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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 mai 2021

Report continued from volume A.

EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY ORDERS

Continuation of debate on the motion for extension of emergency orders.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I rise today to speak to this motion to extend the emergency powers this government has given themselves to take us through this COVID-19 pandemic. I've got to say, the powers that this government has given themselves are significant. We've had stakeholders contact us, in the very short period of time that they have had, from when they became aware that we were going to be debating this motion a few hours before a long weekend—they had a short window of time to get us comments.

I want to address one comment that came from CUPE. The reason I bring up CUPE is because CUPE represents many of the front-line health care workers who are impacted by this emergency legislation. Their ability to collectively bargain, to take their required vacation time off, and have many of their long-fought rights upheld—a lot of them have been suspended under this emergency powers act. When you're in the depths of an emergency, when you're in the height of a first wave or a second wave or a third wave, I get it. I don't necessarily agree with it, but I get it. But now we're in a situation where we are coming out of a third wave—hopefully, we don't have a fourth one—yet a decision is being made by this government to take away the rights of our front-line workers, our health care workers, the collectively bargained rights that they have fought for for many, many years. That is deeply concerning. When we're talking about saying thank you to the health care workers who put their lives and health on the line over the last 14 months—they want more than just a pat on the back or a kind statement at a press conference. They want to be recognized, and that means that when they ask for their collective bargaining rights to be returned, it means you listen to that, when it's time for them to be returned—and it is time for them to be returned.

There are a lot of things to address, because this bill really does speak to that larger issue of, what has the government's response to COVID-19 been? Where has the government fallen short? There are a lot of ways this government has fallen short.

When I think about my riding of University–Rosedale, the first thing that comes to mind are the mass outbreaks that have happened in the long-term-care homes in my riding. There was the Mon Sheong long-term-care home that had one of the first outbreaks in the first wave. Many

people died. They tried desperately to get more PPE; they couldn't get it. They tried desperately to get more personal support workers in; they couldn't get them. They had very little access to testing. It was very difficult. Family members were standing outside protesting because they didn't know what was going on inside of the building. It took a very long time for Mon Sheong to eventually be connected with Mount Sinai and for them to get the support they needed—too long. Too many people died.

I think about Vermont Square, a for-profit home. It's a very old home. It's registered as a D home—four people in a room. The COVID-19 outbreak spread like wildfire through Vermont Square. I remember doing a round table call with the family council, and there was a woman there whose father was dying in a hospital, and she could not physically go in to say goodbye. They were devastated and furious at the real lack of difficulty they had to get access to testing so that they could identify how COVID-19 was spreading through the building. And they were furious that there were not enough infection control measures introduced so that people who had COVID-19 were separated and weren't stuck in the same room. It was extremely upsetting.

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I also think of St. George Care Community. This is where we really get to the heart of where this government made huge mistakes. St. George Care Community is a long-term-care home that is run by a for-profit, Sienna. I talked to Sienna many times. I talked to the hospital. I talked to management. Sienna assured me that everything was fine, even though personal support workers in that building were contacting me, terrified to speak up, terrified to go public, saying, "We're dealing with 40 residents on one floor with one personal support worker at night." The paramedics who service my area, who regularly go into that building, would tell me stories of how infection control measures were very poorly maintained, because there had been no consistent, thorough training given to the workers in the building. When the paramedic would go in, the staff would say, "The person with COVID-19 who needs to be taken to a hospital"—they wouldn't even escort them there. When they would go to the room, the door would be left open, and they would have to work out for themselves which person had COVID-19. That's not good infection control.

There are things this government could have done to make sure that there were proper infection control measures, that there was proper testing, that there was adequate staffing—which means a pay raise. Those things weren't done, and people died.

I have the luxury to sit on public accounts. It is a great privilege to be part of the team that gets to hear what the Auditor General is doing to make sure that government departments are doing the best they can do. It has been shocking to read and understand what the government's response to COVID-19 has been. We have an Auditor General and her team going in, doing the deep dive, interviewing people, reviewing documents, reviewing meeting minutes—when there are meeting minutes—to assess where do things go right and where do things go wrong.

Her reporting is extensive, but I want to give you an example of the seriousness of the issues that she has identified by reading out just the headlines of one of many chapters she has written on this government's response to COVID-19. These headlines give you an indication of where this government has gone wrong on so many levels.

“Regional Response Structure Is Not Led by Health Experts.” It should have been.

SARS recommendations—remember Toronto? I wasn't living here at the time, but I remember Toronto was the centre of the SARS outbreak, and there were a lot of investigations done afterwards. The SARS recommendation to abide by the precautionary principle—the top recommendation was not heeded. We see this with the real reluctance to bring in a consistent mask mandate, with the real reluctance to acknowledge that COVID-19 is by and large airborne—even now, there's a real reluctance to acknowledge that.

I'll continue with the headings.

Consistent messaging on masks did not begin until six months into the pandemic.

“No Provincial Order to Protect Foreign Farm Workers.” This was despite the fact that 1,335 farm workers—low-paid, precarious workers with very little access to health benefits—come here to ensure that our food supply is maintained and that we have a thriving food economy. We didn't do enough to protect them from COVID-19.

The ministry discouraged testing for COVID-19 for travellers, despite evidence of its spread in other countries. This is the Auditor General reviewing your work. Your latest messaging right now is to say, “Oh, it's all coming internationally. It's the federal government's fault.” When you actually read the Auditor General's reports, they're telling us very clearly that this government, the Ontario government, has a role to play to ensure that spread from elsewhere is controlled at the border, and this government has, on many occasions, failed to do it effectively.

“Delay in Acknowledging Community Transmission of COVID-19.” That's another heading.

“Delay in Requiring Long-Term-Care Home Staff to Wear Personal Protective Equipment”—another heading.

The pandemic squashes your understanding of time; it has for me. These headings remind me of all that I have read and all the things that have happened over the last year.

“There was a delay in restricting long-term-care-home staff from working at multiple facilities.” When we're talking about protecting our most vulnerable, why did it take so long to protect our most vulnerable?

Stakeholders, such as Toronto Public Health and schools, weren't always told about decisions that impacted them before the decisions were publicly announced. It happened many times.

“The ministry did not implement our recommendations from 13 years ago to regularly update its emergency response plans.” I remember being in the Auditor General's briefing on that, and she talked about how this government's failure to even collect up-to-date phone numbers of who to call when an emergency like a pandemic begins led to a slow, inconsistent and chaotic response to COVID-19, which led to more people getting sick. That's going to be this government's record.

When we're talking about a motion to extend your emergency powers to deal with COVID-19, I think there's also this reckoning that needs to happen around what else this government could have done to ensure we didn't have a second wave, didn't have a third wave—hopefully, don't have a fourth wave.

I could go on. That was just one chapter of many.

I also think about the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces. I have the privilege of having the Workers Action Centre housed in my riding. They do great work to ensure that workers in Ontario have the protections they deserve and a decent minimum wage, which they currently don't have. I remember the Workers Action Centre, and also public health units, telling me about how the transmission is really happening in workplaces. It's happening in factories. It's happening in distribution centres. I remember reading the headlines about the huge number of cases at the Amazon facility in Peel. And I remember them telling me about how this government consistently did not do enough workplace inspections to ensure that COVID-19 was sufficiently controlled in these workplaces, how there have been very few fines and next to no closures—yet carding is okay.

I hope that this government looks at what they did wrong and looks at what they did right.

I also want to acknowledge the public health units that stepped up—like Peel's top doctor, Lawrence Loh, who, after acknowledging and realizing that a quarter of essential workers in Brampton and Mississauga were going to work sick, because they had no access to adequate paid sick days, was willing to speak up on that. And then, both Peel and Toronto moved forward on section 22, closing businesses that had five or more linked cases. They did it months late. But that should have been this government that did that.

It should have been this government that had a real plan to make sure that our front-line workers did not get COVID-19, to make sure that people like Emily Viegas didn't die. She got COVID-19 from her dad who went to work. That death should never have happened.

Workers deserve to be safe, and front-line workers deserve to be safe.

I also think about this government's failure to protect small businesses. The reason I say that is because—University-Rosedale is very lucky; we have a thriving small business community. We have Dundas Street,

Ossington, Bloor, College Street, Yonge Street. We have so many main streets where there are mom-and-pop shops that really want to make a go of it. They're running their business, and they hire locally. It just makes our community so special. But when this pandemic began, businesses couldn't survive; they couldn't make it.

Many businesses worked with us to make sure that the federal government and the provincial government provided additional support in terms of a commercial rent subsidy to businesses, but the issue with it is that the provincial government needed to step up and introduce a commercial eviction ban, so that landlords were motivated to sign up to the program, since they weren't willing to take a cut unless there was a real motivation to do it. You've been told by everyone that that was necessary, but it took you months and months and months to bring in that commercial eviction ban. Many businesses in my riding went under, and many of these businesses are never going to come back.

I also think about the small business grant program that, over a year later, you introduced. It was so late. There were many businesses that were very excited about the small business program. They applied for it—hundreds and hundreds of them did—and then they discovered something shocking: This small business grant program was broken. It wasn't working.

We collected a survey of businesses that had applied to the program, that were eligible but had not received their money yet—that had been promised the money, but it hadn't appeared in their bank account. Some of them got through to a staff person who said to them that the money was coming in a matter of days; it never did. We found something really shocking, which is that 85% of the businesses that had applied and were eligible to get funding have not received their funding. If that's happening in University-Rosedale, that's happening all across Ontario.

1740

We need to help small businesses recover, not just to get through the pandemic but also to thrive after—because that's what makes Ontario and our city great. That means keeping the eviction ban, and it means financial support for businesses. We need to help them. That's not what we're debating tonight, but we should be.

