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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 10 March 2021 / Mercredi 10 mars 2021

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS / AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Recovery Month Act, 2021, Bill 250, Mr. Ke / Loi de 2021 sur le Mois du rétablissement, projet de loi 250, M. Ke

Mr. Vincent Ke	12011
Hon. Michael A. Tibollo.....	12012
Mrs. Lisa Gretzky	12013
Mr. Jim McDonell	12014
Mme France Gélinas.....	12014
Miss Monique Taylor	12015
Ms. Andrea Khanjin.....	12016
Mr. Vincent Ke	12016
Second reading agreed to.....	12016

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE / DÉBAT SUR LA MOTION D'AJOURNEMENT

Land use planning

Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	12016
Mr. Jim McDonell	12017

Subventions destinées à l'éducation / Education funding

Mlle Amanda Simard.....	12018
Mr. David Piccini	12018

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 March 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 mars 2021

Report continued from volume A.
1800

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

RECOVERY MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021

SUR LE MOIS DU RÉTABLISSEMENT

Mr. Ke moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 250, An Act to proclaim Recovery Month / Projet de loi 250, Loi proclamant le Mois du rétablissement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. At the end of your 12 minutes of opening remarks, debate will proceed with members from the various parties speaking in rotation. You may recognize members while remaining seated. Each recognized party is allotted 12 minutes and independent members are allotted five minutes in total to debate this item of business. Debate proceeds in a clockwise rotation. You will have an opportunity at the end for final comments.

I now turn to the member from Don Valley North.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Today, it is an honour to stand humbly before you all to present second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 250, Recovery Month Act, 2021. This bill will proclaim the month of September in each year as Recovery Month so that Ontario can seize the opportunity to recognize the people and families across the province who often faced challenges related to their addictions and mental health. Together, we can acknowledge their suffering, hear their voices and answer their cries for help.

Today, we ring the alarm bell to raise awareness about addiction and mental health. Too often, people sleep through the alarm, but today, I urge everyone to wake up and pay attention. We must first be aware of the problem in order to fix it. We must not only hear the alarm, but hear the sounds of suffering that come with it and then try to do something about it. Recovery Month is the alarm that we need now to awaken public awareness. Let's consider this bill as a public intervention.

Speaker, many people who deal with addictions and have struggles with mental health live to tell their stories. Sadly, too many others do not, and this must change. I know of a young man whose difficult life journey was entangled by addictions and mental health challenges. Like others in his circumstances, he tried to self-medicate

to ease his pain. When his despair became unbearable, tragically, his life ended in suicide. His name was David. He was an only child. He was the most important person in the world to his parents. I can only imagine the unspeakable sorrow they must feel.

Recovery Month emphasizes the value of prevention, and the hope of recovery with help. Recovery is a journey that begins with building a fortress of self-worth, even when the foundation is shaky. It requires mindfulness, understanding and an open heart tempered with a steely sense of willpower and self-determination.

With many compassionate and caring people and organizations willing and able to help, a person who has been caught in a cycle of harmful addictions and whose life has spiralled into a state of dysfunction can come out from the shadows of stigma and shame. By accepting help, they have the chance to embrace the difficult journey of recovery to arrive at a healthier destination, where freedom from addiction is possible. Through recovery, they can be transformed into contributing members of society. Recovery also affects their families and our society as a whole. It is more than a worthy pursuit; recovery is often a choice between life and death.

We must remain awake and vigilant to inspire real change in public perception of those afflicted by addictions and mental health challenges. Addictions and mental health concerns touch people from all ages, genders, races, creeds, socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Anyone can become chained to addiction.

Speaker, along with this important recognition is hope: hope for a better future, for all those who, too often, suffer in silence, relegated to the shadows of society; hope that comes naturally with an increased awareness of the complex issues of addiction; hope that is more powerful than stigma, more potent than any drug and the most critical component to those seeking recovery from addiction. This bill emphasizes the fact that people can find effective treatment that ultimately will lead to recovery.

To demonstrate its concern and commitment, our government will invest \$1.9 billion over 10 years to match federal contributions in mental health and addictions services and housing supports, bringing the total new investment to \$3.8 billion. This includes \$176 million in 2020-21 for initiatives such as expanded community supports in both French and English, as well as \$19.25 million for mental health support for post-secondary students.

Speaker, Recovery Month will focus attention on the issues of mental health and addictions. It will also increase public awareness and reduce stigma as we shine the

spotlight on the types of addictions that Ontarians face every day. It will encourage people to seek and accept help. By proclaiming Recovery Month here in Ontario, individuals and families experiencing painful situations and consequences related to mental health crises and addiction may begin to realize they are not alone. That is an essential realization to encourage recovery.

