million square feet. I don't know if you folks have seen what a million square feet looks like, but when you're standing on the roof, you quite literally could land a plane on that roof, and that's going to be 1,000 good-paying jobs in my community, which I'm very appreciative of, but that is there because of the efforts that were taken safely by the construction teams, in that case by hundreds and hundreds of construction workers, and by the Ministry of Labour to ensure their safety, to keep that construction going.

Across the province, Madam Speaker, hard-working Ontarians kept the province going through what has been the most difficult period in our modern history.

Now, as our understanding of COVID-19 developed, the approach to emergency management developed and evolved. We followed the science. We've listened to the doctors, and we continuously updated our approach to public health to meet the needs of Ontario families. The rapid developments were accompanied by regular briefings by Premier Ford, by cabinet colleagues, by our medical officials to keep Ontarians up to date for this once-in-a-century pandemic.

1410

The people of Ontario have demonstrated true solidarity—the Premier has called it a “Team Ontario mentality”—and commitment to the public good, and I'm sure that every member of this House can point to examples in their communities, in their own ridings. I'm sure, Madam Speaker, we would share many of them, as we are neighbours in the Durham region—individuals and families who took on this opportunity to really make a difference in their communities.

I'd like to talk about a couple of those in my community. One was a dear friend of mine, an Ajax business owner, Jim VanDusen. He owns one of the local car dealerships. He started a community sign program where he funded signs supporting our front-line health care heroes. He's also on the board of our local Ajax Pickering Hospital, and we spent many hours collectively driving around to celebrate our health care heroes and honking our horns in celebration of the work that was being done by those in our community.

We have over 30 churches, mosques and temples that also rose to the task of supporting communities, and I know this happened across the province. I remember this summer being very pleased to visit with my friend Pastor Marie Miller at our local Pentecostal church for an appropriately socially distanced drive-through graduation. Those of you who have been to Pentecostal services will know that they can be pretty rousing, and if you add the sound of car horns to that, it can be quite something.

None of us who were there will forget this very memorable speech. We were honouring new graduates, and Charlene, a young woman—I should say a younger woman, certainly younger than I am—had talked about her 10-year program, her 10-year trial to graduate with a master's in clinical social work, something we desperately need now as we deal with the mental health crisis. She had all of us in tears as she talked about her journey and the intersection of that journey.

I remember one of the other graduates standing up—I thought this was kind of appropriate. She said, “You know, our parents”—by which she would be referring to people closer to my age than, perhaps, say, the Minister of the Environment's age. But she said, “Our parents will talk about how tough it was, how they had to walk to school back and forth uphill both ways when they were growing up, and they have all these stories about it, but they'll never be able to say, ‘Hey, we went to school and graduated during a global pandemic.’” These were truly inspiring speakers.

During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, my friend Councillor Ashmeed Khan and I supported the Masjid Quba mosque food drive, which distributed non-perishable items. They were partnering with many of the churches in Ajax to make sure that we took care of the people in the Ajax community.

Another one of my constituents, Frank Kakouros, is the owner of the legendary Petrina's billiards hall. If any of you come to Ajax, I'd be happy to take you for a bit of billiards there. You should leave your wallet at home because Frank is pretty good at the table. But his business as a billiards hall was shut down during the pandemic. He turned his Facebook account, his popular account, into a social meeting place where not just people who love billiards but people who love Frank and love Frank's sense of humour joined him, to be there, to meet, and then turned that into a hub when it came time to encourage people to become vaccinated. It was very important to our community.

During the early stages of the pandemic, when the supplies of personal protective equipment and sanitizer were limited, another Ajax resident and dear friend of mine, Gagan Singh, mobilized thousands and thousands of masks and bottles of sanitizer to be used across Ajax and across Durham. His work and dedication were incredible.

As I mentioned, the construction crews—I talked about the work they've done on this very important distribution centre, but the work they did on two of our local long-term-care homes, Ballycliffe long-term care and the Ajax-Pickering long-term-care home, which will be opening come April—a construction-to-opening period of less than 18 months as a result of the investments of this government and also the great work of those construction crews to make sure the work got done.

There are countless stories, and I know there are countless stories from across the province and indeed across the country, about the great work and the focus of our communities. As members of this House, I know we always take the opportunity to thank our constituents for

the work they do in supporting our communities, both paid work and otherwise.

Now, our government did act quickly, as I mentioned, over the past year, providing supports for businesses, ensuring availability of COVID testing, overseeing the distribution and administration of vaccines in partnership with federal and local governments, and giving our health care system and public health units the tools that they needed to keep our communities safe. The reopening Ontario act provided the government with the framework and the mechanisms that were required to respond to COVID-19 from the earlier waves to now in the fourth wave.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the current motion. I'm sure people have been wondering when I would get to the current motion, namely the continuance of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

To begin, I think it's important to thank the committee Chair, the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington, and the Vice-Chair, the member from Humber River–Black Creek, and the other members of the select committee for the work that they have done. As has been noted, it's been very important.

As we enter this new parliamentary session, I think it is important that this Legislature remain laser-focused on the important issues that relate to the pandemic and that also means, included with our firm commitment to health and safety as we gradually return to normal life, the oversight of what the government is doing. Working to achieve these goals over the past year was, in part, effected through the regulations of the reopening Ontario act, which was enacted pursuant to the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, and is an important continuation and allows the government to continue to rapidly respond to the public health situation.

Just a couple of the tools that have been discussed at the committee and enacted by the government include limiting sizes of gatherings and capacity limits; placing necessary restrictions on higher-risk commercial settings; providing increased staffing stability to residents in long-term care; and ensuring necessary financial relief for families, for individuals and for businesses across the province.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018, the people of Ontario made a clear choice, after years of mismanagement at Queen's Park, that our government was elected to bring accountability and good governance back to the province. Even during the early waves of the pandemic, where fast action was crucial to stop the spread, support families and businesses and get vaccines out, no decisions were made lightly. Emergency orders issued, amended or extended during the pandemic have always been made with careful consideration, informed by public health guidance, the latest science and, of course, the needs of our constituents.

In the summer of 2020, the government House leader moved to establish this committee in order to provide oversight of the government's management of the pandemic, and, Mr. Speaker, as I said, effective oversight is important.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Madam Speaker; thank you. Sorry.

Despite being the most populous province, Ontario's per capita COVID-19 case count is, as has been mentioned, among the lowest in Canada. I'm proud to say—and I know we all are proud collectively of our constituents—that more than 80% of Ontarians over the age of 12 are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, and over 86% have received at least one dose so far.

As this House resumes and continues its work, serving the people of Ajax, our government remains steadfast, resolved in its commitment to get us through this difficult time. This effort has, from the beginning, been a team sport, involving all levels of government and, in fact, involving in many cases members working across the aisle to do what was best for Ontarians. This team-sport mentality applies within the provincial Legislature as well, which brings me to the work that the committee is doing at this time.

Mr. Speaker, the select committee boasts membership from both sides of the aisle—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Madam.