I also want to talk about schools. The reason I want to talk about schools—just on a personal note, I live in an apartment downtown, so my park is my lifeline. Every time schools close, my partner and I look at each other and think, "How are we going to get through this next wave? How are we going to divide up the day? Who do we know who could come in and babysit our kids? How are our kids doing mentally? Are our kids okay, given that they can't play with anyone?" It's extremely difficult. And what we're going through is what thousands and thousands of parents all across Ontario are going through, as well.

Kids have lost a year of learning. We had the strike and then we had the pandemic, and they're behind.

I listened to the Minister of Education spin his tales with his numbers, trying to convince everyone that money is increasing next year, and trying to convince everyone

that schools are safe, even though anyone who is a parent knows exactly how COVID-19 is spreading through the school. When you see the numbers spread through a school, you know exactly how safe that school is, and you know that it could be a hell of a lot safer.

What always shocks me is that we are still not doing enough to make sure schools are safe in September. After all we've learned, class sizes are still really big. We're now expecting teachers to conduct online learning and in-person learning at the same time. Yet where is the budget to do that? And how is that actually possible to do over a whole year, at the same time as we're trying to help kids recover after a year of learning and recover after the mental health challenges so many of them have had? It seems like you're breaking schools and you're breaking kids and you're breaking parents when that community needs all the help that they can get, because kids are our future. I really don't understand it.

It's also why I'm proud to co-sponsor a bill with my colleague the member for Davenport, MPP Stiles, to talk about child and youth recovery and centring children in our recovery from the pandemic. We need a plan to put our kids front and centre in our recovery because they have gone through so much. Their learning has been affected. Their ability to play has been affected. They've had to struggle with online school. Many of them have had really tough mental health challenges. They need support. This bill, coming up with a plan to help them be provided with that support, is really critical, and I'm so proud to sponsor it.

I want to conclude by talking about the issue of health care. Some of my colleagues and members in the House talked about the issue of health care, as well.

I want to recognize the nurses and the doctors and the social workers who have contacted me over the last year to beg me to explain and to convince the Ontario government that more needs to be done to stop the spread of COVID-19.

I also want to acknowledge the many people who have contacted me who have had their surgeries delayed. I'll just give one example. Jill is a non-smoker who was diagnosed with lung cancer. She has no idea how she got it. She's stunned. Her surgery was delayed. She's terrified, because she wants to have the operation so that she can recover and be fine. She has a good chance of recovering, but she needs that operation. She is one of so many people in Ontario who need access to health care and need their surgeries.

This is what I want to end with. The NDP BC government has come up with a plan, and they are implementing a plan to deal with the backlog of surgeries and diagnostic procedures. They are well on their way; we're not. If there is one thing this government does, one thing we should be debating now—we need a plan to deal with that backlog of surgeries and diagnostic procedures so we can catch that cancer and get people the surgeries they need.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good afternoon, everyone. Aren't we all lucky to be here this fine Thursday afternoon? I'm looking at the clock. It's quarter to 6. I am so happy to be here with all of you.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: The Chi-Cheemaun is what?

Hon. Bill Walker: It's going to sail soon, so you've got to get going.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, yes. We'll be sharing that canoe, my friend.

Actually, my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I'll be driving my bike up your way, and I might be dropping in, saying hi, taking in some of that local tourism you have in your area as soon as we can safely do that.

Hon. Bill Walker: You're welcome any time.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I do know that. But it goes back to the class of 2011—and I see there are a few of my friends who are here. We've always had that cordial friendship.

I remember being elected in 2011, and when we came in, there was a large group of us. We sat down in our seats for a while and we were watching how things were operating in here. Remember those discussions we had downstairs during those receptions? "What the heck is wrong with these people?" I remember those conversations—and it was a commitment that we had made to all of us. We said, "We're going to try to change things."

I like the lines of communication that have always been open, the respect that we've always shown each other. Regardless of where we're sitting in this House, we can talk, we can laugh, we get mad, but we will always have that respect for one another.

Anyway, I am, again, always thrilled to stand in my place and bring the voices of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin to the floor of the Legislature, Speaker. I just want to share with you some of the things that I'm going to try to cover in the very limited time I have to speak today.

I want to talk about small businesses, the support and the impacts that they've had—the good and the bad—on the small businesses in my riding. I want to talk about the mental health of children and adults. I want to talk about the long-term-care homes and the fact that we're asking for a full judicial review. I want to talk about crown lands too. I want to talk about boat launches. I want to talk about campgrounds. I want to talk about the vaccine rollout that has been happening, from a northern perspective. I also want to spend a little bit of time on some of the messaging and some of the discussions I've had with First Nation chiefs from across my riding and some of the community leaders there in regard to how the blame game has been playing between provincial and federal.

I want to start off by talking about the initial response when we got into this whole crisis and how our front-line workers—when I talk about front-line workers, for the purpose of this part of the discussion, I'll talk about individuals who are in the medical professional field, who are in our hospitals, who are in our drug and addictions

centres. All of these individuals rose to the call and immediately went into action, responded to the needs, and understood that there were some significant actions that needed to be taken so that we could make sure that care was going to be provided to those in need.

1750

Initially, when these orders came out, there were some super powers that were given to a lot of the administrators within a lot of these facilities—whether you're in a long-term-care home, in a hospital or whatever. Individuals were taken out of their daily routines. They were pulled out of their places of work. Their hours were changed. Their vacations were cancelled. Everything was changed—the atmosphere, the individuals they were working with. All of this caused an enormous amount of stress, and over time, it affected their mental wellness. Some of them have now returned to their original places of work, but the mental wellness—the impacts that it has had on them have not eased because it gets changed. We're going through another extension of these orders. If there's something that we've learned over the course of this last year—why wasn't there an opportunity for discussions? Why were the rights of these individuals taken away from them? They have families, they have their needs, and they have their frustrations, but they also have representatives that are there—which are labour organizations, which have fought for years to provide them with the rights that they have. We've had almost a year now where we could have had those discussions. "How do we return to a respectful abidance of the collective agreements that are there? How do we continue on with what we're doing now, responding"—and they're professionals. They have a conscience. They know that care is going to be required for individuals who come into our hospitals or our long-term-care homes. They understand the needs that are there that they have to accommodate at times. But again, when a person needs time away for their mental wellness, there is a process that they follow through their collective agreements. You apply for your holidays, there is a discussion, and you get that time off. But that is taken away. That is no longer there. Their hours are changed, their schedules are changed on a whim, but we've taken that whole process out. There's no reason why this should continue.

If there's something that we've learned over this extensive period of time, it's to have a dialogue. We know what we need within our workplaces in order to meet the needs of the individuals who are being affected. Let's have that discussion so we can meet your needs as the administrator and my needs as the workforce. But that's not happening. It's unfortunate that this is going to continue to go on. It's going to affect the mental wellness of the workforce, because it elevates frustration.

Now I want to jump into a discussion that I had with a very well-respected chief out of Manitoulin Island. I enjoy having conversations with him. He enlightens me. He challenges me to be a better MPP. I've often sat with him and was quiet—because you are being taught, you are being educated, and it's time for you to absorb as much information as possible. I always enjoy the discussions

I've had with Chief Shining Turtle from Whitefish River First Nation.

The one message he's given me to bring to this Legislature to offer to the government, particularly to Premier Ford, is, stop blaming others. Stop passing the buck. Stand up and be accountable for the decisions that you've made, right or wrong, good or bad. If you've taken an action and it's a wrong one, correct your course. Stand up and take your position. But stop blaming and stop crying wolf. If you keep telling people, "If you don't do this, you're going to force me to do that. If you make me mad, then I'll do this"—well, people, just like children, will push that envelope. What his message is saying is, "Lead." That's what this province needs right now. We need leaders in this province, and we need people who will make a decision and follow through with it. Be clear with the decision that you're making. Have the details upfront. Show your plan. Make a decision, and follow the medical experts who are providing you with that advice.

Again, I always respect the discussions that I've had with Chief Shining Turtle, and I always look forward to having those discussions with him.

Another part of the big discussion that he and I had is that, even prior to COVID-19 coming out and the pandemic that we're in, there was another huge pandemic across the Algoma region and across northern Ontario, and that's the opioid crisis. I can tell you that there are many chiefs who are tired of doing community walks and prayer walks and looking at some of their members in their communities—and it's across northern Ontario. Sault Ste. Marie is being affected. The entire Algoma region is being affected by the opioid crisis. Sudbury is being affected. Northern Ontario as a whole—the crisis has been there for a very long time, and it was there prior to COVID-19. We need to deal with those issues. We need to take concrete steps about how we're going to be able to deal with the mental wellness of individuals. And right now, COVID-19 has just accelerated that fire, and it is blowing up.

I'll go back to the Algoma region. There has been a transition. Algoma Public Health has transferred their services over to the Canadian Mental Health Association, and they're in that transition. Surprising to me is that apparently the Algoma region was the last region that CMHA weren't involved in and that the services were still being provided by the public health unit. That transition is happening, but there are individuals who are contacting my office and saying, "This transition is not happening fast enough. We feel like we're being left out." Again, reaching out to the CMHA, and knowing that there are always challenges that are going to be there with a transition—but patients and individuals and community members are hurting. We need to make sure that we address those.

Sault Ste. Marie has been without a treatment centre. Their treatment centre burned down a couple of years ago. We've been working, pursuing, along with the Sault Ste. Marie district hospital—making sure that they get a level 3 treatment centre there. I've had the discussions with Minister Tibollo about moving it along. I hope we get to

move it along, because the Algoma region needs it—per capita, we are losing family members higher than any part of this province.