While statistically, young men are more often involved with dire consequences from opioid addiction, women are also at risk and worthy of help to approach their problems. There are many success stories of those who have accepted help to find peace and hope through recovery. Ontario is fortunate to have a variety of mental health and addictions resources and organizations that provide help to those in need.

For example, the Jean Tweed Centre provides support services and programs aimed at helping women to face their struggles associated with substance use, which are often accompanied by a history of trauma. One of their clients, Samantha, reports that she had experienced significant trauma in her young life, which led her to substance use as a coping strategy. At age 18, she began an ongoing journey with the centre, when she found the courage to reach out and ask for help. Her decision proved to be life-altering and changed the trajectory of her future as she began to deal with her past.

The centre provided her with a safe place to feel vulnerable while committing herself to the journey of hard work through recovery. She completed a 21-day residential program, followed by a continuing care program and participated in individual and group trauma sessions. Through the Reaching Out to Women program, she ultimately found a placement for supportive housing. The help she received prepared her to accept the long-term choice of hope, help and healing.

1810

She continued to work on coping strategies and life skills and had not used any substances in 18 months. She then transitioned to a post-secondary education program and was accepted into a behavioural science technician program while maintaining a 3.85 GPA. She is also giving back to the community by working full-time as a peer support community resource worker.

This is a clear example of the power of hope when combined with help. Speaker, as a province, we all feel the pain and bear the consequences when mental health and addictions are ignored. Unemployment among people who are struggling with untreated addictions creates an economic burden, not only for themselves, but for everyone in Ontario.

People naturally want to live up to their potential and contribute to their families and communities, but without good health, free of addiction, it is an enormous challenge. Recovery Month will help to reduce both the personal and economic toll of untreated mental health and addictions. It will offer people the opportunity to contribute as they long to contribute. The public will also expand their understanding of the issues, and through communication and support, help will be found and accepted.

Think of David and Samantha and please remember them and their families. While they are only two people among thousands of others, their stories illustrate the realities of mental health and addictions struggles, the risks and consequences of untreated mental health crises and addictions, and the discovery of possibilities when health and hope are restored through the process of recovery.

I ask you all to support Bill 250, Recovery Month in September. Together, we have the chance to make a difference to many people who matter more than they may realize. Let's help them to believe in themselves and to invest in their future and ours.

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: I am very proud to be here today to stand in support of my colleague and his bill that will officially proclaim the month of September as Recovery Month here in Ontario. If passed, Mr. Speaker, this bill would make Ontario the first province in Canada to proclaim Recovery Month through legislation.

I hope that every member here in the Legislature will join me in supporting this bill. We need to continue sending a message of purpose and hope to those living and suffering with addiction challenges, and let them know that with the right supports, they can recover.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Don Valley North for standing up for the people of Ontario who may be living with an addiction challenge or have been impacted by addictions in other ways. I'd also like to thank some other individuals outside of the province who have helped bring attention to Recovery Month and have been working hard to help those either living with addiction challenges or supporting those who have already taken the first steps in their recovery journey. A heartfelt thank you to my counterpart in Alberta, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, the Honourable Jason Luan; his chief of staff, Marshall Smith; and finally, Giuseppe Ganci of the Last Door youth program addiction recovery centre in British Columbia. Giuseppe has been working tirelessly to support individuals across the country recovering from addiction and wants to demonstrate that recovery from addiction is possible, and it's attainable and sustainable.

For far too long, many of these Ontarians and their loved ones had been forced to navigate a complex and fragmented mental health and addictions system that had been continually underfunded and simply ignored.

Mr. Speaker, it shouldn't be news to anyone in this Legislature that over a million Ontarians each year experience a mental health or addictions challenge, with two million Ontarians also visiting their family doctors for mental health or addictions-related reasons every single year. And we know that the COVID-19 pandemic has only presented us with new and more complex challenges.

That's why our government has stepped up and has been making the additional investments to finally take the next important steps towards building a modern, comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions

system that works for every person in the province of Ontario, a system that is fully supportive for that individual through his entire lifespan.

Almost a year ago, we launched Roadmap to Wellness: A Plan to Build Ontario's Mental Health and Addictions System. The roadmap provides a path to building a comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system that offers Ontarians better access to higher-quality care, when and where they need it. The Roadmap to Wellness is built from the ground up. It was based on our extensive consultations with families and people with lived experience, grassroots organizations and front-line health care providers from around the province.