Hon. Rod Phillips: Madam Speaker. I'll have to do a fine correct next time on my speech. I apologize, Madam Speaker—bringing valuable perspective and helping ensure that our government's emergency measures are sound. I appreciate the oversight of the select committee and firmly support its mission.

Now is not the time to take our hand off the tiller, even in terms of the decisions that need to be made by government or in terms of the important oversight that this committee provides. Thanks to sound management, the best public health advice and latest science, and the dedication of our front-line workers, Ontario is well positioned, although continues to be cautious, on the path to recovery from the worst of COVID-19.

While restrictions have eased significantly over the course of the past year, we all know that we must remain vigilant, and I know that many of the inquiries and suggestions that come from across the Legislature are in that spirit of remaining vigilant. Our government must remain nimble and responsive to respond to changes in the public health context, both those that are originating here and what we're learning from other jurisdictions around the world. That is why, Madam Speaker, the work of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight must be permitted to continue.

Since the House rose in June of this year, its members have had the opportunity to return to their ridings, and I'm sure all of you, as I did, heard from your constituents about their concerns. I'll tell you a little about what I'm hearing in Ajax.

In my riding, 75% of the businesses are reporting losses as a result of the pandemic. According to the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, 55% of business owners, despite that challenge, believe that the worst is behind us.

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One particular example from a few weeks ago—it's one of the places I would love to take any of the members of

the Legislature, were you to come to visit me in Ajax—is Beryl’s Pepper Pot. Madam Speaker, you may have been to Beryl’s Pepper Pot. Beryl’s Pepper Pot is a fabulous Jamaican take-away restaurant. It’s run by, not surprisingly, a woman named Beryl. Beryl talks very eloquently about the challenges that she and her business have faced. Beryl talks about the challenges with getting and retaining staff, something that I know we’ve all heard about throughout the pandemic. Beryl talks about getting the supplies that she needs, the very unique blend of Jamaican spices, which are very tasty—a little rough on my stomach, but very popular, as witnessed by the large crowds of people who line up regularly outside of Beryl’s. This is a family business. Beryl’s own daughter, a chartered accountant who works at a local firm, comes in 20 hours a week to help out, to support the business and, frankly, to support the community.

It’s the continued existence of businesses like Beryl’s and the heroism of people like Beryl and all of her front-line employees that have gotten us through this challenge.

The reason I raise Beryl is because Beryl was, first of all, very appreciative—and I have to be fair—not just of the support provided by this Legislature and this government, although that was certainly helpful, but also of the support provided by local government and by the federal government. Again, it’s that team spirit of people working together.

Beryl is now thinking about opening another Beryl’s Pepper Pot. So Madam Speaker, if you’ll forgive me for my misstatements of your gender, I will suggest to her that she try Oshawa as that location, because there’s lots of good food down the road in Oshawa, but everybody could use a Beryl’s Pepper Pot nearby.

Hon. Stan Cho: Willowdale.

Hon. Rod Phillips: And Willowdale could be next.

These business owners like Beryl—and it’s one of the real privileges of this job that we all get the opportunity to meet these fabulous, larger-than-life personalities in our ridings—need us to maintain the nimble approach, to make the important decisions that are being made by this government. Families need us to remain flexible and make sure that we are providing the support that’s necessary but also charting the very important path out of this once-in-a-hundred-years pandemic. Our communities, our local governments—all of them need the continued agility that this government has shown so that we can make sure that Ontario emerges from this pandemic stronger than ever, as the Premier has said. In that light, the work of the committee remains essential. It is important in a democratic society.

We have certainly seen stresses and strains on our democracy through this, but I think we all can be quite proud, particularly when we look to other nearby jurisdictions, of how Ontarians and Canadians have responded in this challenging time. But it is not a time to reduce our vigilance. It is not a time for governments to be timid about doing what needs to be done, and it’s not a time for this Legislature to relax its oversight—and to ensure that we continue to make sure that the dollars that are spent, which

are still very dear, are spent wisely, but also that the actions that are taken make sense.

It’s incumbent upon all of us, as members of the Legislature, to maintain that momentum that Beryl talked to me about, that momentum that we’re hearing about in our communities, and help the province through to the end of the pandemic, to make sure that we are vigilant about what government is doing but that we are also mindful of the needs and the hurt that is in our communities.

That’s why I’m proud to fully support the extension of this motion of the select committee on emergency management oversight, so that our government can continue to protect and support the people of this great province and the Legislature can continue to have the appropriate oversight of that work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will perhaps helpfully remind all members that the term “Speaker” doesn’t need a gendered term; it can just be “Speaker.” So mister or madam—although being called “mister,” I’ve been called worse probably in this room—or just “Speaker” will suffice regardless of who’s in the chair.

We will continue with debate. Further debate?

Mr. Lorne Coe: We’re now getting close to an hour in debate on the government motion number 2 amendment to the motion to re-establishing a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. I’m very honoured to be able to participate in the debate this afternoon.

I think it’s important to talk a little bit about what the motion does. This motion reflects our government’s commitment to ensuring that the important work—and it is important work—that the select committee carried out for the last year can continue with the continued objective of keeping Ontarians safe, informed and engaged. We all aspire for those three key aspects.

As members may know, the proroguing of the House last month dissolved the previous select committee established last July. In order for the important work of the select committee to continue, it needs to be re-formed, and we’re taking the first possible opportunity to move ahead, so now the motion before us is similar to what members debated last July. In this same spirit of transparency and accountability to the constituents that we have the privilege of serving, it would, if adopted, establish an all-party select committee to receive oral reports from the Premier or his designate on the orders made under the reopening Ontario act that have been extended or amended.

The select committee, Speaker, was established because it was another opportunity for us to demonstrate how important it was that despite the fact that we were bringing forward an act, which was the reopening Ontario act, we were exiting the state of emergency. That’s an important distinction to stay with. I think it was very important that we did exit the state of emergency, but what’s clear, however, is that some rules had to be left in place so that we could continue to fight the pandemic. I think we all know that we’re still in the midst of difficult challenges with respect to COVID-19 across the province.

We've never faced a crisis like this—we never have—an economic and health care crisis. We saw and continue to see communities not unlike mine in Whitby and some of the adjoining communities in the region of Durham impacted dramatically. Now, we've all had those impacts in our communities, but ultimately, the select committee was established to ensure that there was an accountability measure over the actions that were taken by the government, the authority that was given to the government by all parliamentarians through the reopening Ontario act.

The member for Ottawa South's amendment itself: It has not been a practice of this government for the Premier to oversee and tell committees how they should be doing their business, and many of you who have been here for some time know that. You know that from your own experience. The way the committee is set up right now, it doesn't restrict the Premier to having one visit in front of the committee; in fact, the Premier can come as often as he likes. That's right there in the terms of reference for it.

The interesting thing about all this, Speaker, is that the members opposite stood in this place and were critical that the Premier would go to the people every single day to give them updates on what was happening across the province in terms of our fight against COVID-19. You will recall, Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Scarborough–Guildwood said, "We have to stop this campaign. All the Premier is doing is campaigning when he goes out in front of the people every day at 1 o'clock." Well, Speaker, this Legislature continues to sit because the Premier specifically said the Legislature has to continue to sit. There has to continue to be opposition accountability for the things the government is doing to battle COVID-19. I know, Speaker, you agree with that premise and practice.