I want to touch on the vaccine rollout. I talked a lot about that in the earlier opportunities I had. The realities of northern Ontario are not the realities as far as what you see on CP24. I am still getting calls from constituents whose appointments are being delayed; the vaccines are not being made available. And I'm still waiting for vaccines for people 60 and up. Recently, we've seen the news where it can be as low as 18—others are being made more available. But again, when people and seniors are sitting in their living rooms in northern Ontario and they watch the news—it is certainly not the reality that they're facing at home.

Then there's the uncertainty and frustration about, "Well, we've just suspended"—oh, the gentleman, John. John, John—son of a gun, John, I'm sorry, I forgot your last name. I know I have it in my phone, and I will follow up with you. He has received his first shot of the AstraZeneca vaccine. He's wondering, "Well, I'm sitting at home. When is the second shot going to be made available? Where is that information? When is that coming? I'm half secure right now. I feel like I'm driving my bike with one tire but the bolts are loose on it. When is that going to come for me?"

Again, the realities as far as what we see in northern Ontario are not the realities that are there—we understand that there are hot spots and that they needed it, but now it is time to make sure that there is an equitable distribution of that vaccine throughout the entire province. I want to make sure, on behalf of the voices of northern Ontario, that we get our fair share in northern Ontario. We've seen the outbreak. We actually had questions this morning in regard to what's happening up in Timmins. We want to make sure that there is a fair share of distribution across this province.

I want to go back to the mental state of how people are feeling—and the announcement that came out with the Premier today. I've been in here for three hours now, and his announcement came out three hours ago. My phone has been lit up with my staff sending me messages. "Mike, what is happening?" Quite frankly, I don't know. Again, there are too many questions and there is a lot of ambiguity in regard to what the Premier announced this afternoon, and people are frustrated or asking questions.

One of the biggest questions is, why have the students been left behind?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member.

Seeing the time on the clock, it is now time for private members' public business.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Ballot item number 90: Mr. Phillips.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The ballot item not being moved—orders of the day.

I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Government notice of motion number 111.

1800

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Resuming the debate adjourned on government notice number 111.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin to continue debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have a very short period of time left and I really want to get this in, because the mental wellness of our children is preoccupying myself and many. It should be at the forefront for everyone across this province.

From a northern lens, which is something that I always bring to the floor of this Legislature, from the Children's Centre Thunder Bay—the workers there did a study, and I want to try to read this out: “According to the mental health workers at CCTB, suicidality is increasing, hopelessness is increasing, sleep difficulties and eating problems are on the rise, and high-risk behaviour is escalating. And as much as we would like to think otherwise, virtual services, virtual learning and virtual social lives are not solving the problem. This situation is untenable and simply not acceptable. We must work to balance the threat to people's physical health with the impact on children's mental health. We must balance today's needs with the future consequences that are looming just over the horizon.”

Here are some of their statistics that they found from a short survey that they did:

“—In Thunder Bay, over the past year, kids and families have been subject to school closures and virtual learning for two thirds of their educational time.

“—A survey of CCTB employees, who are also the parents of ... children, indicates that the difficulties experienced because of school closures is twice the difficulty posed by virtual learning citing social isolation, hopelessness, mental health issues, conflicting demands, as key issues facing their children and families. Many of our employees are being crushed by the multiple demands and the distress of their clients.

“—A survey of our clients' experiences ... seen through the eyes of our clinicians suggest that 72% of open cases are currently experiencing substantial difficulties related to school closures and 69% are experiencing difficulties related to virtual learning.

“— ... 65% of our clients are experiencing more mental health difficulties; 57% are experiencing increased behaviour problems; 70% of parents are experiencing significant distress in trying to work and support virtual learning from home; and 45% of parents could no longer work because of school closures.”

There's so much information that they're going there, but the impact—the reason why I bring that is that we have to put our kids first. We have to make these decisions based on helping them.

The fact that—I'm not sure; I didn't hear the announcement that Premier Ford came out with at 3 o'clock. But where are our students? They were not even on the bus, for crying out loud. Where are they? That is tragic.

I want to talk about another thing that would help our children and our moms and dads, and I want to go back to a northern lens: campgrounds—and not just campgrounds, but boat launches and crown land. In northern Ontario, part of our way of life, in dealing with stress, is not just hooking up a trailer to a truck and going out in the bush; it's the experience of preparing for your week. You're not just preparing for three days; you're preparing for almost two to three weeks getting to that event. That is as exciting, going out into the woodlands, as anything else—and you would know, Speaker, because I can tell you, I remember at one point when your car was just swamped with everything. Anyway, it was the experience—it's the experience of preparing, of going out on the road, which is wonderful. Think of the excitement. It just gives you joy—that I'm going to be seeing new things, I'm going to be catching a fish, I'm going to be paddling in a swamp and I'm going to see a turtle. Imagine the benefit that you get for your mental wellness doing that.

That's why it's important to open up our crown lands—and understand the fact that when we go out on crown land, it's not to gather in one spot. I'm trying to get away from everybody on my street and find the most isolated spot across the lake that nobody knows about. Those are the realities of how we do things here in northern Ontario.

The other last thing I want to say, and I promised I would in the last little bit of time, is that small businesses are hurting big time—and restaurant owners, who, for whatever reason, did not qualify, because according to the application, they were not open last year. Roland LaChapelle from Wawa, who owns the Viking Restaurant and employs up to nine individuals, didn't qualify because out of his entire year of the qualification period, he needed to have a certain amount of employees and income in the month of April during the application process. He didn't apply. I'm dealing with another lady who didn't apply because she has a spa. We've implored this government to open up the small business grant to create more eligibility. Small businesses need your help. They need you to step up. There needs to be further expansion of this program.

Again, my strongest message that I'm leaving here with my time, which just flew by, is that we need to address mental wellness across this province, particularly with students and children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate that, hopefully, doesn't include the Speaker?

I recognize the member from Brampton South.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you so much, Speaker. I've heard stories of how you're an outdoor enthusiast, so I'm looking forward to being able to get outdoors with you.

It's always an honour to rise here in the House and contribute to the debate.

Members of the opposition have raised some serious concerns with the government. I think with the motion that has been presented today, in terms of the extension of the reopening act and additional powers that this will grant the government yet again, as we continue to navigate lock-

down after lockdown that has been imposed by this government—many people are struggling. I have some time and I will certainly chat about that.

But I want to take a moment to highlight some of the local community organizations that have stepped up to the plate to help our community in Brampton—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: —and across the Peel region get through this pandemic.

Organizations, like our faith-based organizations, the Ahmadiyya community in Brampton, have been helping to provide meals to our local seniors—and our food banks. The Great Lakes Mosque has been doing meal deliveries to seniors. They pick a different organization every month, and they go out and make sure that the vulnerable people who are being supported are receiving the meals they need—healthy, fresh, nutritious meals.

The Knights Table is our local food bank. I have on many occasions spoken in the House about the increased demand that our food banks are facing as food insecurity continues to rise in all of our communities. In Peel, and in Brampton in particular, we've seen our numbers double in some instances in terms of demand. The Knights Table has been trying to do its best. Organizations like Regeneration Outreach have been trying to reach at-risk homeless folks in our community, as well. But they're struggling to keep up with the increase in demand for their services. Unfortunately, the government isn't providing them with the support they need to help support those vulnerable people in our communities either.

That's why faith-based groups are stepping up to the plate to help take care of the most vulnerable people in our communities—like the Kennedy Road Tabernacle. They were sharing with me that they've got a massive church at the corner of Kennedy and Vodden Street in our riding, and they have been encouraging folks to drive through so they can get a care package with some staples, so that they can cook meals for their families. They also reached out to my office to say that if we knew anyone who needed help or assistance, we should encourage them to reach out to the Kennedy Road Tabernacle. We've certainly been connecting them to community members, as well.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: But it's not just faith-based groups that have been stepping up to the plate; it's also small businesses, like Calypso Hut, a staple in our community, providing fresh, delicious Caribbean cuisine. I know their owner, Jay, is a wonderful person who has been going above and beyond to reach out to long-term-care homes and retirement residences, making sure that their staff are getting delicious Caribbean meals, to help them nourish their bodies and souls and get through some really hard, long days.

And I can't forget Gregory's catering, which has been donating prepackaged delicious meals on a regular basis

to the Knights Table so that they can go out and do street outreach to make sure that homeless people in our community are not going hungry.

As many people know, Peel has never received its share of social service investments, and we have some of the longest wait-lists for affordable housing, for mental health services.

1810

With respect to housing, some people are waiting 14 years in order to be able to access affordable housing units—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry.

Stop the clock.

Three times I've asked to come to order—same conversation just a few minutes later. Please stop.

I will return to the member from Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you, Speaker. I think we all are experiencing some COVID-19 fatigue and want to get out of here. I don't blame the government members. But this is their motion that they've brought forward, so they should at least listen to what the opposition is raising here. There are some serious concerns.

It's not just us; stakeholders across the province are concerned about the government's continued power grab here through Bill 195, which has really detrimental impacts across our province and to multiple communities.

I was trying to start us off on a positive note, to highlight some of the good work that folks have been doing across the province and in my community to help us get through it—because, unfortunately, the government has really failed to help people navigate this pandemic and help them feel supported and help them feel like there's a light at the end of the tunnel. I'll chat a little bit about that now.

I shared all of the good work that our local faith-based organizations and our small businesses are doing.

It's also important that we acknowledge how difficult it has been for people in Brampton Centre and across Ontario. I know in every single riding of this province, members are receiving communications from small businesses, from workers, from seniors who are wondering what is going on here in the province of Ontario.

The Ontario Federation of Labour makes it clear that the Conservatives' proposed reopening Ontario act did give them special powers, and they're very concerned about this continuing on now until December 1, with the extension that this motion seeks to achieve.

The introduction of this bill made many people become very worried about the impacts this was going to have on our democracy.