Before COVID-19 hit us, Mr. Speaker, I met someone with lived experience who had once been told by his mentor to make sure he bought himself a black suit, because he either wouldn't survive his addiction or he'd be wearing it to his friends' funerals. This is an unfortunate situation that repeats itself around the province. Everyone deserves a second chance at life.

It was the many conversations and experiences like this that motivated us to create the Roadmap to Wellness. The lack of access and fragmentation in the system was identified in 2010 by a standing committee of this very House, and it's our government that is finally addressing these issues.

Our roadmap means more community-based services in English and "en français," including services for children and youth. It includes investments in mental health and justice services, as well as supportive housing for individuals with serious mental health and addictions challenges, and it provides for those who either are homeless or at risk of homelessness. It also includes funding for community and residential addictions, including treatment and care for opioid addictions, and more hospital inpatient beds for mental health and addictions patients.

As part of this funding, we also invested in targeted community and residential addictions services, nurse practitioners for detox services, addictions day and evening care, and both in-home and mobile withdrawal management services—meaning easier access to high-quality addictions care for Ontarians in more rural and remote areas of the province.

Despite all these investments, our government also recognizes that last year has been one unlike any other in the memory of our province due to COVID-19. So, in December, we announced an additional investment of over \$147 million to immediately expand access to critical mental health and addictions services for Ontarians of all ages during the COVID-19 outbreak.

This further increased our investments in supporting the mental wellness of all Ontarians during the COVID-19 pandemic by an additional \$194 million. As part of our COVID-19 response, it included over \$60 million invested in community-based mental health and addictions services and inter-professional primary care teams, with \$30 million of this funding going towards child and youth mental health; an \$8-million investment in targeted, culturally safe services for Indigenous peoples; and over

\$15 million to expand virtual mental health and addictions supports, making it easier for Ontarians across the province to access these resources, including Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy and virtual supports for the many health care workers in the province as well.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask why this bill is important to our Roadmap to Wellness. We know that connecting people to the community is key to successful long-term addiction recovery. Adopting a sociocultural approach to recovery requires the engagement of the individual and their social and physical environment. Supporting the community plays a significant role in helping the community at large to learn about recovery and understanding that everyone deserves a second chance.

Removing stigma and saving lives through inspiration and education about how to access the health care system is critical to a successful plan, and we know that the community inspires recovery when it is founded on the principles of compassion, trust, faith, integrity, diversity, fun and unity.

1820

Recovery Month will provide the catalyst to achieve these goals and build more therapeutic environments in which individuals and families can be assisted in developing skills necessary to live free in recovery. That is the purpose of this legislation, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

To wrap it up, I want all of you to know that it's okay to not be okay. Help is available to everyone in this province. Our government is going to continue making the necessary investments to deliver high-quality care and build a modern, connected and comprehensive mental health and addictions system to ensure those services continue to be there, when and where every Ontarian needs that help.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 250, the Recovery Month Act. The bill, if passed, would proclaim September as Recovery Month. As many people in this House know, in communities all around the province, Recovery Month already takes place. I speak every year at our Recovery Day event that takes place in my riding. But I do recognize that this bill would make it so that the province would officially recognize that.

So, Speaker, I want to thank the member for Don Valley North for bringing this forward. During his comments, he spoke a lot about the destigmatizing of addictions, and that's a really important piece, that we destigmatize addiction, because it can happen to anybody. I always say—if I've said it once, I've said it a million times—you are one accident away from needing pain medication and that pain medication not being enough, and then you need more pain pills and then eventually it can escalate to something else. You are a surgery—one surgery—away from that happening. It could happen to anybody; it could happen to any of us in this room. So I'm glad that the member from Don Valley North addressed that and the fact that we need to destigmatize substance misuse in order

for people to feel comfortable coming forward and talking about it, for the person who is experiencing addiction, but also for their family and their friends.

The member from Don Valley North read a letter, I believe, from—it might have been a constituent; I'm sorry, I don't remember. But he read comments from someone who has had a family member who had struggled with addiction. The member said that this person, in their words, talked about how it's an immeasurable loss; it's hard to explain to some other people what that's like. Well, I've experienced it. I lost a brother. So I understand.

And I do appreciate the bill. But, Speaker, we need more than just a month to talk about recovery. There needs to be the funding, the programs and the supports put behind it in order for it to be effective. Our talking about recovery does help to destigmatize, but without the programs in place, people get into this cycle of addiction and recovery, addiction and recovery, addiction and recovery, because the programs are so disjointed and underfunded.