The Ontario Legislative Assembly continues to sit, it continues to have oversight and it continues to have question periods. The Premier, the Minister of Health and other ministers who are out there fighting the pandemic are out giving daily updates to the people of the province of Ontario. The Chief Medical Officer of Health joins the Premier as often as is needed, and he has his own briefings, as he did today. It's noteworthy, Speaker, that the Solicitor General has made herself available to the committee at almost every single committee meeting. It is truly a testament to how important it is that we ensure that there's accountability for the measures taken under the reopening Ontario act.

Speaker, we would prefer not to have a reopening Ontario act. We would have preferred to have not been in a state of emergency. These aren't things that this Parliament takes lightly, nor should it. These aren't measures that we wanted to enact, but they are measures that we had to enact, because we're facing a global pandemic the likes of which we haven't seen before. We took those measures often unanimously—again, a point I think we need to speak of because of its application—because we wanted to make sure that the people of the province were safe and secure. In order to do that, I think members will agree that there had to be oversight, so we brought the select

committee forward. We made it accountable to Parliament. A number of their reports were actually tabled this week, Speaker.

We brought in a new measure, the take-note debate, which could be brought forward for further debate, which we have used often. We brought in another mechanism with which members could divide on a committee report and force a debate. On any one of those reports brought to the House this week, the members could have divided and forced a debate—on any one of those reports. That is a standing order change we brought forward as a government, because we understood that in a Parliament like this, there are independents. You would appreciate, Speaker, that they don't always get to sit on every committee, because they are independent. They don't get to sit, and we recognize the fact that they shouldn't be shut out of debate on important issues. That type of procedure, when a report is tabled in the House, gives even independents the opportunity to debate and talk about something that took place at a committee that they would not have otherwise had the opportunity to do. But, Speaker, it also extended that to any member of the House to do that.

On every level, we have made significant changes to ensure that this place is more accountable to the people of this province, that members on all sides of the House have every opportunity to represent the people of their community. The select committee was another example of that. There's a dual Chair, whereby the Chair of the justice committee also serves as the Chair of the select committee on oversight. That was done to reflect just how important this committee is.

The way the rules stand, Speaker, the Premier can attend in front of the committee as often as he likes. The committee can request that he be there. Members have done a very good job at committee of holding the ministers who are making decisions accountable through this process, and that's reflected in the reports that were tabled earlier this week.

This is a very unique select committee, one that we will have the opportunity to reflect upon after the pandemic. We will see if this type of select committee can be used for other matters and other issues that become important for a time.

As it regards the pandemic, the throne speech made it abundantly clear that Ontario is taking a very cautious but optimistic approach. It's good news that daily case levels remain low, but that is not reason, Speaker, for us to declare victory and to dispense with caution. That's why we want to bring this select committee back as soon as possible, because we know that we need to have measures in place. We know that the reopening Ontario act will still be in place for some time.

Our government has worked closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and experts throughout the global pandemic, seeking their advice before we're making decisions. This week, we brought in some new rules with respect to rapid testing in high-risk areas by utilizing the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and local regional medical officers of health like Dr. Robert Kyle, who is the chief medical officer of health for

the region of Durham, the largest region geographically in the province of Ontario.

We're fortunate, Speaker, to see low daily case numbers right now, but we know that could change at any moment. We're starting to see signs that the economy can come back, and that's why it's so important that we continue our fight against COVID-19, why vaccine certificates have been effected, and why we must continue to encourage everyone who is able to get vaccinated to do so. As it currently stands, over 86% of eligible Ontarians have received at least one COVID vaccine dose. Over 81% of eligible Ontarians are fully vaccinated. Ontario is a leading jurisdiction in this regard, and it is thanks not only to the people of Ontario, but also to the countless front-line health care workers who have made this level of vaccination possible.

We know that the best way to put this pandemic behind us is to get vaccinated, and we're seeing these results. But make no mistake: This province was brought to its knees by COVID. As a direct result of underfunding by previous governments, 800 people in the ICUs forced the government of Ontario to put in the most restrictive measures against COVID-19 in North America and have them in place longer than any other jurisdiction. The lack of investments, predominantly by the previous Liberal government for over 15 years, to increase ICU capacity, to increase health care capacity, forced us into a situation where we had to enact stringent public health measures.

Speaker, you will know that Ontario is an economic giant of North America, and it was forced into prolonged lockdowns because of the inability of the previous government to make the right decisions in terms of ICU capacity and in terms of health care capacity in this province. To make matters worse, the previous government, often supported by the opposition, made almost no substantial investments in long-term care. Our government is tackling long-term care to make sure that it's better for the people of this province of Ontario. The Minister of Long-Term Care in his presentation cited several examples that are taking place across the province of Ontario, including in my riding in Whitby, where we recently opened a brand new long-term-care facility operated by Durham Christian Homes: 169 new beds for the town of Whitby, and in fact, the region of Durham.

I was pleased—

Interjections.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Well, thank you for that, because it's just one example of what this government has accomplished in long-term care after so many years of neglect of that sector.

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Speaker, I was pleased to join the Minister of Long-Term Care and the Minister of Finance in Ajax towards the end of August to celebrate—and it was time to celebrate—a new long-term-care home being built at Lakeridge Health Ajax Pickering Hospital. It's great news for the residents and families of Durham region, and it reflects the strength of our ongoing commitment to get long-term care right.

Now, Speaker, if we're to pay for these investments, we have to have a strong and vibrant economy. That's why we brought in vaccine certificates, to ensure we can keep our businesses open and that we don't find ourselves in lockdowns in the future. That's why we're constantly encouraging people to go out and get vaccinated. That's why we're bringing vaccines to more places in the province of Ontario: using a GO bus, for example, to get to communities like Ajax and Pickering and Oshawa and other communities that we've not been in before—and we're doing that in collaboration with local public health units like mine, led by Dr. Robert Kyle and his great staff who have done so much to support residents in our community. There are other examples where public health and medical officers of health have done exactly that, lifting people up, making a difference and ensuring that they protect their families.

My riding of Whitby is home to so many great small and medium businesses, staffed by hard-working men and women. I support vaccine certificates because I don't want to see our province enter a future shutdown, and they don't either.

But the job of this Legislature is still not done. As long as there's an act in place through the reopening Ontario act that puts in place restrictions against some of the rights of the people of the province of Ontario, there has to be effective oversight; absolutely, there has to be.

I see I've got about two minutes left, so I'm going to wrap up now, Speaker, in appreciation for others who are going to speak after me. While we didn't have to bring in that oversight that I've referred to, the Premier absolutely insisted and our government agreed; in fact, this Parliament agreed. I think it's absolutely clear that it's time to get this committee up and running as soon as possible.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity this afternoon.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I'm delighted to participate in today's debate on the amendment to the motion to re-establish the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. As the parliamentary assistant to our hard-working Solicitor General, I'd like to begin by first taking a moment to acknowledge that I am a proud member of this government. The Premier and this government have always and will always put the people of Ontario first and foremost.