As we've heard already from other members, members of the PC caucus were forced to give up their seat, and they were kicked out of caucus for speaking truth to power about what this government was doing. We heard from those members about those experiences and how they tried to advocate to this government what the right approach was. I applaud them for taking a principled stand and

standing up for their constituents and for democracy in the province of Ontario.

As the Ontario Federation of Labour points out, the Ford government has clearly used its emergency powers to override things like collective agreements, limiting many workers' ability to file grievances when their rights in the workplace have been violated.

And instead of fixing the root and systemic problems that have caused sectors like long-term care to fall into disrepair, frankly, this government has focused its attacks on the very front-line workers they continue to call heroes.

This week, we celebrated PSW Day, and we just celebrated nurses week. The government continues to applaud these front-line workers as heroes. We all agree that they are heroes, but I think what we disagree on is the empty platitudes from this government, time after time—when they want to thank front-line workers for the heroic efforts they've been doing, but they don't want to ensure that these people have a livable wage. They don't want to make the PSW pay permanent. In fact, that is set to expire at the end of June, and the government has given no indication of whether that pay increase is going to be made permanent for those PSWs. These are precariously employed individuals, many of them piecing together two to three jobs in order to make ends meet.

I had a chance to connect with many PSWs throughout the pandemic, and they shared the reality of the work they do. I found it horrifying to learn that many of them, because they were working in multiple homes—due to regulations that the government introduced, they were limiting mobility to work at multiple sites. Some of these PSWs are now at risk of losing a source of income, because some of the congregate care settings that they were working in and employed through have terminated their contracts with those PSWs.

I asked the Solicitor General, in our emergency management oversight committee, if there was any plan to help these PSWs out, because it was their regulations that prevented these folks from working in multiple homes, because the system was in such disrepair. They should at least acknowledge that these folks were being terminated and losing a source of income—nothing. It was as if she didn't even understand that this was the reality of many of these front-line workers, and I find that extremely disappointing. Yet again, they stand up in the House and they want to applaud PSWs, but they don't understand the reality of what these folks are subjected to, and they don't even want to pay them fairly.

As we've learned through the Auditor General's report, the Canadian Armed Forces report, the long-term-care commission and many reports before this—they all indicate very clearly that long-term care has been neglected in the province of Ontario. Liberal governments, the Ford Conservatives, as well as Conservative governments before them, cut and privatized our long-term-care system, neglected to ensure that there were improvements being made to ward rooms, to ensure that there were enough beds and capacity being increased to not-for-profit homes rather than for-profit homes. In fact, what this government

did was actually make that worse. In the year-plus since we've been in a state of some emergency or another, the government has failed to act on any of these recommendations. They did not hire more PSWs throughout the summer, when we know that other provinces were able to do so. They did not hire more nurses in those homes. They did not increase infection control measures, like recommendations stated that they should. They did not try to separate residents to avoid outbreaks. And when they knew that homes were in crisis, they waited days and days before calling in the military to help.

Speaker, blaming the federal government seems to be the order of the day for the government here in Ontario, but they have a responsibility, as well, to be protecting people in our communities.

We know that they failed seniors. They continue to fail workers in the province of Ontario, as well.

Paid sick days: Our colleague from London West introduced her bill, I believe, on March 11 of last year—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: December.

Ms. Sara Singh: Oh, December; there we go, sorry—December of last year. Unfortunately, the government chose not to support this bill, the Stay Home If You Are Sick Act, which would have provided 14 days of paid sick days to workers, something that medical experts said was needed in order to help us prevent outbreaks in workplaces.

In the community of Brampton and Peel, we know where the outbreaks were happening in our city and our region: It was in our workplaces, in our manufacturing, in logistics, in food processing, because our essential workers were still going in to work, even when they were sick, because they could not stay home, because they did not have access to paid sick days. Again, when we talk about precariously employed individuals—many of these folks have to make the difficult decision between going in to work or putting food on the table. That's not an easy decision to make when you have a family to support, when the cost of auto insurance continues to rise in your community, when the cost of housing continues to go up; it is difficult to make a decision to stay home.

We know through research that was done by Peel region that 25% of the 8,000 individuals they interviewed and surveyed were still going in to work sick, because they didn't have a choice.

Dr. Loh, Patrick Brown, Bonnie Crombie, Mayor Tory—the list could go on and on—their own science table recommended implementing paid sick days in a timely fashion. The government dithered and delayed, and that actually cost us lives in the province of Ontario.

1820

And we are in deeper, longer lockdowns because of the government's inaction.

When they had an opportunity to act and help us potentially prevent another lockdown here in the province of Ontario, as we navigated the second wave to the third, they chose not to make those investments in our communities. In fact, they chose to ignore the advice of medical experts and started opening things up in early April, when it was very clear in February that the modelling said if we

did that, we were going to be heading towards a disaster. But what they did was communicate to small businesses that they could open up their patios and that they should start preparing for a reopening. So those small businesses went out and purchased supplies. They called employees back. They purchased food and beverages that they then had to throw out, because 48 hours later the government decided, “Actually, we’re going to backtrack on what we just announced, and you can’t reopen.”

I think this really underscores one of the biggest challenges throughout this pandemic with this government—the absolutely chaotic communication. There is no reason that the government is not following the science. It defies logic that the medical experts, their science table, are very clear on what needs to be done, but then they show up at a press conference grasping at straws and making these very extreme decisions without actually consulting with the very folks who are going to be impacted by this.

For example, we all remember the infamous press conference where the Premier announced that he was closing down the playgrounds and bringing in the police, because that was the way through the pandemic. And then 24 hours later, we had every police service in Ontario saying, “We were never even asked if we wanted all these extraordinary powers. We don’t want to be carding folks on the street. We don’t want to be stopping essential workers on their way to work.” They didn’t even ask anybody, just like they didn’t ask anyone about outdoor recreation. The science table was clear: Outdoor recreation is safe. The approach of closing the playgrounds and shutting down outdoor recreation and amenities made the government feel like they were doing something, but it defied logic and science.

That’s why we see ourselves in the situation that we do. It’s extremely troubling. The chaotic communication during a pandemic, during an emergency, has contributed to people’s anxiety, their fear. Their mental health and well-being has been suffering, because the government can’t seem to figure things out or do what the science experts have recommended that they do. Our children, our seniors, small business owners—these are the people who are paying the price for the government’s failure to understand what needs to be implemented in our province.

When we think about young children who are experiencing mental health concerns and illnesses in record-breaking numbers, it’s absolutely horrifying that even today, the government’s announcement—while I’m sure we’re all relieved that they’re actually listening to the science and allowing people to get out and play safely, there was no mention of students and education, no plan to reopen our schools, not a single investment being made that will help us actually get to a safe reopening of our schools.

Children are struggling with school closures, the lack of access to sports and recreational programs. They’re dealing with social isolation. Our children have been hardest hit. The numbers in terms of suicide attempts are going up—I’m sorry. I talk to my constituents on a regular basis. It’s really hard. I speak to parents—and I speak to young people—who don’t know where to turn when their

children are experiencing mental health concerns. We have some of the longest wait-lists in the province—over 730 days for a young person to get access to mental health supports in the Peel region. Many of these young people are attempting suicide because they really don’t know where else to go. The government hasn’t helped create supports for them.

So the chaotic communications only contribute to this anxiety that people are feeling.

A hybrid model is not going to help students—especially those who are at risk, who are racialized, who may have special needs—to actually feel like they’re connected.

It’s so disappointing to know that the government has the opportunity to make the investments we need to safely reopen our schools, to keep our educators safe, and they choose not to.

There’s so much that we need to talk about—vaccines, for example. It feels like *The Hunger Games* for most folks out here in the province of Ontario. If they’re lucky to be on Twitter at the right time, they’re able to access a vaccine and book an appointment. But why should it be this way? It’s because the government failed to plan effectively. I know that when I’m connecting with folks in our community, they’re wondering if there’s even a plan to help get people their second doses in a timely manner, or are we going to see the same slow and sloppy rollout we did the first time with the vaccine strategy here in the province of Ontario?

Speaker, as I wrap up my time here today, I think it’s important to highlight for the government that it’s not just my riding that is experiencing these concerns; it’s every single member in this chamber who has a responsibility to stand up for their constituents, to ensure that small businesses are getting the supports they need; that young people are able to access mental health services and supports in a timely manner; that workers are being protected, rather than having their rights infringed upon—and that instead of applauding our front-line workers, they have a responsibility to actually take care of those folks and resource the long-term-care sector appropriately. These are all things that are within the government’s power. I urge them to do that.

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

Ms. Jones has moved government notice of motion 111, relating to the extension of a period of emergency.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

MOVING ONTARIANS
MORE SAFELY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À ASSURER
À LA POPULATION ONTARIENNE
DES DÉPLACEMENTS PLUS SÛRS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 20, 2021, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 282, An Act in respect of various road safety matters / Projet de loi 282, Loi concernant diverses questions de sécurité routière.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: The Moving Ontarians More Safely Act is one that touches on a number of different things, and each of us here in the House, whenever we get up to talk about something, tends to talk about things that are more relevant to each of our own ridings. I'm not going to be any different on this one. As I'm talking about it, I'm going to focus on things that are most important to the people in my riding, because when we put legislation in, we are doing things on behalf of the people we represent.

I do recognize that there are a number of things in here for different sections of the more urban areas, and when we look at the changes that are being made to the tow truck industry, it's predominantly for the 401 corridor. There are sections of the 400-series highways that will be set up so that it will be restricted who could be coming in as a tow truck operator in the event of an accident, and I understand that that's important to a lot of people in areas that are outside of my riding. It's not really going to have an effect in my riding, so I'm not going to touch on that very much.