According to a November 2020 report by Public Health Ontario and the chief coroner, overdose rates in opioid-related deaths increased during the months of the pandemic by 35% to 40%. Over 1,500 people died from opioid overdose in 2019, and there was an increase in 2020. In eight months, there was that same total of people.

We have a government that actually cut funding, by \$330 million a year, to mental health and addiction. A month of recognition is not fixing that. Those are real lives that are affected by it, the people who are struggling with addiction and their family members, and by extension the people who work within mental health and addictions. It affects them as well, because they cannot provide the supports and services to as many people as they know they need to and they want to.

Speaker, in the 2019 budget from this government, there was no provincial spending on mental health and addictions. They just allocated federal money. What we need is a government to come to the table with the funding for the supports and services, not just a recognition.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to discuss Bill 250, Recovery Month Act. I would like to thank the member from Don Valley North for his leadership on this important initiative.

Our government knows that COVID-19 has impacted our most vulnerable, including those who are at risk of becoming homeless and facing mental health and addictions. This is an important issue, and it is something our government has taken a lot of decisive action to combat. From the onset of COVID-19, our government has taken action to support our most vulnerable, and with new variants of concern now in Ontario, there's an increased risk of spread to vulnerable people. Our government is vaccinating at the highest rate in Canada. That includes those who live and work in our shelters.

Speaker, I'm proud to reiterate that our social services relief fund is now providing a total of \$765 million in

flexible funding to our municipal service managers and Indigenous program administrators. I'll put that number against any province funding emergency housing in Canada. This funding is preventing and addressing homelessness, increasing supports in rent banks and utility banks and helping to protect staff and vulnerable residents in shelter settings.

We were the first province to sign a joint investment agreement with the federal government to provide funding directly to people to help them afford their housing costs—and, once again, before Canada's only NDP government, in BC.

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit makes \$1.4 billion available in a portable benefit directly to those who need it most. It goes directly to people who are on the social housing wait-list and to people eligible for or living in community housing. It helps them pay their rent and gives them a choice in where they want to live. To date, 7,200 Ontarians have already received direct rent assistance through this program, with that number expected to grow each year. This year alone, we're investing nearly \$1.5 billion to help sustain, repair and grow community and social housing and end homelessness in Ontario.

Supportive housing is widely considered a key element in preventing and addressing homelessness. That is why, this past December, we announced over \$47 million in supportive housing for individuals with mental health and addiction challenges and who are experiencing or are at risk of becoming homeless. This funding is flexible so that communities can use it to meet their unique mental health and addictions needs: for example, hiring mental health and addictions workers to help people experiencing homelessness get the supports they need and helping people at risk of homelessness to maintain their housing, because every Ontarian deserves a safe and secure place to live and access to services to help them get through these unprecedented times.

Our government has been working with communities across the province to provide much-needed support for vulnerable people. Leaders and organizations across the global mental health and addictions sector mark September as Recovery Month, and our government would like to join them to recognize and support Ontarians recovering from addiction.

I hope all members of this House will join individuals and families affected by addiction to support this bill by proclaiming Recovery Month here in Ontario.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm always happy to have the opportunity to speak about mental health and addiction in this House.

The ongoing opioid overdose crisis in northern Ontario is affecting every community. Our communities are suffering, families are struggling and people are dying. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, opioid-related incidents continue to rise. The situation is alarming in every community of northern Ontario. For instance, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre reported that it had

treated 262 patients for opioid overdoses last year and that many other incidents have not been reported. Similarly, in Timmins, they had 29 opioid-related deaths in 2020. From January to August last year, 60 residents of Sudbury and Manitoulin district died from an opioid-related overdose, nearly double what we had the year before.

1830

Although the statistics continue to climb, it is critical to recognize that those are not numbers; those are people. Those are our brothers or sisters or neighbours or loved ones or children, people who are struggling with mental health and addiction, people being preyed upon by dealers, people who are feeling lost because they don't know where to turn for help. People who are trying to get help for themselves, for their families or for their friends are feeling abandoned.

Recently, White River First Nation sent a public letter to the community outlining their concerns: "Why are so many of our people losing their way? What is at the root of this spiral into substance abuse that disconnects people from their very spirits? We have to acknowledge that abuse, in its many forms, often lies underneath addiction. When you can't cry out, when you have nowhere to turn and no one to trust, drugs can offer the illusion of relief."

A major issue we face in rural and northern Ontario is the lack of services. The very few programs available in urban centres are not available to us in the north. Rural areas of northern Ontario need mental health infrastructure adapted to our population needs. Right now, people seeking mental health and addiction services are left unsupported.