This global pandemic that we have endured and continue to live through has caused the entire world to navigate uncertainty as if walking through a thick fog. It's hard to know which direction to take, but this Premier and this government have taken a thoughtful and measured approach to supporting Ontarians to get through this global emergency so that we can return to as normal as possible.

Though so much has improved—schools have reopened, and you see the smiles on children's faces that they get to be back with their friends. People are returning to their offices, they're leaving their homes and enjoying

the company of colleagues. Fans are able to attend Leafs and Raptors games. Now, that's because I'm from Toronto, so I have to cheer on my local teams. And this is good, and we have certainly acquired a new appreciation for gathering, for being together.

We can all recall the Olympics in Tokyo this past summer, in stadiums equipped for tens of thousands of people—no one could be there. But here in Ontario, with thoughtful care and measure, we can now be at a game, and over time, stands will be full, to cheer on our teams in common cause in real time and in person, and not confined to our couches or exclusively by Zoom.

But we cannot become complacent. We must continue to protect all of our people and preserve the progress that we have made together. We must see this through to the end, and the end is in sight. Vaccination has seen great progress, with 81% fully vaccinated and 86% with their first shot. We have made outstanding progress, but there is still more we can do to encourage everyone to get their friends and their families vaccinated. This is a collective effort, and we must all rely on each other to see this through to the end.

These lessons are not new, and our greatest generation showed us how it was done during World War II—that get-on-with-the-job, can-do attitude that achieved so much and catapulted the Western world to decades of prosperity. Well, in this province, we will do that again. Ontario has always been and will continue to be Canada's engine. We learn this from our greatest generation, the generation that built such strong foundations that we in Ontario are privileged to walk and build upon today.

And speaking of our greatest generation, I also want to take a moment to thank the minister and the previous Minister of Long-Term Care for the incredible work that has been done to ensure that our seniors, those who have given us so much, will live their golden years in dignity, in the safety and security that they so richly deserve for all that they have given and contributed to me, to you, to all of us. Thank you to our ministers for their work on behalf of our seniors and your mission to raise the standard of all Ontario's neglected long-term-care homes. Thank you for providing such needed funding.

I know the minister was here earlier speaking, and my previous colleague just spoke. I just want to share what's happening in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. We are going to be blessed with 256 new long-term beds for my community. We are so pleased. We are going to be getting additional funding, like many ridings across this province: funding for staffing at Lakeshore Lodge, McCall Centre, Garden Court and the Lithuanian lodge. This is money to help with staffing to ensure that our seniors have the care they deserve.

I am so proud of this government, and I am also proud to be a member of the standing committee, to be part of the great work that has been done in helping guide Ontario through this unprecedented global pandemic. The reopening Ontario act is a critical tool. Any plan must have elements inherent in it. It must first be flexible, and this period in our history—all members, I am sure, will

agree—has been largely unpredictable, and decisions have been made based on the best information available at any given time. But that has often changed quickly, and the plans have to be flexible to adapt to a changing environment and circumstances. The reopening Ontario act has this capability. That was demonstrated in Ontario's reopening and the strengthening of public health measures as it became necessary to do so.

Last July, when the original legislation was debated, clear differences from the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act were noted. It was limiting, and their orders could not be introduced beyond what was already in place on July 24, 2020. It was limiting because orders could not be easily amended. This limitation meant that the space for the government to manoeuvre during this global pandemic became very narrow.

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The limitations meant that amendments to orders could only be made for a very narrow and targeted set of agreed-upon reasons, including:

- requiring people to act in compliance with advice, recommendations or instructions issued by public health officials, such as the Chief Medical Officer of Health;

- providing for rules or practices that relate to workplaces or the management of workplaces, such as in cases of redeployment of staff;

- closing or regulating places like businesses, offices, schools, hospitals or other establishments or institutions; and

- prohibiting or regulating gatherings or organized public events.

The reopening Ontario act has provided the province with the flexibility and the space to manoeuvre to effectively respond to provide support to an ever-changing environment, whether that was cautiously reopening Ontario when appropriate or strengthening public health measures when necessary. As a result of Ontario's cautious approach, the province's public health and health care indicators remain stable and show improvement.

We have maintained effective public health measures like indoor masking while implementing vaccine policies to protect our most vulnerable in retirement homes, hospitals, home and community care, schools and post-secondary institutions, among others, and it is working. This approach required that some of the highest vaccine thresholds for easing restrictions were necessary. The proof of this is, just a week ago at the end of September, Ontario had a COVID-19 case rate of 38 cases per 100,000 people. This is one of the lowest rates of active cases in the country and well below the national average. Speaker, these past 18 months have been most difficult for all of us, but thanks to the efforts put forth by every single Ontarian, we have achieved this.

We know people have gone above and beyond to support each other during this time. Last weekend, I was at our tree festival in my riding, and people came up to me to say that they were just happy to be out, that they are happy with the progress Ontario has made when they look at what happened in other provinces and all around the

world. Despite the rain that day, the local band continued to play on—which is great, to see people out supporting one another with a positive attitude and a smile on their face. I spoke to many children that day who were excited to be back in school and certainly want to continue to be in school. That’s why we want to encourage people to get vaccinated: so we can protect those who cannot.

Other ways people are helping in their community are through donations. In my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, we have the Daily Bread Food Bank. This weekend, they have a goal to find 284,000 pounds of non-perishable food. So we’ll be out there on Saturday collecting food at the Daily Bread Food Bank to help their cause and to help those who are in need.

Throughout COVID, neighbours helped other neighbours. I have a lot of people who live in apartments and condos. People went to check on their neighbours, knocked on the door to see if they’re okay, to see if they needed a ride to get a vaccine. They created Facebook groups to help, just because of loneliness—it’s been tough through COVID.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention that this week is our mental health awareness week. Remember, everybody, to please check on a friend or loved one. Please practise self-care, mindfulness, and go ask for support if you need it.

This weekend, we also remember: What did we do last year on Thanksgiving? A lot of us weren’t able to gather. It was just the two of us, my husband and I, last year, alone. Our kids were at home with their mom and my in-laws were at home in Sudbury alone. My mom was able to gather with my sister and my nephew, but we weren’t able to gather together. Let’s feel blessed this year that we can gather once again with our friends and family. But when people do gather, please be safe and keep your groups small.

Speaker, let’s talk about vaccinations, because vaccinations have remained our best defence against becoming seriously ill from COVID-19. Ontario and Canada continue to lead the world in terms of vaccination uptake, with over 86% of those eligible to be vaccinated having received at least their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine. The evidence is clear that vaccinations work. The Delta variant is at its greatest risk now and the most dominant strain. Unvaccinated people are at the greatest risk and must be vaccinated for the sake of their health and their families they come in contact with.

In my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, the community has been working together to ensure that those who have yet to be vaccinated have the tools and the resources they need to do so.

Earlier today, Mayor Tory mentioned that this weekend they’re going to have a VaxGiving and there will be 16 sites across the city of Toronto where people can go to get vaccinated. Let’s get one person vaccinated—and that’s one less person in the ICU and one less death.