There was some conversation earlier today in the debate about this bill about e-bikes, and one of the things that makes me very happy about this is that we're looking at it from the perspective of different municipalities and how those municipalities will actually deal with e-bikes differently, because there is no one-size-fits-all. Even in my own riding, in the city of Peterborough, we have an urban centre. We have a significant number of bicycle lanes. They're working towards the gold standard—and there actually is one—for bikes and bike lanes. But if I move just 12 kilometres away from the city of Peterborough, I'm into Bridgenorth, which is a small town that does not have that same infrastructure, nor does it have that same need for it. And if I move just another five kilometres from that, I'm in Ennismore.

1830

Ennismore is a great community. They have put a number of professional lacrosse players into the NLL—

Hon. Todd Smith: Good hockey players there too, like Dave Roche.

Mr. Dave Smith: Dave Roche, a professional hockey player.

Ennismore is a hamlet of about 300 people, so it's amazing that they've put as many professional athletes into different sports as they have. It's essentially just two streets; there are a couple of small side streets that are dead ends that come off of them. Their requirements for e-bikes are

vastly different than what they are in Peterborough—and that is vastly different than what it is in Toronto. For me to talk about some of that great work that has been done on it—it means nothing to the people in my riding, for the most part, because it doesn't affect the people in my riding.

I think that whenever you put legislation forward, you have to recognize that you're legislating for the entire province, and you have to do it in a way that doesn't create a negative, unintended consequence for different sections of the province. So giving the municipalities the ability to make adjustments to suit their needs, to suit what the people they represent want makes an awful lot of sense.

What I will touch on—I talked about it during second reading, and I talked about it with a few private member's bills—is the stunt driving. During COVID-19, stunt driving has become almost its own epidemic.

We don't have, in my communities, the same type of stunt driving—it's not guys with hot-rodded import cars doing doughnuts in the middle of the street or in different sections of a subdivision. But we do have a great deal of stunt driving.

The old Mosport raceway is not far from my riding. If you go down the 115, you can get to it. We do have Peterborough Speedway, though, which is only a 1/3-mile track. It's really interesting, because it seems like Highway 115 has become part of the raceways now.

In January, one day, at 11 o'clock in the morning, the Peterborough county OPP clocked a vehicle travelling 162 kilometres an hour on Highway 115. It was a 20-year-old driver from Peterborough. He was charged with stunt driving. About three and a half hours later, in the opposite direction on the 115, they clocked a driver doing 167 kilometres an hour. He was a 20-year-old, as well, from Courtice, heading back from Peterborough to Courtice.

In February, in one weekend, there were three separate incidences on Highway 115: a 25-year-old from Etobicoke doing 157 at 9 a.m., a 44-year-old from Toronto doing 154 at 1:30 that afternoon, and a 20-year-old from Bowmanville doing 160 at about 3:30 in the afternoon. The irony of that was that the 25-year-old and the 20-year-old were coming up to Peterborough to take their full G driver's licence tests.

There's a real failing in our system when you don't have your full driver's licence yet and you're driving to the testing centre, and you're doing more than 100 miles an hour.

I know that there are some members who are sitting in here saying, "What's 100 miles an hour?" It's 160 kilometres an hour. There are people who may be watching, like my parents, who would recognize and understand 100 miles an hour far more than they would if I was to say 160 kilometres an hour. That is an excessive speed on a public highway.

What this legislation will do is increase significantly what these fines are for these individuals. It changes it from a seven-day impoundment to a 14-day impoundment. Why would that matter?

The interesting part for the one gentleman was, it was a rental car. He would have 14 days of additional rent that he'd have to pay for it, which I think is a great punishment to hand over to them, because there would be no way for him to get out of that. A 30-day driver's licence suspension, on the spot—the first offence that you're convicted of, it is a suspension for a minimum of one year, up to three years. For a second offence, a minimum of three, all the way up to 10. For a third offence, it starts as a lifetime suspension; you do have an opportunity to appeal it and have it reduced at a later date. If you're lucky enough to have it reduced and you're given your driver's licence again and you do it a fourth time, then it is a lifetime suspension.

We've also lowered the threshold for stunt driving on roads that are less than 80 kilometres an hour. Now, if you're doing 40 kilometres over the speed limit, that would be considered stunt driving. Think about that in a residential neighbourhood, where the speed limit is 50. If you're doing 90, that is most definitely reckless driving. That is most definitely stunt driving. So lowering that threshold is a very good idea.

I talked about it in second reading, as well. We're changing the narrative around this. It's very similar to the narrative that was changed with drunk driving. I'm 51—I've talked about my age a few times here in the House.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: No, you're not 51.

Mr. Dave Smith: I am 51, yes.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: What's your secret to looking so young?

Interjections.

Mr. Dave Smith: Grecian Formula, just like—if you recall that commercial.

As I said, I'm 51. I grew up in a small town, and there was a narrative then with friends of my parents, where the joke was that you had to drive drunk because you were too drunk to walk home, and that was reasonably acceptable. We've changed a lot of things with respect to the Highway Traffic Act and what is acceptable behaviour.

I don't want to out my parents, so to speak, as being irresponsible, but I think back to being a kid—I lived in Wellington. I lived in Minister Smith's riding.

Hon. Todd Smith: Ron Smith.

Mr. Dave Smith: Ron Smith is my father, yes. We lived in Wellington. My grandparents lived in Belleville. My father had a 1972 Chevy half-ton. I remember it really well. It was a side-step and it was red, with a bench seat big enough for Mom and Dad. That was our family vehicle. When we would go to Belleville during the summer, three lawn chairs would be put in the back of the truck. My brother, my sister and I would ride in those lawn chairs. They were the ones that were aluminum tubes with the weaved nylon seat, so they might have weighed half a pound in total. There was nothing to them. Because they were aluminum and the bed of the truck was wood, it was like stepping on ice. And that's how we would drive to Belleville. There were times when I know my father was laughing about it, because he and Mom would be in the front seat—the only seat in the truck—and he'd have a

jackrabbit start so that we'd all slide back to the back of the truck, and then we'd pull our seats forward again, or he'd turn the corner really quick and then look to see where we were, just to see us sliding around in the back of the truck. It's not to say that he was irresponsible. That's not it at all. That's what was the norm.

1840

I talked as well during second reading about how just outside of Wellington, near the dump, MTO donated the paint to put a drag strip on that county road. You would never think to do something like that today.

We're changing the narrative around stunt driving. It's not something that's cool. It's not something that's safe. In fact, it's very dangerous. It's something that can cause a lot of harm.

One of my colleagues talked about it today—I believe it was the member from Flamborough—

Hon. Todd Smith: Glanbrook.

Mr. Dave Smith: Glanbrook, yes. She talked about a 2,000-pound vehicle travelling at excessive speeds.

I've got a 1965 Corvair Corsa.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Beautiful.

Mr. Dave Smith: It's a beautiful little car, yes. And it's considered a 1960s sports car.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Is it red?

Mr. Dave Smith: It is red, yes, and it's in the parking lot. It's considered a sports car. Its top speed is about 160 kilometres an hour. You're really pushing it to go much faster than that.

With today's vehicles, the least expensive economic vehicle—the Chevy Spark, for example—has no problem doing 160 kilometres an hour. You don't need any horsepower. For the sports cars that we have today, it's not uncommon for them to have 400, 500, even 700 horsepower. Mine is 56 years old and it's 140 horsepower, and that was considered a sports car back in the day. It was a different thought process. It was a different type of vehicle that you were driving. Now we're talking about 2,000, 2,500, maybe even a 3,000-pound vehicle that's got a 300 or 400 horsepower engine in it, with probably a six-speed. It's a rocket. And if you're not careful, if you're irresponsible with it, you're going to kill someone. It's a weapon.

We need to change the narrative today. We need to change that thought process. It's not cool. It's not something that you should just go out and do.

If you google "stunt driving in Ontario," if you go to YouTube and do it, there are thousands of videos where people have taken their smart phone and recorded the stupid activity that they've done. There's a narrative from so many that this is cool and this is what they should do. We've seen a rise in stunt driving in Ontario since COVID-19, probably because the streets are empty and it makes it easier for people to do that.

What this legislation does is put in some serious penalties for it as a deterrent. And if you get caught doing it, it's a pretty severe offence. The first conviction for stunt driving now is a minimum of a one-year suspension. Think about those two kids—think about those two 20-year-olds; I sound like my father now, talking about 20-year-olds as

“kids.” Think about them coming up. They don’t have their full driver’s licence yet. They’re going to the driver test centre. Because they’re in their twenties, they’re probably nearing the end of the time that they have to go for that full licence. They get pulled over doing 60 kilometres an hour or more above the speed limit. It’s an automatic driver’s suspension. Their insurance is going to go through the roof. But the key is, they get a one- to three-year suspension the first time they do it, which likely means they have to go all the way back to the beginning and start over again. So it’s not just a one-year suspension for them. Realistically, it’s about three or four years before they get their full driver’s licence—which is something that should be a deterrent for someone to doing those types of things.

I only have a couple of minutes left, but one of the other things I want to talk about is protecting workers on highways. Again, with my riding, it’s not the same as when you’re talking about the eight lanes or 12 lanes or whatever it is on the 401, with the collectors and the express lanes going in multiple directions, and the feed-in streets and so on with it, where you’ve got construction going on, but we do have significant construction.

I’ll talk about Highway 28 in particular. Highway 28 is a section that goes from Peterborough all the way up to Bancroft, and it’s a section of highway that feeds into a lot of cottage country. I’ve got 123,000 people who live in my riding, but we swell to about 160,000 during the summer because of seasonal residents.