This needs to change. Mental health, addiction, consumption treatment sites and overdose prevention sites continue to play a vital role in our health care system. They help the most marginalized in our communities, and they must be accessible to us northerners.

Some simple and concrete steps the government can take today to help address the opioid crisis include:

- declaring the opioid crisis a public health emergency and breaking the stigma of substance abuse;
- investing in harm reduction strategies immediately;
- working with municipalities and local services boards to address mental health and addiction issues in their communities;
- funding the mental health and addiction infrastructure needed to bring equity of access to the people of the north, including more safe beds and 24-hour services for treatment;
- addressing the social determinants of health of people living with an opioid addiction; and
- expediting the approval process for supervised consumption sites in the north.

The government must take action now to prevent more opioid-related deaths in the north. Opioids impact more than just the individual; they impact all of our community. This bill is but a small step in that direction. We need way bigger steps.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It is my pleasure to be able to stand in the House and to speak as the NDP's critic for mental health and addictions.

I picked up the bill, and it is a very small bill. It is a bill that recognizes a day that organizations across Ontario, across Canada are already celebrating. If the government wanted to bring forward a bill, then it would be for actual treatment for people. It would be funding for people in our communities. I heard the minister be here and speak about all of the things that he says are happening in his ministry and the work that they're doing, but we have not seen a dollar flow. We have not seen any money flow at all.

In 2018, Premier Ford reduced what was the Liberal commitment of \$2.1 billion over four years to \$1.9 billion over 10 years. That money is to be matched by the federal government, so that would have totalled \$3.8 billion, which amounts to a \$330-million cut. When we have people dying in our communities daily, when we have families who call us—I'm not sure if they're calling you, but I'll tell you, they're calling me.

Long before I was the critic, they were calling me. I have family and friends calling me, saying, "What do I do? My daughter is on fentanyl. My son is doing this. Where do I take them? I can't even get them into a detox centre. And even if they get into a detox centre, I can't get them anywhere after that."

A 100-day wait—has anyone ever met someone addicted to fentanyl or methamphetamines or crystal meth? Has anybody even ever paid attention? They cannot wait 100 days. They're lucky if they live 100 days. Those parents are crying, they're begging, for help. And what happens is we get a private member's bill for an awareness day, talking about people who are in trouble, people who need help. It says, "By proclaiming Recovery Month here in Ontario, individuals and families affected by addiction may begin to realize they are not alone." They're alone, Speaker. They are alone, they are desperate and they need a government that is actually going to step up for them and save their children.

These awareness days are not saving anybody. It's fantastic that the member brought this forward because he thought it was the right thing to do, but what it did was allow the minister to come into this House and make an announcement and talk about all the warm and fuzzy things that he thinks he's doing. But if you get on the street—which I did on the weekend. I met a 17-year-old boy who walked up as I'm handing out peanut butter sandwiches and hot chocolate. He walks up, and I see him make a deal. I call him back over, and I'm like, "How old are you? What's your name?" He's 17. He doesn't live in our city. He doesn't come from our city. He's staying at a shelter down the street and he's high on down—that's what they call fentanyl, "down." He's high. I said, "If I could help you, would you get the help?" And it's "Could you?" because there's nothing. There's nothing.

Spend some time in your communities; actually take a look and see what's happening. Talk to these kids who are desperate and families who are probably at home crying, wondering where their children are. Thanks for the bill, but actually—

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Unlike the comments opposite, I am proud to be supporting Bill 250, Recovery Month Act, because it commemorates so many people who struggle with addiction every day and those who may be leaving the hospital because they needed that extra help. It really commemorates all the efforts that this government is doing on the mental health file. It was great to see the minister in here to really stand up and talk about what we're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Don Valley North now has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Vincent Ke: My heartfelt thanks to the Honourable Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions for his incredible work, leadership and support for this bill. Thank you as well, PA McDonell, for your confidence in this bill and for your support. My thanks also extend to the members from Windsor West, Nickel Belt, Hamilton Mountain and Barrie–Innisfil for your valuable input. My gratitude also extends to Eric Chamney from the office of legislative counsel for his expertise in drafting this bill.

Speaker, in sync with mental health and addictions leaders and organizations, locally and around the world, who designate September as Recovery Month, Bill 250 demonstrates Ontario's continuous crusade to improve mental health and to fight against opioid use, overdose and addictions.

People who feel burdened by the weight of fragile mental health and complex addictions need champions, not critics, to empower them to rediscover their purpose and promise through the hope of recovery. Untreated mental health and addictions can lead to social alienation, homelessness and crime in the community. The ramifications are real and make an impact on us all as a society.