Speaker, Ontario’s cautious and prudent reopening plan has been made possible thanks to the orders found under the reopening Ontario act.

It is vitally important that all of us in this House have a keen and thorough understanding of government decision-making, especially when it comes to COVID-19 or indeed any future emergency.

When the reopening Ontario act was passed this past July, it included with it a number of important measures that were to ensure accountability and transparency. Included were regular reporting to the public regarding orders that were amended or extended; a report to the Legislature following the first year of the act’s in-force date; a sunset clause on the legislation, subject to renewals by this Legislature; and regular reporting to a committee of the Legislature regarding the orders extended or amended in the preceding 30 days.

This brings us to the motion before us regarding the amendment to the re-establishment of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. As a member of that committee, I would like to point out the important work that the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight conducts on a regular basis.

As members know, the reopening Ontario act requires that at least every 30 days, the Premier or a minister whom the Premier delegates is responsible to or shall appear before and report to a committee designated by the assembly concerning orders that were extended during the reporting period and the rationale for those extensions.

As a member of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight since its inception, I want to share my experiences. I have been lucky to be joined by our distinguished Chair, the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington, as well as my fellow committee members—the members for Eglinton–Lawrence, Oakville North–Burlington, Niagara West, Sarnia–Lambton, Durham—as well as others from the government and opposite sides who have joined us.

Since August 2020, the select committee has met 15 times to hear from the Premier’s designate. Each meeting is comprised of a 30-minute oral presentation from the Premier’s designate, outlining the orders that have been amended and extended during the previous meeting. This is followed by 70 minutes of questions from all parties to help explain the rationale for the extensions and the amendments.

The questions that members of the committee have raised are far and wide-reaching, and they include representation from all across the province. Such questions are about the need for workplace redeployment measures; the government’s plan for easing restrictions when case counts decline; and the impact of the orders on the lives of Ontarians, including what supports the government is providing to mitigate that impact. It is also a valuable opportunity to share the stories from our communities and our constituents—their concerns, their thoughts, their fears and hopes for what will come next. I am sure that all members have heard, as I have, from many of their constituents throughout the pandemic, and they forward their questions and concerns to the committee. I believe that they think the work done at that committee is extremely helpful to share that, and I’m sure their constituents appreciate the answers heard.

Speaker, I know Ontarians want this to be over. I know they want to understand and have confidence in their government's plan to combat COVID-19, and this committee has provided a forum to do just that.

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Members of the committee have had the opportunity to hear from the Solicitor General during most of these meetings as she has been a designate from the Premier due to her ministry's responsibility for emergency management and carriage of the reopening Ontario act itself, as well as her role as co-lead in partnership with the Minister of Health in the province's vaccination campaign. I applaud the Solicitor General and her entire team for their tireless work on behalf of the people of Ontario.

The committee has also heard from the Minister of Health, the Chief Medical Officer of Health—who at the time was Dr. David Williams—as well as Dr. Steini Brown, who was with the COVID-19 science advisory table.

The committee provided written reports to the Legislature after each meeting, and I hope the members have taken the time to review them, as most committee members have.

Speaker, I'm proud of the work that we have accomplished on the committee to date, and I'm sure my colleagues from all sides of the House are as well. It is why it is so important to ensure that the select committee can continue to ensure legislators remain actively engaged in these critical proceedings. It is vital that the committee seamlessly continue its critical role without delay. The committee ensures that the government can and will continue to follow the legislative obligations required by the reopening Ontario act.

Speaker, this is yet another example of how our government has ensured that the Legislature can continue its important work during COVID-19. Whether it has been safely continuing in-person sessions of the Legislature, making changes to the way that we vote in order to maintain physical distancing, or the regular debates that we've had on the extensions to declarations of emergency and the powers under the reopening Ontario act, our government has never wavered in giving the Legislature the tools needed to continue working throughout COVID-19. I am sure all members can agree how important that is.

We know that vaccinations offer a high degree of protection against COVID-19. As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor noted in her speech from the throne, "Getting vaccinated protects you from the worst of COVID-19. It will save your life." The data is clear: Unvaccinated people are 43 times more likely to be in an intensive care unit bed compared to their fully vaccinated counterparts.

Speaker, these are critically important measures put in place to help continue to keep Ontarians safe from the dangers of COVID-19, which is why it remains so important for this committee to get back to work. Moreover, these measures deserve the attention of the select committee of emergency management to ask questions and seek information from the government on decision-

making when it comes to these and other changes. This is but just one example of many of the kind of work that this committee will be able to undertake once it's reconstituted.

I want to ask all members to support this committee in returning to its vital work as soon as possible. The safety and the restoration of normal life and activities and our economic recovery, which will bring prosperity to all Ontarians, depend on it. Speaker, I began by referencing the thick fog this pandemic shrouded—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I didn't intend to speak today. I hope I can do it. My caucus colleagues know—over the summer, I told them I wouldn't be seeking re-election. One of the reasons for that, I told the media, my mom, who was to turn 98 in December—I wanted to go visit her in Newfoundland. Well, a couple of weeks ago, on a Friday night, I get a phone call that says, "You better come." This is all because I heard so many people this afternoon talk about long-term care, loved ones sharing stories, PSWs, Thanksgiving, family and closure.

My son and I hopped a plane on the Sunday morning at 6 o'clock, transferred in Toronto, got to St. John's. We knew we had a four-hour drive. My luggage didn't make it, so I had to wait several hours for the next flight to come in, so I went to my buddy's house. Actually, I was borrowing a car from my buddy, because—if anybody wants to earn money, open a car rental shop in St. John's, Newfoundland, because you cannot rent a car in Newfoundland, no matter what, unless you booked it months and months in advance. I knew my cousin had a car, but my brother was going to fly in Tuesday, so I said, "If I can borrow a car from my buddy, my brother can have my cousin's car."

My niece, who was coming in from Ottawa, actually went on Facebook and said, "There are no cars to rent in Newfoundland. If you know of anyone, let me know." Sure enough, Newfoundlanders being Newfoundlanders, somebody said, "I'm offshore. I'm working for the next week or two out here. Go to Conception Bay South and pick up my pickup," which she did.

So we had a four-hour drive. Then it started to rain, and then, on the highway, we started to hydroplane, so we had to slow down. Then we got to the isthmus between the Avalon Peninsula and the Burin Peninsula, and the fog slowed us down to 40 miles an hour. So we got to the little crossroads of Goobies—the Irving station, another station across the way—and stopped just to grab a coffee and a sandwich. Then you go down the Burin Peninsula Highway, where you're more apt to run into a moose or a caribou than any oncoming traffic. We got to the home—an hour and a half too late. Fine.

My mom was a survivor. She survived the tidal wave in 1929, as I've told you. She loved to dance. At the visitation, at the funeral home—it's Newfoundland tradition; my mother would be up step-dancing in her nineties whenever that button accordion kicked in. Well, we had a button accordion player and a guitar player at the

visitation, and I said to my brother, “You’d better go check to see if her toes are tapping in there.”