What we’re finding is that we get people coming up from areas that are not part of Peterborough—predominantly the 905 area code. They buy their cottage, and they come flying up the Highway 28, travelling as if they were on the 401, in the summer—and that’s the only time we can do any road construction on it. Doing things to make it safer for those construction workers is something that I applaud in this piece of legislation. Having automatic flag assistance devices is something that will be a great benefit, because when you’ve got a two-lane road, one lane in each direction, and you’ve got a grader travelling down it to clean up the shoulder, having an automated flagging system to let people know that there is that road construction going on is something that could save someone’s life. You’re travelling up over a hill, you come up over it—and on Highway 28, they’re consistently doing 110 or 120 in an 80 zone. When you pull up behind that grader, which is going to take up the whole lane just because of the size of it—and it’s probably 10 tons—when you hit that at 110 or more, you’re not living. This is one of those things that are in the bill that will absolutely protect people and stop some of those accidents.

So I thank the minister and the associate minister for putting that legislation in—because it’s not just for the GTA area; it’s also for rural areas like mine.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. You always give very impassioned speeches in the House. Thanks for highlighting some of

the concerns around folks speeding on our highways and roadways. I think that’s important.

I’ve listened to government members talk about the impacts that this has and the increased fines that are needed, but one of the things that I haven’t effectively heard from Conservative members is with respect to how you’re actually going to educate people about this behaviour and how you’re going to help change that behaviour. I understand that fines are one tool that you’re using as a punitive measure, but we could work towards preventing this from happening in the first place.

So could you help us understand what your government is planning to do to help educate younger drivers with respect to safety on our roadways?

Mr. Dave Smith: That is one of the challenges that all governments have whenever they introduce new legislation—how do you get that education out to the people when you have something that’s going to make a change to it?

Obviously, these types of changes are something that will be incorporated for all of those new drivers as they are coming through the process, because part of the driver education process is teaching those young, inexperienced drivers how to do things differently.

It is more of a significant challenge for us with those existing drivers, but it’s no different than, as I talked about earlier in my speech, drunk driving. It’s a whole process of education that we’ll have to go through to get people to recognize that this is something that is serious, and it is as serious as driving drunk.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: There have been a number of stakeholders from a variety of sectors who have been quite supportive of this bill: mayors, municipalities—some from our area, the region of Durham—law enforcement and road safety advocates. I wonder if my colleague could speak a little more about that level of support, beyond just what I’ve referenced—other sectors as well.

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Mr. Dave Smith: This is something we had a great deal of consultation on, and we’ve gotten a great deal of support from a number of different stakeholders involved with this.

When you look at the construction industry, this is something that they have said is going to be very valuable for them—the road construction side of it, when you look at what’s happening with the changes for the automated flags.

These are the types of things that are going to make a very positive difference for us. We got that feedback from all of the stakeholders on these changes.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for his comments.

I wasn’t in the committee when it was reviewing this legislation, but I have been talking to my colleagues who were there, and certainly, we’ve been looking very

carefully at this bill. One of the things that I think we've all found very confusing and perhaps a little bit concerning is that, with regard to the provisions around e-bikes, the legislation is not consistent with the EU and the US markets in its application of the word "e-bikes." I know that the members of the opposition brought forward amendments which I think would have been very helpful and would have assisted the government in this regard and assisted the e-bike industry and users here in Ontario.

Could the member explain why the government rejected those amendments and why this bill is going forward without those amendments?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much for the question.

One of the things that has come forward as a narrative from the opposition is that there are going to be e-bikes that are currently on the road that are outlawed, which is absolutely not the case. Not a single e-bike that is in use right now in Ontario is going to be outlawed as a result of this.

What this legislation does that I think is so very important is, it gives municipalities the ability to choose what is going to be most effective for their area. I spoke about that in my speech. What you need in downtown Toronto for an e-bike is not the same as what you need in downtown Ennismore. Making it so that it's one-size-fits-all and making it more restrictive so that those municipalities can't have the choice and can't customize it specifically for their needs is something that is doing a disservice to the people of Ontario. This bill gets it right.

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

Mr. Will Bouma: Speaker, through you: I appreciate the comments from the member from Peterborough-Kawartha.

In my riding, we have Highway 24 running north-south between Brantford and Cambridge-Kitchener-Waterloo. I'm a volunteer firefighter, and significantly, it's not uncommon for us to be on that highway at accidents. It seems weekly I read in the paper that there's stunt driving occurring on Highway 24.

So I was wondering if the member could explain a little bit more—and I know he covered some of that—about just exactly what we're doing, as far as fines and penalties for stunt driving go, to try to dissuade people from doing that.

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate the question from the member from Brantford-Brant.

One of the key things on this is that we're lowering the threshold in areas where it's 80 kilometres an hour or lower so that stunt driving is at 40 kilometres above the speed limit. We have increased the fines. We've increased the suspensions. We have increased the impoundment of the vehicle for it.

I talked about Highway 28 in my riding—I'm sure it's very, very similar to yours. It's a stretch of road that is relatively straight. It is hilly at times. It is a country road at times. People drive far too fast. When you're taking a vehicle that is 2,500, 3,000, 4,000 pounds, and you've got a trailer behind you, and you're zipping down a road that

was designed for 80 kilometres an hour and you're doing 120 to 150, you will kill someone. We're trying to prevent that.

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: There have been three children who have died on our roads in the GTA over the last few weeks. It's unbelievably tragic. I'm sure many of you have read about it in the news.

One of the amendments that we introduced to Bill 282 came from the road safety community—MADD, Bike Law, Friends and Families for Safe Streets—and what they asked for is tougher penalties for people who break the rules and kill or injure someone like a child, like a road worker, like a pedestrian or a senior. These things are simple. One of them is that they just hear victim impact statements. Many drivers who kill and injure don't even have to turn up to court. Sometimes they walk away with a few-hundred-dollar fine.

My request to you is, can you look into including the vulnerable road users law amendments in the bill or look into introducing them afterwards in regulation?

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you very much for the question.

My heart goes out to those families. I've got three kids. They're adults now. I know the stress that we went through as a family when one of my children was very, very sick. I can't imagine the pain that they would be going through.

I don't want to get into too much of the details of that specific accident. My understanding is that it is an open investigation with the police right now and that there is the potential for Criminal Code charges. Criminal Code charges are something that are outside of the purview of the province of Ontario. We're dealing with the Highway Traffic Act.

I think that any time we can assist and help—so that where there is an opportunity for Criminal Code charges to be laid, we should be doing those things to help with that, because that's really where it needs to be addressed. It's a criminal activity when you've gone out and purposefully done something that has caused that much harm and pain to a family.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I believe we have time for a quick back-and-forth. I recognize the minister.

Hon. Todd Smith: I do want to thank the member from Peterborough-Kawartha for spinning a few good yarns here during his speech on this this evening. He's a great storyteller.

And I want to thank the Minister of Transportation for the work that she has done on this bill.

On a lighter note, the Leafs are opening their playoff series tonight. I'm just wondering what the member from Peterborough-Kawartha would believe is a safe speed for the Stanley Cup championship parade to proceed at here in Toronto.

Mr. Dave Smith: That is an excellent question. It's one that needs to be answered.

What I'm going to say, because I am such a huge George Armstrong fan, and George Armstrong was the last captain to hoist the cup over his head—it must be 10.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise this evening to join the debate on Bill 282, the Moving Ontarians More Safely Act. It is a pleasure to speak on behalf of many constituents in London West who emailed me about this bill.

I'll talk a little bit about the good things that are in this bill, but I will be spending most of my time on the concerns that were raised in terms of the impact on e-bikes, which are very popular in my community and communities across Ontario.

This bill includes a number of provisions that will certainly make a difference to improve road safety in the province, and I want to acknowledge the important work that has been done by members of the official opposition to support that work.

In particular, I want to acknowledge the MPP for University–Rosedale, who introduced a private member's bill called the Doored But Not Ignored Act. Those provisions around dooring are, thankfully, reflected in this bill. That will definitely make streets safer for cyclists in this province, who previously could have been caught in a dooring accident, and there was no requirement for police to even come to the incident and report it. So that will make a big difference.

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It would have been nice if the private member's bill that was introduced by my colleague the member for Davenport, the Teach the Reach bill, had also been included, because that private member's bill was a way to help prevent dooring in the first place—to encourage drivers to reach over to open their door, which forced them to check the road to make sure that there wasn't a cyclist coming along. That would have been an extra improvement on this bill. It's unfortunate that that wasn't there.

I do want to say that the convictions for stunt driving and the penalties that are proposed in this bill for careless driving causing bodily harm are a positive step forward. But it would, again, have been nice to have seen more of the work that has been done by the official opposition—your own bill, Speaker, the Fairness for Road Users Act (Contraventions Causing Death or Serious Bodily Harm), that private member's bill that you had introduced as the MPP for Oshawa; or, again, my colleague the member for University–Rosedale's private member's bill, the Protecting Vulnerable Road Users Act. Both of those bills included more serious consequences. That would have been important, I think, to further the safety of road users in Ontario.

With that, I want to go to the issue of e-bikes. I want to recognize and thank Ben Cowie from London, who is president of the London Bicycle Café. It is a popular business, a growing business in London, as more and more Londoners look to e-bikes as a way to help the environment and to get around safely. Ben Cowie has mobilized a

movement, actually, across the province, connecting businesses like his in communities across Ontario that all became very concerned about the proposed legislation and what it would mean for the vast majority of e-bikes that are currently on the road in the province.

Basically, the legislation sets out definitions for e-bikes that will effectively ban bicycles that are currently being used and that would be completely legal if they did not have the electric assist.

Ben Cowie wrote to the Standing Committee on General Government, when the bill was before the standing committee, raising concerns, as he says, that Bill 282 “unintentionally bans products that are already used safely every day in our province by families, municipalities, corporations, and even organizations funded by the provincial government.”

Having pointed out to the government that this bill unintentionally has that impact of banning these vehicles, these bicycles, it's curious that the government decided to proceed anyway. They moved from unintentionally banning these e-bikes to intentionally banning these e-bikes, and so that raises big concerns for all of the people in this province who have these vehicles already in their homes. They're using these e-bikes to get around.