Speaker, Bill 250 proclaiming September as Recovery Month in Ontario will focus on the hope of recovery, because mental health and addictions affect—

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

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1840

Mr. Ke has moved second reading of Bill 250, An Act to proclaim Recovery Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless the member would prefer to have it—

Mr. Vincent Ke: Regulations and private bills standing committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You're asking that it goes to the regulations and private bills?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Yes, thank you.

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

There is a late show—two late shows, actually. Therefore—

Miss Monique Taylor: Get used to it, guys.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm going to ask that you come to order. It's been a long day and you could make it longer.

Pursuant to standing order 36, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

LAND USE PLANNING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Guelph has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant or designate will have up to five minutes to reply.

I now turn to the member from Guelph. The floor is yours, sir.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today to debate why it is so vital that we protect the essential role that wetlands play in protecting our homes, our businesses, our infrastructure, our communities and our properties from flooding. Wetlands clean drinking water. They provide habitat for a diverse range of species. They help keep the Great Lakes clean. And wetlands do it all for free, if we don't pave over them. Yet, this government is taking extreme measures and unprecedented actions to destroy the provincially significant Lower Duffins Creek wetlands.

Speaker, 75% of Ontario's wetlands are already paved over. We simply cannot continue to pave over our wetlands without severe and catastrophic consequences. Extreme weather events fuelled by the climate crisis are already costing us billions of dollars and will only get worse if we don't take action to reduce climate pollution. Flooding is the costliest extreme weather event in Canada, causing insurance payouts of over \$1 billion in 11 of the last 12 years. Estimates are that it's three times that amount for public infrastructure.

The most costly insured extreme weather event in Canadian history was the 2013 Toronto floods—over a billion dollars. Who will forget the day in August where Toronto experienced \$84 million worth of damage in three hours? And why is it happening? Because too many of the wetlands in the area have been paved over. Enough is enough. That's why I asked the government this morning to cancel the MZO that's going to allow the destruction of the Duffins Creek wetland.

Canadians are spending over a billion dollars to repair and rehabilitate the Port Lands in Toronto, because we paved over the Lower Don Lands river wetlands. Now the government wants to do the exact same thing with the Lower Duffins Creek wetlands.

Speaker, I want to quickly go through the timeline, because it highlights the extreme measures and extraordinary extent to which the government is acting on this issue. On October 30, they issued an MZO allowing development in the Duffins Creek wetland, even though the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority raised significant objections and the town of Ajax opposed it. I will grant Pickering supported it. I actually asked the government a question that very day because the consequences of that decision were so obvious.

The government then introduced a budget bill on November 5, with a schedule that guts conservation authorities' ability to protect us from flooding. On November 30, environmental groups announced that they would be taking the government to court over the MZO in Duffins Creek. Literally the next day, the government doubled down and put forward amendments that would actually force a conservation authority to issue a development permit if the minister ordered it. It only took them three months to use their extraordinary power when, on March 4, the minister ordered the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority to issue a development permit by March 12.

So, Speaker, has the government read the TRCA report that's going to be debated on Friday? The TRCA has made it very clear—and I want to say this in response to the minister's response to my question. He said, "Oh, the TRCA is issuing a development permit." The staff report clearly indicates that they're doing it "under duress," and they're actually recommending an indemnity condition placed on the permit.

I want to quote from the staff report: "This condition is required in recognition that TRCA would ordinarily decline permission of such a permit, but that TRCA's board of directors was forced, under duress, to adhere to the province's legally mandated directive...."

This issue is not about jobs. We learned today this is for an Amazon warehouse. This is not about jobs. They can build that warehouse somewhere else. This is about who we are as a province, what we value, what kind of legacy we're going to leave our children and grandchildren. Are we going to protect the places we love? Are we going to protect them from flooding? Are we going to protect their communities from flooding? Or is the government going to pave over all of it and destroy it? That's the question we have now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, now has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a pleasure to rise again in the House today to reiterate what the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has time and time again said to the members opposite, who have failed to understand why our government issues ministerial zoning orders. Our government has been clear that every single minister's zoning order issued on non-provincially-owned land has been at the request of the local municipality, full stop. Municipalities are in the driver's seat, not us.

MZOs are accelerating priority projects, and these projects will be key in Ontario's economic recovery. These projects include thousands of long-term-care beds, hundreds of affordable and supportive housing units, a hospice facility and hospital expansions.