She had a lot of good friends, a lot of the PSWs from the home. The manager had told me on the phone and through texting that they would ensure that in her final hours she was never alone in the room. They sang to her. She wasn’t responding, but they sang and they kept her company.

We had beautiful weather after that rain that first day: nothing but sunny, warm temperatures. We had a good crowd out at the church. We told some funny stories about my mom and teased my younger brother. I call him my chubby younger brother; who am I to talk about chubby? My wife tells me she only married two thirds of me, with the weight I’ve put on since we were married.

But we told some funny stories about my mom, including the time I was in Toronto on some union business. My brother’s son was getting married. There was a wedding rehearsal. My mom was flying in. He said, “Can you go to the airport and pick her up?” and I said, “Sure.” So she’s there and she’s telling the security guard about this wonderful son she has, my brother, and about his son getting married. So I get there and I go over, and she turns around and says, “That’s not my son. That’s the other one.”

Laughter.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What can I say?

My brother, whom I love so dearly—I never tell him how much I respect him. He was career Air Force. He retired as a chief warrant officer, which is the highest you can go as an enlisted member before becoming an officer. He didn’t want to be an officer.

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Anyway, the backhoe couldn’t get in to dig the grave, so we had to make arrangements for some men to dig next to my dad. When my dad passed, the backhoe was late coming in and the hole was dug. He was in there. So I went just down below where my mom lived and grabbed a bottle of rum, a couple of shovels, his buddies, and we threw some dirt, drank some rum, told some lies about my dad, and threw some more dirt, drank some more rum. We had him filled in before the backhoe came back.

That’s the way we did things. The Newfoundland community really got together. This was down on the Burin Peninsula on the south coast. My mom lived in Kirby’s Cove—that’s between Collins Cove and Mosquito Cove—but she used to live across the harbour in Kelly’s Cove, when the tidal wave came in and washed them out. She’s written up in all the books written about the Newfoundland tsunami in 1929, about her mom breaking out through the window and her and her two sisters and her mom going out and getting into a boat from one of the neighbours that had rode over in a dory to pick them up.

After the service, burial, the gentleman, a friend of mine who bought my mom’s home and is doing a fantastic job of renovating it, he took us out in a boat. About eight of us got in his boat. We went around the harbour and had a good visit. When we came back in, his brother had already

been cooking up some fresh cod and scallops on the wharf. So we had a good scoff; a very nice way to end the day.

I can’t say enough about her. But I wanted to, today—I didn’t want to; I wasn’t going to. But I wanted to pay tribute to her, because five years ago, we had to take away—my brother went down and he was visiting—well, I better tell you the story.

My mom is visiting in Ottawa, and so Gale and I drive down to Ottawa to pick my mom and my brother up to go to a wedding in Pembroke. We get to Arnprior and there’s a Tim Hortons. My brother and I want coffee, so we go in to Tim Hortons. Gale is having a nap. Mom didn’t want anything. So we get our coffee. Barrie and I come back out. We get in the car and we drive away. About 20 miles down the road, I want to say something to my brother that I don’t want my mother to hear, so I turned around, and they’re not there. On the way up towards Pembroke, I noticed the OPP had the radar up, so I couldn’t go speeding back. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, or back at Timmy’s, the women went in to go to the washroom while we were in line for the coffee, but they didn’t say “hi” or “we’re here.” I know it’s my fault; I should have looked in the back. So meanwhile, my mom is really upset. My wife is trying not to laugh, more on that in a moment.

So they call the OPP. My mother insisted on calling the OPP. So my wife calls the dispatcher and the dispatcher says, “Let me get this straight: He not only left you, but he left his mother?” So when we come back—we finally get back—my wife was trying not to laugh, and my mom is standing there, arms crossed, toes tapping, not amused. Okay, I was in a bit of trouble. I’m in a bit of trouble because once driving back from Florida in the middle of the night—the border in Kentucky or Tennessee or somewhere—Gale had been driving and I had been sleeping. She stops for gas. I see her at the side of the van; I figure she’s getting in the backseat—

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, you know where this is going.

So I pay for the gas; I get my little cassettes ready to slap in the player to keep me awake. I buy my son some football cards—and he’s now in the passenger seat in the front. So as I’m driving up I-75, I say, “Do I go under this way? What side of the highway are we on?” And he says, “Where’s Mom?” I said, “Well she’s in the back; it’s her turn to sleep.” “No, she isn’t.” “Yes, she is.” “No she isn’t.” So I say, “Gale?”—whoop.

So she comes out of the washroom and we’re in, like I say, the middle of nowhere. There’s one attendant; he’s got a big gun on his hip. She looks all around. She looks up towards the I-75 and she sees these tail lights backing up, coming in. So I’ve got two strikes against me.

So, that night in Pembroke, we were sharing a room, the four of us. It was very quiet, and all of a sudden, one of us—I don’t know who was first—giggled, and once the first giggle happened, then the laughter erupted. Finally, they saw the humour in me leaving behind my wife and my mother. But, Speaker, I do have two strikes against me, and I promised my wife never to do that again.

Having said that, it was a good send-off. We got to visit with some great friends. She still hasn't forgiven me for putting her in the home. Like I said, my brother went down to take away the car keys a month before. He thought he took away two sets of car keys, which he did. She had a third set hidden upstairs. Now, the neighbours had told us she's not really safe to be driving. She didn't learn how to drive until she moved to that part of Newfoundland to look after her parents back when I was at university in 1969 or 1970, but she always had her pedal to the metal. Well, they told me it was no longer safe for my mother to be on the road. So anyway, I had to go down—it was my turn—to sell the car and take her from the house into the retirement centre. I don't think she ever forgave me, really, but it had to happen. We knew it had to happen. She wouldn't accept it at first, but once she got there, she had great roommates and she was where she had to be.

This home, I can't say enough about the home. They cook their meals fresh every day. They brought in entertainment. My mom was the first one up on the dance floor. She fell a couple of years ago while dancing and was in a wheelchair, but they would take her to the dance or to the rec room when the band was in, and as soon as that accordion kicked in, her toes were tapping, Speaker.

Her dementia got to the stage where she liked to have little teddy bears all the time. I have this great video of her with the teddy bear, her toes tapping. She's showing the teddy bear the band and she's singing to the teddy bear. It was Behind the Parlour Door. It was a great tune. In fact, the two guys we had come into the funeral home were the band—the guys that were singing Behind the Parlour Door. They were in this room doing the music, we had the video up with a bunch of pictures in this room, and as soon as they heard the video, they played that song. It was so, so cute. The minister, Rev. Dr. Simon, was from Nigeria, I believe. He was one of her dancing partners in one of the videos we had of them step-dancing. He was her favourite dancing partner. Anyway, I'm rambling. I'm sorry for taking up your time.