I just want to share some of the emails that I have received from some of those Londoners who have e-bikes and are concerned about whether they will now be breaking the law because this government decided to ignore the input that was brought to the committee when the bill was being considered. Nancy McCreery writes to me, “As a mom who recently went car-free in the city of London six months ago, the addition of our e-bike ... has been a game-changer for my family. We chose to give up our car in an effort to help the planet. I support the bill generally but would like to see the attached commentary be included,” and the attached commentary she's referring to is the submission from Ben Cowie and the London Bicycle Café.

Similarly, here is another email from Chris, who says, “I just wanted to let you know that I support the MOMS Act with the attached ... commentary included, so I'm not driving my illegal cargo bike around to move my family and have to go back to driving....”

“We gave up our car in October of last year to make our city and the planet better and less dependent on cars to get around. We now use our cargo e-bike as our main mode of transportation from groceries to taking our daughter to activities and recently we even took our pets to the vet.”

Marlene Jones wrote, “I bought my Urban Cruiser e-bike in 2016. It was easy to ride and I loved it immediately. With five pedal assist levels, I was able to ride my e-bicycle effortlessly, even climbing the hill at Blackfriars, although suffering from osteoarthritis for many years. In 2018, I had both knees replaced. Each spring, summer and fall from 2016 through to my retirement in 2019, I rode my e-bike daily to and from work (7.5 km each way). I saved thousands of kilometres on my car, as well as dollars to buy the gasoline it takes to run a car, and I got fresh and exercise in return.”

Marlene's experience shows the value of e-bikes to people in the province who are experiencing mobility or accessibility challenges as a very accessible and environmentally friendly mode of transportation.

This email is from Laura Wall, a constituent in London West. She says, "While I don't (yet) have an electric bike I have friends and family for whom this has been a game-changer to enabling them to get around more, go further, reduce their dependence on the car, and all around health and well-being to move about the community safely...."

"That said, my understanding is a number of technical challenges with aspects of the legislation are not aligned with industry/global standards developed.... The majority, if not all e-bikes/cargo cycles are imported and an 'Ontario-specific' model is unlikely to be manufactured. Plus, there has been a positive growth of power-assisted cycling in every part of Ontario and what is the impact on existing cycles?"

I think that Laura asks a very valid question. A lot of Ontarians are asking that same question: What will be the impact of this bill that suddenly makes what were legal bicycles all of a sudden in contravention of the law?

So, Speaker, having shared those concerns of the people in London West, I will wrap up my remarks. But I would plead with the government to listen to what they heard during the committee from Ben Cowie and others about the need to ensure that the standards that have been created for e-bikes don't unintentionally discourage the use of those bicycles in the province.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member's debate. I just wanted to ask the member: The MOMS Act proposes the Towing and Storage Safety and Enforcement Act, which would require tow operators, tow truck drivers, and vehicle storage operators to have a provincial certificate to operate. It also proposes vehicle and equipment requirements for tow trucks and provides protection for persons requesting or receiving towing and storage services. Does the member opposite agree with the steps outlined to combat the fraud and criminal activity seen and experienced by many in the towing industry?

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Ms. Peggy Sattler: Certainly, there had been awareness of the need to introduce accountability within the towing sector. Hopefully, this is the legislative solution to help regulate the towing industry, as well as, I would point out, the vehicle storage industry, which—there have been media reports and others about misconduct and violence in those sectors. I think that it's helpful to allow municipalities to create restricted towing zones within their jurisdiction, and that's a good step forward.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, the MOMS Act proposes an automated camera enforcement network to allow photo evidence of vehicles that illegally pass streetcars on the left or streetcars with the doors open to pick up or drop

off passengers. Does the member opposite support this measure to protect transit riders?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Absolutely, I support that measure, and I'm very grateful to my colleague the member for University–Rosedale for bringing that measure forward in her private member's bill, the Doored But Not Ignored Act. She recognized, certainly before this government did, the critical importance of making dooring a reportable offence and also to protect pedestrians and transit riders who are getting on and off the streetcars in the city of Toronto.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I really enjoyed the presentation the member brought forward, particularly the information that she brought from her constituents when it pertains to the e-bikes. There are a lot of good things that are in this bill, a lot of things that are supportive, like the issues with the road workers, the fact that we need an accountability process for the tow truck industry. Numerous times over the past week I've stood in my place talking about the need, and the particular relationship that I have with the tow truck driver out of Elliot Lake.

The reason why I want to put the question to the member is, there's always something within the context of the bill that we have to revisit and that we have to now reintroduce new legislation to fix the problems that are there. This is something we could have done with the e-bikes. A lot of your constituents are suggesting—and made good suggestions—of how to eliminate that. I would like the member to expand on what those suggestions are and where the direction is coming from, from her constituents.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I appreciate the question from my colleague. Once again, I want to refer to the considerable efforts and advocacy of Ben Cowie and the London Bicycle Café, who made a very handy chart for the government, pointing out exactly where all these unintended consequences were stemming from in the legislation. He set out exactly each schedule of the bill, what is currently written, what they believed was intended, what are the unintended consequences and how this could be fixed. All the government has to do is refer to Ben Cowie's table and implement those solutions, and problem solved.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions? No questions.

Further debate? Further debate?

Ms. Mulroney has moved third reading of Bill 282, An Act in respect of various road safety matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I think I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

SICKLE CELL DISEASE AWARENESS
DAY AND THALASSEMIA
AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021
SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION
À LA DRÉPANOCYTOSE ET LA JOURNÉE
DE SENSIBILISATION
AUX THALASSÉMIES

Ms. Khanjin moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 255, An Act to proclaim Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day / Projet de loi 255, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation à la drépanocytose et la Journée de sensibilisation aux thalassémies.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm delighted that Bill 255 has made it to third reading. I just wanted to echo the importance of the bill that we are debating today. May 8 marked thalassemia day nationally in Canada, but it was very important for one of the largest provinces, being Ontario, to also recognize those and the many families affected by thalassemia. Likewise, around the corner, we're looking at June 19 for Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day. What better time than today to be able to pass this bill so that we can be able to celebrate June 19 officially in Ontario, for the first time, as Sickle Cell Awareness Day?

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Lanre, who walked into my constituency office when I first was elected and really educated and informed me about what sickle cell was. She took time to sit down with me. She talked about her family history and what happened to her brother. That inspired her to found the Sickle Cell Awareness Group. She founded it many years ago, well before I was elected MPP, and she's done a lot of work on the initiative.

One thing that she brought to my attention: She said it was great that Ontario is doing newborn screening for sickle cell and thalassemia, but we have this handbook that the Ministry of Health had come up with—which is really helpful, but how do we take this handbook and build on it to help our doctors, our nurses and those working on the front lines? She said, "You know, what would really help is if we bring more awareness to this issue in Ontario, because Ontario is responsible for health care, and that would lead to so many other changes and awareness." So that brought me to working on this bill.

She also met with my colleague from Mississauga–Lakeshore. He took great interest in this topic as well. We thought we would join efforts, like so many of us do, to introduce this bill, Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day, so that we can not only honour those who, unfortunately, have passed from either disease, but for those families, to pay tribute and to really help the future of these two diseases be a little bit better and a little more comfortable than it is today.

In Ontario, for example, there are 3,500 people with the disease of sickle cell, and about 6,000 in Canada. When it comes to thalassemia, we've got about 1,200. About 75%

of those live in Ontario. This is not just about those individuals, but it affects so many people's lives. When we introduced this bill, with the MPP for Mississauga–Lakeshore, we took to the task right away. We spoke with OMA, and I want to thank the folks at OMA who took the time to meet with us. We've been able to come up with a lot more ideas than just awareness day, but to really build on the awareness day, build on the work that they're doing at the Ministry of Health.

I wanted to give a special shout-out to Dr. Jacob Pendergrast. He's really been at the forefront of sickle cell support. He actually puts together conferences for medical students, and they're able to get a CMA accreditation by going to these conferences. He has really been able to help with that continuous education part. One thing we learned from the medical side with Lanre and others is that medical students learn so much in med school, but oftentimes when they end up picking a specialization, or depending what they go on, they may often forget what they learned, and that's just the nature of many professions, not just medical doctors. It doesn't make them bad people; it just happens. He talked about the need for, of course, that continuous education, the ability, if someone wants to brush up on sickle cell or learn a little bit more about other blood disorders or thalassemia, to have a forum for it.

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Many doctors and many universities like U of T had built on different modules that they could offer, but this conference that Dr. Pendergrast put together was really effective. They worked with U of T; they worked with different pharma companies to be able to put it together. So, he was really delighted to see that the government is also putting forward a bill that does recognize thalassemia and sickle cell disease, because it helps him also highlight the importance of the work that he is doing and, of course, the work he is doing for his patients.

When it comes to patients, our government always talks about having the patient at the centre of care, and we're doing a lot of great transformations in our health care system in order to build family health teams and that wraparound care. Thalassemia and sickle cell is a great example of that, because you really need that wraparound care, no matter where you're going, and you need to make sure those around you understand that you're not drug-seeking, which is what we often hear when a sickle cell or thalassemia patient comes into the ER or goes into a hospital. That's not why they're there; they clearly have a medical condition that needs treatment right away. The triage has to be well done, and the person who is doing the triage in that situation has to be well educated about it. That's something that has come up.

Some hospitals have developed a really good framework for how they deal with patients who they know may have sickle cell. The UHN network, for example: I really commend the work they're doing—great research, great collaboration. That's now being outsourced to other health regions, because things like sickle cell and thalassemia don't just live where the University Health Network lives, they live all across Ontario, and people

shouldn't be living just based on where they're going to get that health care. They can choose wherever they want to live, knowing that they'll get that health care service. Certainly that's why that handbook is so important, to get work under way to raise that awareness, which is why this day is so important.