Of course, a municipal request simply starts the process for us, and we need to do our due diligence. For example, in our last budget, we committed to expanding the greenbelt. We are making good on that commitment by launching consultations to grow the size of the greenbelt. This includes the Paris Galt moraine, which is an area I know the members opposite have advocated for, for further protection. For that reason, I hope the member participates in the consultations and provides feedback on adding the Paris Galt moraine into the greenbelt. This consultation would set the foundation for the largest expansion since the greenbelt was created in 2005.

We've been clear that we are expanding the greenbelt and will not develop any part of it, unlike the previous Liberal government, who carved up the greenbelt 17 times and removed 370 acres of greenbelt lands. That is why the minister has rejected nine different MZO requests from municipalities that would have allowed development in the greenbelt.

This specific MZO that member opposite raised earlier in question period was requested by the city of Pickering and is supported by the region of Durham, to help create over 10,000 jobs and boost the economy in the region. We are supporting these local municipalities.

Prior to the issuance of the MZO in Pickering, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing ensured the proponent entered into an agreement with the region to address the necessary infrastructure upgrades required for several intersections and an overpass, as well as pay for traffic, environmental and archaeological studies.

1850

The proponent also has an agreement in place with the TRCA for a one-to-one replacement of wetland loss, and secured 100 acres of land to re-create a new wetland and give it to the TRCA in perpetuity, along with the funding to create the wetland.

According to an environmental study conducted on the existing wetland, the wetland is in decline. It is dominated by invasive species, provides few ecological benefits, and given that it is surrounded by existing development and its proximity to the 401, is expected to continue to decline.

Speaker, this will lead to a net benefit to all natural environment and permanently protect 100 acres of land from future development. I understand the mayor of Ajax has expressed opposition to this project, but let me be clear: These lands do not fall within the city of Ajax. Our government has always been clear that we are committed to working with our municipal partners to advance local priorities. Both the city of Pickering and the region of Durham requested this MZO, and we adhered to the requests.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank both the member from Guelph and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing,

the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, for their responses.

SUBVENTIONS DESTINÉES À
L'ÉDUCATION
EDUCATION FUNDING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a double billing, and the second billing is: The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell has in fact given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Colleges and Universities. Now the member has up to five minutes and, of course, then the minister or the parliamentary assistant to the minister will have up to five minutes to respond.

I now turn it over to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: Le mois dernier, l'Université Laurentienne, une institution financée sur les fonds publics, qui compte environ 9 000 étudiants, réussissait à se placer sous la protection de la Loi sur les arrangements avec les créanciers des compagnies. C'est du jamais vu, monsieur le Président. Une université publique—pas privée, mais bien publique.

Cela signifie que l'Université Laurentienne de Sudbury, qui comprend une faculté de médecine et une faculté d'éducation, est en train d'être restructurée de fond en comble non pas par des experts en pédagogie et non pas par les élus au gouvernement, mais par des avocats spécialisés en droit de la faillite. Et la programmation en français est sérieusement à risque.

Cette situation soulève l'importante question que j'ai posée plus tôt aujourd'hui, à savoir si le gouvernement respectera ses obligations financières en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français et fournira à l'Université Laurentienne les fonds nécessaires pour qu'elle offre des programmes postsecondaires en français, de qualité, dans le nord de l'Ontario.

Les faits sont clairs : ça fait longtemps que l'Université Laurentienne de Sudbury est désignée en vertu de la Loi sur les services en français de l'Ontario. C'est une loi quasi-constitutionnelle votée par cette Assemblée législative il y a belle lurette et que le gouvernement a récemment découverte—enfin. Même si la loi fut adoptée il y a des décennies, il vaut mieux tard que jamais.

Mais maintenant, nul besoin d'avoir la tête à Papineau pour comprendre la conséquence pratique de cette désignation. Ce gouvernement a l'obligation juridique de fournir les fonds requis pour que l'Université respecte la loi. Et de ce qu'on peut voir, le gouvernement ne confirme toujours pas respecter son obligation de financer.

Aucune réponse à ma question. Tel qu'on s'en attendait, le gouvernement a essayé de se cacher sous « l'affaire est devant les tribunaux », qui ne s'applique clairement pas dans le cas de ma question.

Either the member doesn't understand what “the matter is before the court” means, or he does, but chooses to use it anyway to deflect. The question is regarding the

government's legal obligation under the French Language Services Act to provide the necessary funds to the university to ensure compliance with the act as it is designated by the act and has been for decades.

That matter is completely different from the matter that is before the courts, which is the reorganization of the university. The government's compliance with the French Language Services Act is not currently before the courts. It could very well be in the future and it would certainly be a legitimate case, but currently, today, tonight, that matter is not before the courts. So why would the member and his government say that?