When I told my mom—we had good days and bad days with my mom. Some days, she had lost the concept of a telephone, how to hold a telephone and what this voice was. But other days, we'd get the PSW to hold the phone up and we'd have a bit of a conversation. I guess it was late July, I said, "Mom, I'm coming down to see you over Thanksgiving." She said, "Oh, I don't know if I'll be here at Thanksgiving." When my niece went down to visit with her in August, she would ask a question, maybe, "Are you enjoying the weather?" and she'd get a response that had nothing to do with the question that was being asked. One of the times, my mom said, "You know, there's a man with a light down there at the end of the road, and I'm just not ready to go see him yet." I mean, the signs were there, but I, for one, didn't want to believe it. I wanted to be there, wanted to spend time with her and tell her again how much I loved her. It was a good trip. I would have liked to have been there an hour and a half sooner than I could make it, but circumstances prevented that.

I say to you all, this Thanksgiving, if you have family—and I hope we all do—that you spend time with your

family and tell them how much you love them. And I'm just sorry that I took your time this afternoon, but thank you.

Applause.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order. I'm going to return to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and politely ask him to share with us your mother's name.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. My apologies for that. Phoebe "Pearl" Hatfield—she was a Brushett. If you look it up in the tsunami books, you'll see "Pearl Brushett." She was known as Pearl. She was 4 foot 11. My dad was 5 foot 11. She was like Granny on the Beverly Hillbillies. Remember that? In fact, when we were taking her belongings from the home back to the cove, there was a rocking chair. My niece was driving the pickup. The rocking chair was in the back, rocking, and she pulled over because she was afraid it would rock its way out of the pickup. And my son and I were just saying, "Remember the Beverly Hillbillies and Granny in the back in the rocking chair?" And that's exactly what my niece said. She said, "I can just see Nan rocking her way out of the back."

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I think it's fair to say, on behalf of the Legislature, that we sincerely offer our condolences to you and your family. As we all head into Thanksgiving, we're giving thanks for our loved ones and appreciating you sharing your stories with us.

Further debate?

Hon. Jane McKenna: I just want to first start off that there are certain people in your life that touch your heart and soul, and we're all in this together. I know the member opposite from Windsor–Tecumseh—because you're going to make me cry—when I lost the election, the first person that called me was that wonderful man. He brought tears to my eyes because we were very close when I got in, in 2011. There are certain people in here that inspire you to come to work, but you appreciate—whether we're partisan or non-partisan—that there are people here that make such a difference. He does live in my daughter's riding and she probably loves him as much as me.

But I want to say a couple of things. When I got the position as associate minister, the second person to call me after Minister McNaughton was this lovely man. And I have a relationship with you that—we'll always be bonded, and I am very grateful for you and all that you've taught me while I've been here. I can say this, that this is to you, Pearl, because you did a hell of a job raising the son right across here.

And my partner—who hates when I call him my boyfriend, because he says he's 68 and I'm 60, and he hates it—but I'm going to say this: Every time the member from Windsor–Tecumseh calls me, he says, "Are you engaged yet?" And he just about crawls under the furniture that he asks that every time he calls.

But, anyway, I just want to say to you, I cherish you; I love you from the bottom of my heart and thank you so

much for all that you've done for me here, because you make getting up in the morning worth getting up. So thank you very, very much.

If you'll just give me a few more minutes about Thanksgiving, I just want to talk about my kids for a few minutes. I know we're going back to this motion, but just to say a few things. When my kids would come home from school—I have five kids and they're all roughly three years apart, so there was always a big age gap—I noticed at dinnertime, they would come home from school frustrated from a kid, or frustrated, whatever. It would always be a bit combative at the dinner table, and the dinner table was always important to me.

So I decided that we were all going to sit down at dinner before we started, and we were all going to say something wonderful about one person at the table. It was amazing how it turned our table around because instead of having the stress, everybody would actually have to sit there and think and try to out-trump the person prior to that, before.

So then, when we have Thanksgiving and birthdays—we've done that through our whole lives. Thanksgiving is coming up—I appreciate what you said about that—and we all sit there and say what we're thankful for, because we all are thankful. We're members here. We have an unbelievable responsibility to take care of the people in our constituency offices. I'd be remiss not to thank the wonderful people of Burlington who have worked so extremely hard through COVID-19. I want to just do a shout-out for Ken, Peter and Dan in my office, because they make my job so much easier by being on the phone every day, helping people in my community. So I want to thank them also today.

But just to remember, we get up, we all have five minutes of truth at the end of the day, but the most important thing is remembering our mothers, remembering our family and just being thankful for all that we have, with our children, my grandchildren; everyone in here, your grandchildren and your family—just a moment to thank everybody. Everybody on Monday, enjoy the time. We all deserve a break to spend with our family. Thank you so much. I love you very much.

I'll get back to the motion. Over the past few weeks, Speaker, I've received a number of emails and calls from residents in Burlington wanting to know more about the difference between a state of emergency and the various emergency orders, and the role of the emergency management oversight committee. I'll start by answering these questions for those watching on TV or online.

All three levels of government, federal, provincial and municipal, have the ability to issue a declaration of emergency that enables them to take immediate, temporary and extraordinary measures to ensure safety and security due to a major crisis. Back on March 17, 2020, Ontario led the country in being the first to declare a provincial state of emergency due to COVID-19 under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Within five days of Ontario's state of emergency, all provinces and territories had followed our lead in declaring either a state of emergency or a public health emergency.

Thanks to our collective efforts in the fight against COVID-19, our last declaration of emergency ended on June 2, 2021. I often get asked by constituents, "Since the state of emergency is over, why do we still have emergency orders?" To anyone watching at home, emergency orders issued are the extraordinary measures governments at all levels have put in place during COVID-19. Here in Ontario and right across the country, many emergency powers do not actually require a declaration of emergency.

As of today, Ontario currently has four emergency orders in force under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 31 orders under the reopening Ontario act and 63 orders that have been revoked, thanks to the progress we have made together.

Speaker, under the 35 emergency orders currently in place, we are able to support and protect Ontarians during these unprecedented times. Take, for example, emergency order 98/20 that prohibits unfair pricing, also known as price gouging, for necessary goods; order 74/20, which gives hospitals expanded measures to ensure that doctors and medical staff can be rapidly deployed to potential COVID-19 hot spots; or order 140/20, which allows for work deployment measures for services funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services under the violence-against-women support services or the anti-human-trafficking community support programs.

For those involved in legal proceedings that are not criminal in nature, order 76/20 provides for electronic service of documents, something that did not exist prior to this pandemic.

Ontario's emergency orders have supported our continued progress in the fight against COVID-19. Our battle against the first, second, third and now fourth waves of this terrible virus has proven that when Ontarians work together, we can accomplish nearly anything. On July 13, 2020, our government House leader, the member from Markham–Stouffville, one of the hardest-working people that I have ever met, introduced a motion to appoint a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. Following debate, the motion carried on July 15, 2020.

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The purpose of this committee is to receive oral reports from the Premier or his designates on any extensions of emergency orders by the Lieutenant Governor in Council related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the rationale for those extensions. Reporting provisions under the reopening Ontario act, 2020, include a requirement for the Premier or a minister to whom the Premier delegates the responsibility to appear before and report to a standing or select committee designated by the assembly, at least once every 30 days, on orders that were extended during the reporting period and the rationale for those extensions. To date, the committee has met 15 times.

I want to acknowledge the outstanding work of Ontario's Solicitor General, who has presented and answered questions for committee members at each of these meetings. Committee members have also heard from and questioned the Minister of Health, Ontario's Chief

Medical Officer of Health, the head of Ontario's science table Dr. Steini Brown, among others.

Speaker, our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, recognizes that the official opposition plays an important role in holding government to account. That's why, unlike other governments, Ontario's Legislature has sat in person throughout the entire pandemic, and it's why the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight was put forward by our government.

If you're a big sports fan, you've likely imagined your dream team for various sports. In basketball, we had the ultimate dream team in the Raptors back in 2019. If you're a Leafs fan, you'll have to go a little further back; I was seven the last time they won the Stanley Cup. Speaker, Ontario has assembled an incredible team in our fight against COVID-19. Our government's plan is formed with the advice and counsel of Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, previously Dr. David Williams and since June of this year, Dr. Kieran Moore. We have been so fortunate as a province and as a government to be able to benefit from their years of experience. The Minister of Health also draws upon the valuable guidance and strong advocacy from the president and CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association, Anthony Dale. Working together, Ontario has built unprecedented capacity in our hospitals at a pace that we have never seen before.

Our Premier, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, as well our cabinet and the COVID-19 command table, also depend on expert counsel from Chief Roberts from the Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs; Matthew Anderson, the president and CEO of Ontario Health; the president of the Ontario Medical Association, Dr. Kassam; Alex Munter, the president and CEO of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; and so many other distinguished experts.

Regardless of where in this great country you live, coronavirus has brought all Canadians together with a shared goal of beating COVID-19. Whether we live in Toronto, Burlington, Kenora, Windsor or Kanata, we are united in our desire to put COVID-19 behind us. I remember reading a news story last summer about a shopping centre that had just reopened. They were using the slogan, "Open as Unusual." This statement certainly captured the new reality we all experienced around the world. It is thanks to the collective efforts of all Ontarians that we're making progress on this steady road to safely and carefully eliminate the remaining restrictions, and fully reopen Ontario's economy. But there's more to do, Speaker.

Ontario makes up 39% of Canada's population and, as of yesterday, just 11% of all active COVID-19 cases in Canada. Despite what opposition parties want to believe, Ontario is managing the spread of COVID-19 during the fourth wave better than British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Quebec.

We're reminded that this fight is not over yet. Three weeks ago, Alberta declared another public health emergency as a result of COVID-19, and two weeks ago New Brunswick reinstated their provincial state of

emergency. Now is not the time to become complacent or to make changes to procedures and processes that have proven to be effective.

Speaker, this has been a journey like absolutely no other, and I've got to say, I'm proud of how Ontarians have come together during these unprecedented times.

Ontario led the country in being the first to declare a provincial state of emergency due to COVID-19.

Premier Ford showed strong leadership by being the first government in Canada to release modelling data that guided the government's decision-making.

Ontario led the country in being one of the first to outline a plan to reopen our economy.

And now we're leading North America with among the highest vaccination rates. Today's data shows that 87% of Ontarians 12 or older have received one dose and 82% are now fully vaccinated.

Our provincial vaccination numbers lead the nation, but I also want to recognize and congratulate Ontario's top public health units based on vaccine distribution: Leeds, Grenville and Lanark district, where 96% of their residents 12 or older have received one dose and 92% are fully vaccinated, and Thunder Bay district, where 92% of residents 12 or older have had one shot and 86% are fully vaccinated. High vaccination rates in these rural and northern communities serve as motivation for all of us.

As an MPP for Halton region, I'm glad to see our vaccination rates continuing to increase, with 89% of residents 12 or older receiving one dose and 86% now fully vaccinated in Halton.

But we're not there yet.

Speaker, as a lifelong resident of Burlington, I'm always proud to talk about the great people and places in Burlington, Canada's best place to live in 2019, according to Maclean's magazine. Burlington is a community like no other. In good times and in bad, we rally together to make sure that no one is left behind. Throughout this trying time, it has been inspiring to see the thoughtfulness, generosity and kindness of people in my community. I am proud of the many local organizations that are stepping up to lend a hand, including:

—the Burlington Food Bank, which continued to collect food for families and individuals in need and switched to a delivery model for distribution to ensure physical distancing;

—the Compassion Society of Halton, which ensured that those in need throughout the Burlington community continued to receive food and clothing throughout the pandemic;

—Food for Life, which instituted foyer-pickup programs, delivery-to-the-door programs and prepackaged food bags to ensure that those in need continued to receive food safely;

—Burlington's Salvation Army, which switched their food bank to an appointment-only model to safely distribute food;

—Don MacEachern, who started Project Kindness to deliver restaurant gift cards to individuals and families negatively impacted by COVID-19; and

—Wellington Square United Church, which instituted a highly successful meal bag program that allows Burlington residents to drive through and pick up their meals.

Social media has also played a critical role in connecting our residents with local supports. Take, for example, the local Facebook groups: Burlington Together, which is now 8,000 members strong and connects people in need with others who can help, performing tasks such as picking up groceries or medication, making masks and more; and Burlington Dads, which held a community bottle drive that raised \$7,815 in cash donations as well over 2,000 pounds of food.

Whether you recognize Ontario as “a place to grow” or “yours to discover,” in these difficult times people right across the province are finding new and innovative ways of coming together to support those in need.

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Speaker, to have your words recorded for all time in Hansard and broadcast on TV and the Internet is an honour and a privilege. It is important to the accountability that comes with elected office. Over the last 19 months, I’ve been asked several times what I think leadership is. Like so many of us these days, my first instinct was to go to Google. But with over 864 million search results for “what

is leadership,” for me, the key take-away is that leadership means different things to different people at different times. That’s why it should come as no surprise that a similar search on famous leadership quotes returned over 59 million results. One of my favourites is from Herbert Swope, a three-time Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who became famous as a war correspondent and as the editor of the New York World. He said, “I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure: which is: Try to please everybody.”

Our democracy isn’t perfect, but it’s the best system we have. The goal of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight has always been to provide members with the opportunity, at least once every 30 days, to hear and ask questions about the various emergency orders that have been extended and why. The goal of this committee should not change just because we’re getting closer to an election. That’s why I’m pleased to stand in this place today in support of the government’s motion, as moved by the Solicitor General on Tuesday, to reappoint the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight with the same mandate and membership as the first session of the 42nd Parliament.

Thank you so much, and happy Thanksgiving. I appreciate having the time today.

Report continues in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, Peter Sibenik,
Meghan Stenson, William Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (IND)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (Transit-Oriented Communities) / Ministre associé des Transports (Aménagement axé sur les transports en commun)
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
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	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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 Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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
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	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

**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-présidente: Donna Skelly
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Randy Hillier, 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
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts
Amarjot Sandhu, 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
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp
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, Faisal Hassan
Logan Kanapathi, Michael Mantha
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Donna Skelly, Vijay Thanigasalam
Vacant
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
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: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Will Bouma, John Fraser
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
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