Another thing that we talked to Lanre about is really turning the handbook into an easier guide, be it a poster for our doctors—and they're very in favour of this—so they know what to expect. So it's no wonder why there's so much support, because this is more than a day, it's more than the people who we've unfortunately lost already to this; it's also about the future, so that there's more understanding of this and we can pay tribute to individuals.

I did want to take the time just to mention a few local individuals who I've spoken to about this bill. Claudine Cousins, for example—a really good friend of mine—is the CEO of Empower Simcoe in Barrie. She has worked in the government before at children and youth services, many, many years ago. I spoke to her about this bill and she was really moved that this was happening. She was delighted that there was an awareness day, and she said to me, “Empower Simcoe thinks everyone should have the opportunity to lead a meaningful life. Gaps in the health care system are challenging for individuals with sickle cell. Any opportunity to close these gaps would benefit the population and society at large.” I think that really summarizes it quite well, that our government is making these great transformations in our health care system, fixing gaps, giving the wraparound care. This is another example of how that will help.

Another quote I just wanted to go over—I've got to thank Lanre for all of her work, for what she has done with sickle cell, but I also spoke to a local individual named Titi. She's a local entrepreneur and a data privacy professional. She and her husband moved to Innisfil a few years ago, and somebody she knew really closely was Tosyn Bucknor. Tosyn was really popular in Nigeria. She was a huge influencer on social media. She was a songwriter. She was on the radio and television, and she was a rising star, as many people characterized her. Unfortunately, she was taken from us very early, at the age of 37, by sickle cell.

When Titi found out that we were doing this, she was also very happy that Ontario has turned an eye to this and is showing it some importance. She said to me, “Sickle cell anemia is a common genetic disorder that has been personally experienced by loved ones for me. Tosyn Bucknor, publicly known as Tosyn, is a friend from a very young age, and whom I have watched as she lived through the many painful crises ... of being a sickle cell carrier. She lived her life and lit up the world in everything she chose to do; a lawyer, an on-air personality, but most of all, a really great friend—a sister, a daughter that Canada will choose to recognize June 19th at this point in time—not just as a form of recognition, but to actually raise and increase awareness around this disease is a great step. Thank you in memory of the many Tosyn Bucknors across

the world, living here in Canada by birth Canadian, or by adoption. We say thank you.”

I think that really also summarizes it well, because it's about many of those individuals. It's not just a number: It's people's stories; it's someone's life that has been affected by this. Now the largest province in Canada will be able to recognize this day and can build on the awareness. It's something we can point to every year, as a reminder to the government of the day, whoever it may be, to reflect on what has been done in the past, where we're moving forward, how we're building on a health care system that thinks of everyone and how we can close some of those gaps.

On that note, I just wanted to leave off with thanking those who helped draft this bill. I commend the legislative team, the legislative drafters, because they had to deal with me going back and forth on this bill. You may think it would have been very simple, but there was a lot of back and forth. So, I do appreciate their patience and scheduling with me. It was very kind of them.

I of course want to thank my colleague, who couldn't be here today, the MPP for Mississauga–Lakeshore. He and I have been on so many Zoom meetings to build on what we're trying to represent today—because we know what we're doing is not just building an awareness day, but it's really building on what our health care system desperately needs.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: I am truly honoured to be standing in the chamber today to debate this bill, and the reason I feel so honoured is because of something that happened—I think it was just a couple of days ago. I had, some months back, stood in the House and spoken about the Reverend Regena Ward-Provost, 43 years old. She was diagnosed with sickle cell in May 2019. I'm going to spend a little bit of time speaking about her particular circumstance, but I want to start from what just happened most recently.

She called me and she said to me that not only has she been suffering from sickle cell, but now she's tested positive for COVID. She's in hospital. When I got the phone call about this bill coming back to the chamber, she asked me to again speak about her, speak about what it is that she would like to see, because as she said to me in the past, she does not believe that she will make it to see the end of her own advocacy. And while she believes that it's wonderful to provide more information and education about sickle cell and about thalassemia, the reality is that what she needs is help.

There is a simple way to build on the handbook that my colleague on the government side has discussed. One of the simple ways to do so would be to implement the universal protocol that she alluded to in her debate. I want to be really clear: I am saying this not to be challenging or to be dismissive of the work and the advocacy that went into the creation of this bill; I'm saying it from a place of hearing from my friend Regena and hearing about her experience.

I'm going to take a moment to share a little bit more about Regena. Reverend Regena Ward-Provost is 43 years old, diagnosed with sickle cell in May 2019. She suffered strokes and seizures at a young age and was misdiagnosed time and time again. It was not until she happened upon a doctor who specialized in internal medicine and who understood sickle cell that she finally began to receive the pain management she needed.

Her pain management was short-lived. After two years in a pain clinic that understood sickle cell, a hospital visit in St. Catharines resulted in chaos for Regena. With no sickle cell protocol in place, she was deemed a drug-seeker. When she arrived in severe need of pain management and support, she got no help. The hospital, in fact, called the pain clinic, and a new hire who was working at the pain clinic didn't know about Regena and banned her from the clinic.

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In that moment of just trying to go and get help, she lost her specialist, she lost her medications and she lost her access to pain management. Her current family doctor has told her that he's uncomfortable with prescribing the pain management drugs she needs and has also implied that she is a drug-seeker. He's cut her off from her medication, and that included cutting her off from hydration, which she needed when she was at home.

When she called me originally, she had said she's stressed. She has often been told that the pain she's experiencing and presenting with is just a sign of anxiety, that she should just go see a therapist. Nobody believes her. They told her the pain is in her head. When she goes to emergency in need of dire help, because there is no universal protocol in place, nobody looks at Regena and provides her with the care, support, compassion and medication that she needs.

And so while we can educate people about how one presents with sickle cell or thalassemia and while we can speak about the importance of reminding government after government that this is an important day to be recognized and that we need more education, it's very possible for us to take Regena's experience and actually help implement the universal protocol, because if we implement the universal protocol, fewer people will end up being in emergency and coming back to us, as elected officials in our own respective ridings, and saying that they were deemed a drug-seeker. Fewer people will come to us and say there are problems in the health care system. Fewer people will come to us and say racism, systemic racism, exists within health care in Ontario.

No amount of posters or reliance on people's good faith and goodwill will stop systemic racism, because the way racism operates in our health care system is through the systems and the norms and the practices. It's not just because an individual looks at somebody and decides they don't want to help; sometimes it's because they don't have the tools they need to help. That's where I feel like we can take this, as a starting point, and we could have implemented something that would have made change in the

health care system. I think that change in the health care system is ultimately what the purpose of this bill was.

Regena is also on ODSP, and this is something that's quite common. I've spoken to a number of people who are advocates for sickle cell. Because of the health care issues they experience on a regular basis and the level of pain, they can't always work regularly. They're relying on social systems to provide them with supports so that they can at least have a semblance of a higher quality of life. She's on ODSP, but because her husband had to collect CERB during the pandemic, her entire ODSP funding had been clawed back. She said to me that she was living on just a little over \$600 a month. She was behind in her rent; she was behind in her bills. She was in intense pain. And then she was back in the hospital for the fifth time that year, alone.

She reached out to me after her family doctor suggested that since having the home oxygen tank was too expensive, she should just buy a fan, blow it in her face and that was close enough. These are the kinds of indignities that happen when we don't take seriously the level of pain and discomfort that somebody has when they present at the hospital or their doctor's.

The interesting thing about all of this is that, in November of last year, my colleagues on this side of the House, my friend and colleague from Toronto—St. Paul's and the MPP from Nickel Belt—also my friend and colleague—introduced a bill, the Improving Access to Health Care Act. That bill would implement the universal protocol that would ensure a higher standard of care for people living with sickle cell disease province-wide.

I wish sometimes when I come to work at Queen's Park that we would work more collaboratively, because if that bill was incorporated in this bill, I would be able to make a phone call to Regena in the hospital right now and let her know that her advocacy was not in vain and there would be a possibility that before she passes—because she has now been deemed palliative—I could tell her that everybody in this House cared so much about her that they implemented the universal protocol. Unfortunately, I will call Regena at the end of this session, I will have a clip of me telling her story in this House once more, and I will have to tell her that the official opposition in Ontario will keep fighting until the universal protocol is implemented. And while she, because she is gracious and loving and kind, will say, "Thank you, Laura Mae, for presenting my story at Queen's Park. Thank you, Laura Mae, for listening and caring," at the end of the day, when we hang up that phone, we'll both know that she may not make it. She may not make it to a day where that universal protocol is implemented in Ontario. And she like so many other people, including some that we have lost, that my colleague across the way had mentioned, won't have an opportunity to see themselves and their experiences reflected in a positive way within our health care system.

I'm not going to spend more time than that, because I think, right now, Regena's story has to sit with us in the discomfort that I'm sure many of us are feeling in knowing that she is sitting in a hospital, hoping that we're going to

do better; praying that we're going to do better; praying that somebody else who experiences what she has will get diagnosed earlier and will be provided with the supports and care that they deserve; and praying that somebody who is diagnosed with either thalassemia or sickle cell and presents at a hospital will not have the same experience, the same sense of denigration and worthlessness, that she has experienced over the course of her 43 years.

Thank you again to the member for putting this bill forward. I hope, as we all reflect on this in the final vote, that the next bill that comes is not a bill that offers tributes and honours, but instead is a bill that offers help, support, care and love to the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Khanjin has moved third reading of Bill 255, Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day? I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. on Monday, May 31, 2021.

The House adjourned at 1939.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
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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
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Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
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Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
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Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Rod (PC)	Ajax	
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	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 Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
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Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
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