Qu'il n'essaye pas de nous passer un sapin ici. We can see right through it.

Alors je repose ma question une troisième fois, monsieur le Président : le gouvernement va-t-il respecter ses obligations de financement et fournir à l'Université Laurentienne le financement requis pour que la Loi sur les services en français soit respectée?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Merci. Thank you very much. Now, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities has up to five minutes to respond.

Mr. David Piccini: I am glad the member opposite has decided to raise these important questions about Laurentian University and the government's commitment to francophone post-secondary education. In short, Mr. Speaker, yes, we will continue to support robust French-language programming in the province of Ontario. That won't change.

First, I think it's important to talk about Laurentian's current situation. As the member mentioned, we are closely monitoring the CCAA proceedings. We know how concerning it is for students and for families alike, and we want them to know that our top priority will continue to be the continuity of their learning. However, as that member knows, particularly given that she did attend law school, CCAA proceedings are a court proceeding, and it would be inappropriate to comment further on that matter.

As the member asked about French-language programming, I'm happy to expand on that in greater depth. Any allegation that our government would cut funding to Laurentian is simply false. Proportionately, we provided grants that account for more than 40% of Laurentian's total revenue in 2019-20. That compares to a 23% average for the university sector overall.

Over the past several years, the ministry has provided several ongoing and time-limited funds to institutions to support them with their operational challenges and considerations, many of which I mentioned earlier today. I also want to emphasize that during COVID-19, MCU has provided significant new investments that have benefited francophone students across the province. We provide more than \$5 billion annually to our publicly assisted post-secondary colleges and universities, \$25 million of which flowed immediately to support our students in the wake of COVID-19. Many of our universities that support francophones ensured that that funding flowed directly to students.

We've increased mental health supports for francophone students. We've increased that mental health funding by over \$10.25 million. As a part of our Virtual Learning Strategy, we have invested over \$50 million to support digital-by-design virtual learning content that benefits francophones across the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, since that member raises concerns about the government's commitment to francophone post-secondary education, I am happy to elaborate on the over 425 French or bilingual programs across the province of Ontario.

Le gouvernement de l'Ontario accorde 17 millions de dollars pour donner de l'expansion à l'éducation postsecondaire en langue française dans tout l'Ontario. Cet investissement contribuera à créer davantage de possibilités pour les étudiants francophones, afin qu'ils puissent suivre les études supérieures dont ils ont besoin pour occuper les emplois en demande d'aujourd'hui et de demain.

Pour soutenir plus de 30 000 étudiants inscrits à des programmes postsecondaires en langue française et bilingues en Ontario, notre gouvernement accorde environ 74 millions de dollars, permettant ainsi aux établissements francophones et bilingues de maintenir ou d'offrir de nouveaux programmes et services en français à leurs étudiants. En outre, le ministère reçoit 14,2 millions de dollars du gouvernement fédéral pour soutenir l'éducation postsecondaire en français comme langue minoritaire et comme langue seconde.

Notre gouvernement est très heureux de pouvoir aller de l'avant avec l'Université de l'Ontario français, la première université de langue française de l'Ontario

dirigée par et pour les francophones. En signant l'entente de financement bilatérale concernant l'UOF, les gouvernements fédéral et provincial ont affirmé leur engagement à satisfaire aux besoins des plus de 622 000 francophones de l'Ontario en matière d'éducation postsecondaire.

This multi-year 50-50 agreement will see Canada invest up to \$63 million from 2019-20 to 2023-24 and Ontario subsequently invest its \$63-million share from 2023-24 to 2026-27.

We are also providing Collège Boréal \$15 million for their Toronto campus. In addition to this new university, there are 10 other post-secondary institutions providing over 425 French-language or bilingual programs in the province of Ontario.

Nous collaborerons avec la communauté pour favoriser l'accès continu des Ontariennes et des Ontariens francophones à une éducation d'excellente qualité.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci. We're going to continue to support francophones across the province of Ontario. I hope some of the 425 programs that I've alluded to, and the commitments and investments we've made, signal just that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Merci. I would like to thank both members for your respectful comments, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and as well to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Colleges and Universities.

There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1900.

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Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
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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
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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	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Guratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Logan Kanapathi
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Will Bouma, John Fraser
Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke
Laura Mae Lindo, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Jeremy Roberts
Dave Smith, Daisy Wai
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

**Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight /
Comité spécial de la surveillance de la gestion des situations
d'urgence**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Tom Rakocevic
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell