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Mardi
14 juillet 2020

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 14 July 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 14 juillet 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 74(c), the member for Timmins has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 197, An Act to amend various statutes in response to COVID-19 and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. The order for second reading of Bill 197 may therefore not be called today.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yesterday, the government House leader, Mr. Calandra, rose on a point of order and asserted that the member for Waterloo, Ms. Fife, divulged information regarding an in camera meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. At that time, I undertook to take the matter under advisement and provide a statement to the House. I am now prepared to make that statement.

While disclosing information regarding an in camera meeting of a standing committee would be inappropriate and could be a valid point of order, the Speaker has no way of knowing what transpires in each standing committee, especially during their in camera sessions. This issue would therefore properly be raised in and considered by the committee.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTING TENANTS
AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY
HOUSING ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT LA PROTECTION
DES LOCATAIRES ET LE RENFORCEMENT
DU LOGEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE

Mr. Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020 / Projet de loi

184, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et édictant la Loi de 2020 abrogeant la Loi sur la Société ontarienne d'hypothèques et de logement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair. You look very chipper for being here as late as you were last night.

I want to indicate that I'll be splitting my time with my two parliamentary assistants: the member for Milton and the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to debate third reading of Bill 184, our proposed legislation, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act.

It was just over a year ago that this House passed the More Homes, More Choice Act, making it easier to build more homes more quickly across Ontario. It was a comprehensive suite of legislative, regulatory and policy changes to transform Ontario's broken housing system.

Before COVID-19 changed the landscape of our province, we were seeing the positive signs of the More Homes, More Choice Act. We were seeing a quarterly high for new rental construction applications, starts and completions.

But COVID-19 has disrupted many aspects of our lives, from our jobs and the economy, to transit and transportation; from our health and our hospitals, to schools and homes. And yet, the essentials remain the same. People still need places to live at prices they can afford. They need good jobs so they can feed their families. And we need to restart Ontario's economy as we recover.

Les gens ont encore besoin de logements qu'ils peuvent se payer. Ils ont besoin de bons emplois pour pouvoir nourrir leur famille, et nous devons relancer l'économie ontarienne à mesure que nous nous relevons.

That's why we're cutting red tape and making costs more predictable for home builders, while encouraging them to build a variety of different types of housing. We're also ensuring that municipalities can better predict their revenues while continuing to build parks and other vital community services.

Our plan also helps individual Ontarians; for example, through our series of housing innovation guides. We know that the demand for alternative, innovative and affordable types of housing is growing—like tiny homes, second units, life leases and co-ownership. Our government wants people to be well-informed before they buy or before they

build. That's why we created a series of guides to provide practical information to those considering these types of innovative housing options.

Many, many municipalities also recognize the growing need for more types of housing that people can afford, and we're looking at ways to encourage and motivate them. Madam Speaker, I'll use the example of Oshawa, which is leading the way in allowing more tiny homes—and I appreciate the fact that you were able to attend the announcement with your mayor some time ago.

While cutting red tape and streamlining regulations helps, we also need to look at Ontario's different housing systems. Whether it's our community housing system, the rental housing market or how we administer building code services, it all needs to work efficiently and effectively to help address Ontario's housing crisis. The Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act includes proposals to improve those areas, and also to dissolve the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corp.

This morning, I'd like to share some of the proposed changes with the members in regard to the Residential Tenancies Act. As we all know, the Residential Tenancies Act sets out the rights and the responsibilities of residential landlords and tenants in the province of Ontario. These rules affect landlords, and when the rules are burdensome and complicated, they impact the supply of rental homes, which can make prices go up or down. The rules also affect tenants. And while the Residential Tenancies Act sets out the rules, from rent and repairs to entry and evictions, the Landlord and Tenant Board is responsible for resolving disputes.

0910

Parts of this law have been around in one form or another for decades. Our government believed, as part of the More Homes, More Choice Act, that it needed a bit of updating. That's why we consulted on changes to the Residential Tenancies Act as part of the Housing Supply Action Plan.

I want to remind members that when we consulted on this piece of legislation, we received over 2,000 submissions, and 85% of those submissions were from the public. These consultations were crucial in developing this important piece of legislation and the piece of legislation, Bill 108, that was passed a little over a year ago.

The consultation is why we're suggesting that landlords would not have to tell prospective tenants how old the fridge is or how much energy it uses or the past electricity usage in the unit in kilowatt hours—which can be difficult if the tenant pays their own utilities.

Finally, the law presently requires that landlords use a standard lease, which outlines renters' rights and responsibilities in easy-to-understand language. So we're proposing to remove the requirement that landlords give renters a printed pamphlet which basically duplicates the same information that's on the standard lease. The standard lease provides more information than the pamphlet to ensure that parties know their rights and their responsibilities before they sign the lease.

We're also proposing to change how some disputes are handled, to make the process easier to understand and to ensure that the parties have an opportunity to have a timely resolution. For example, it allows landlords to have compensation claims for unpaid utilities, rent or damages go to the Landlord and Tenant Board in situations where, previously, they would have to go to Small Claims Court.

However—and I know the members opposite are very interested in this—a large portion of the Residential Tenancies Act deals with evictions, and this is a very, very important part of the legislation in which detailed requirements within the act are easily misunderstood, so I'd like to clarify how the process works.

The eviction process has five basic points: notice, application, hearing, order and enforcement. Those are the five basic steps. In most cases, the first step is for the landlord to give the tenant a notice in writing that they want the tenant to move out. Landlords must use the official notice form that is given to them by the Landlord and Tenant Board. The notice includes details of why the tenancy is ending, and it may include information on what the tenant can do to prevent the eviction; for example, repairing damage or paying overdue rent.

Let me be clear: An eviction notice is just the first step in a five-step process. A tenant who receives an eviction notice does not have to move out, and the form says that. If the tenant does not remedy the situation or move out on the deadline listed on the notice, the landlord can move to the second step and apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to evict the tenant.

Step 3 brings both parties together to discuss the eviction application. In most cases, the Landlord and Tenant Board will schedule a hearing to decide the landlord's application. It will mail a notice of hearing to the landlord and the tenant, along with a copy of the application. The Landlord and Tenant Board adjudicator will make a decision about the landlord's application and whether the tenant should be evicted or not.

This is step 4: It's called an eviction order, and it's always put in writing. The Landlord and Tenant Board will mail a copy of the order to both the landlord and the tenant. If the eviction order is for unpaid rent, the tenant can still prevent the eviction by paying the money that they owe before the deadline and by telling the Landlord and Tenant Board of that fact. If the tenant doesn't move out on the termination date listed in the eviction order, the landlord cannot personally enforce that order. For example, the landlord cannot change the locks. This is illegal, and it is an offence under the act.

An eviction order, as I think most on the opposite side will know, can only be enforced by the sheriff's office. So step 5 requires that the landlord file a copy of the eviction order with the sheriff's office to have it enforced.

We know that COVID-19 has brought financial hardship to many tenants. That's why we've moved quickly to suspend enforcement of evictions, to keep people in their homes. C'est pourquoi nous nous sommes empressés de suspendre les expulsions pour veiller à ce que les gens conservent leur logement.

While landlords can still give eviction notices, that's only step 1 of the process. All hearings related to the eviction applications are suspended, and no new eviction orders will be issued unless it's for illegal acts or serious safety concerns. By order of the court, enforcement of eviction orders is suspended until the last day of the month in which the state of emergency ends.

We also know that COVID-19 has not been easy for landlords, especially small landlords, and I think members on both sides of the House have heard from small landlords in their communities during COVID-19. However, we have heard many, many stories about landlords and tenants working together. I'm going to talk about one story from a Kitchener landlord who rents out her basement and says she is being as understanding as possible with her tenant. She said, "He contacted me and said he's been laid off, so I told him to work it out. Put it off for a month. Catch up later." This means the unpaid rent falls to her, but she says she's going to run it on her line of credit for a month until she can catch up herself.

And it's not just small landlords, Madam Speaker. I know of one property management company, which has more than 70 buildings across Ontario, who said that solutions could include rent deferrals and repayment plans, while another just outright suspended rent increases.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Or provincial support. Provincial support would be good.

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

Hon. Steve Clark: And I'm heartened when I hear those type of stories.

I would hope that what I heard on the opposite side was a thank you to those landlords and tenants who are willing to work things out.

I'm heartened to hear those stories of people working things out during the pandemic. I'd like to take a moment to recognize and thank every landlord who is working with their tenants to defer or reduce rent, to come up with repayment plans and to find ways to keep people in their homes.

We want to encourage more landlords and tenants to work together, and not just during COVID-19. Nous voulons encourager plus de locateurs et de locataires à travailler ensemble, pas seulement durant la pandémie de COVID-19.

I also want to thank every tenant in Ontario. I know for many of you these last couple of months have been difficult, and we appreciate you working with your landlord and continuing to pay rent if you can. J'aimerais aussi remercier tous les locataires de l'Ontario. Je sais que les derniers mois ont été difficiles pour bon nombre d'entre vous, et nous vous sommes reconnaissants de collaborer avec votre locateur et de continuer de payer votre loyer si vous le pouvez.

When rent is overdue, instead of a hearing in front of the Landlord and Tenant Board, we on the government side want to encourage landlords to work with tenants to come up with a repayment agreement. This has always

been an option, but we're proposing changes to the Residential Tenancies Act that would encourage more landlords to explore repayment agreements, and it's a shame the official opposition is misinterpreting what these agreements are all about.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not just us.

Hon. Steve Clark: I hear, obviously, on the other side—I think they're asking me to give you an example, so I will do that, so thank you for that suggestion.

Let's use a tenant named Tony. Today, if Tony doesn't pay his rent, his landlord can go to the board and seek an eviction for outstanding rent using the five-step process that I described earlier in debate. But at some point during the process, Tony's landlord can work with him to come up with a repayment agreement. If he still doesn't pay his rent, then his landlord has to restart the process all over again.

0920

So we're proposing to treat rent payment agreements like any other mediated settlement at the Landlord and Tenant Board, where the negotiation replaces a formal hearing. Tony's landlord would file a notice and an application—so that's step 1 and step 2—but instead of a hearing in front of the board—step 3—she would work with him to come up with a rent repayment agreement. That agreement then, after it's agreed upon, would be sent to the Landlord and Tenant Board for review, and if the board agrees, then it would issue what's called a consent order, which is step 4. Step 4, the consent order, would set out the terms of the repayment. If they don't grant the order—and this is very important—then the original process continues, and Tony and his landlord proceed to a hearing. If Tony breaches the agreement that the board had approved and he doesn't pay his rent, his landlord can seek an ex parte eviction order, basically continuing the process at step 4.

Madam Speaker, I want to clarify two misunderstandings we've heard about this process. First, this could not be imposed on tenants. Tenants must agree and participate in developing the rent repayment agreement, and if they don't, the normal process would continue and the eviction application would go to a hearing in front of the board. Let me be absolutely clear for members of the opposition: No one can be evicted on the basis that they refused a repayment agreement. Suggesting this in any way is wrong, and it dangerously misinforms tenants of their rights.

Second, the process would not apply to landlords who reached a separate repayment agreement with their tenants outside of the Landlord and Tenant Board process. It must be an agreement that has been approved by the Landlord and Tenant Board as part of the eviction process. Again, I'm trying to help members of the opposition: Private repayment agreements that haven't been issued a consent order by the Landlord and Tenant Board do not fall under this process.

As Ontario begins to recover from COVID-19 and people return to work, we need to ensure a manageable transition. We need to find a way to keep tenants in their homes, while ensuring that landlords can afford to pay

their bills, too, so we don't lose rental units. That's why we're requiring the Landlord and Tenant Board, during a hearing, to consider whether the landlord tried to negotiate a repayment agreement with a tenant if they fell behind in rent after March 17, 2020. This must happen before the board can issue an eviction order for nonpayment of rent.

At eviction hearings, adjudicators must already review and consider the circumstances of each case to determine whether or not the eviction should be refused or delayed. This change will require that all adjudicators must consider whether the landlord made efforts to negotiate a repayment agreement. We are doing this to encourage repayment agreements, instead of evictions, for rent arrears accumulated during COVID-19. This highlights to landlords the importance of trying to negotiate a repayment plan and to ensure that tenants who have lost their jobs or are facing challenges as a result of COVID-19 still have a chance to maintain their tenancies.

I think we all know that the Landlord and Tenant Board adjudicators are fair and impartial, operate at arm's length from government and will consider whether the landlord has attempted to negotiate a repayment plan based on the particular circumstances. As we have done since the outbreak of COVID-19, we continue to urge landlords and tenants to work together.

Madam Speaker, many Landlord and Tenant Board hearings deal with overdue rent and evictions, but that's not all they do. The board also hears disputes about maintenance and reasonable enjoyment, about subletting apartments and suite meters. There are many good landlords and many, many good tenants.

As in any relationship, legitimate problems can arise from time to time. Mediation and alternative dispute resolution, where appropriate, can help people to find that way to de-escalate tensions and to move forward by mutual agreement. Encouraging an alternative dispute resolution is already done in many, many provinces. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island—all of those provinces use this method today.

I said at the outset that this legislation is about helping make our housing system work better. We want to simplify and clarify. Where appropriate, mediation would be part of that formula. We're also proposing a change to help hearings run more efficiently and make sure both tenant and landlord concerns are heard at the board.

Right now, tenants can raise new issues that would be the subject of a separate application at the LTB, like a leaky roof at an eviction hearing for nonpayment of rent, without telling the landlord beforehand. But if the landlord doesn't know an issue will be discussed and isn't prepared for it, the hearing may be postponed. Today, landlords must give the board notice of any issues that they want to discuss at any hearing, and we're proposing to extend that same requirement for tenants as well.

To be clear, tenants can still raise certain matters without notice, such as those related to their landlord's application or their rent payment; for example, if they lost their job during COVID-19. But if they want to raise a new

issue that would be subject to a different application, such as a leaky roof, then they need to let their landlord know in advance. That way, everyone can prepare and hearings aren't unnecessarily postponed. Tenants could still raise new issues at the hearing if they can provide an explanation that is satisfactory to the board on why they couldn't give advance notice. Otherwise, tenants can file a separate application with the Landlord and Tenant Board to address those other issues.

So again, let me make this clear, one more time for members of the opposition: The bill does not prohibit tenants from raising new items at an eviction hearing. It doesn't do that. It simply requires that they give advance notice to the board so that everyone is prepared for the hearing and the hearing is not unnecessarily delayed because of those matters.

I also want to make one other clarification for the House, because over the last several weeks, members of the opposition, the independent Liberal members, have been claiming that this bill would make illegal rent increases legal if they go unchallenged from the tenant for 12 months. Again, it's simply not correct. Section 136(2) of the Residential Tenancies Act says that any rent increase is deemed lawful if a tenant pays it without dispute for 12 months. So this has been the case since 1998, and this bill, Bill 184, does not change that either. Saying otherwise, again, is simply fearmongering. It is not true. This has been in place in the act since 1998.

Before the COVID-19 outbreak began, my ministry was hearing increasing complaints about renovations. I see the member for University–Rosedale here. She has brought many renovations to the floor. That's when a landlord evicts a sitting tenant to renovate the unit and re-rents it at a much higher price. To be clear, repairing and renovating units is not against the law. In fact, maintaining and modernizing units and making sure they meet the building code and the fire code requirements makes them better, makes them safer places to live. But if a landlord needs to evict a tenant to do the repairs, they must give the tenant the opportunity to move back in at the same rent before offering it to others. If they break the law, we're proposing to increase the maximum fines upon conviction to \$50,000 for an individual and \$250,000 for a corporation.

S'ils enfreignent la loi, nous proposons d'accroître l'amende maximale sur reconnaissance de culpabilité à 50 000 \$ pour les particuliers et à 250 000 \$ pour les sociétés érigées en personnes morales.

0930

The Landlord and Tenant Board can also order that landlords compensate tenants, and we're proposing to raise that amount to up to a year's rent. Again, I think in this case an example is probably easier. Let's say the Landlord and Tenant Board finds Amal was evicted in bad faith and orders her landlord to pay her compensation. Amal was paying \$1,500 a month for rent before she was evicted. She found another apartment for \$2,000 a month. So right now the landlord could be ordered to pay her up to \$6,000 in compensation. That's the difference between her old rent and her new rent—\$500—times 12 months.

Under our proposed changes, Madam Speaker, the landlord could be ordered to pay an additional year's rent, or \$24,000. That's an increase in compensation of \$18,000 under this proposal. This also ensures tenants could receive compensation even if they were not living somewhere with higher rent—such as moving in with a roommate or a relative until the renovations are complete.

The RTA recognizes that small landlords are different from landlords who manage big apartment buildings. So if you bought a house, rented out the basement to help pay the mortgage and now circumstances have changed—you've got a growing family; you need that extra space—the act allows you to evict the tenant, but you must pay compensation. This is called “landlord's own use.” But if you sell your house to move to one that is larger—it maybe has more bedrooms—and the purchaser wants to evict the tenant so they can use the basement, that's called “purchaser's own use,” and the tenant isn't entitled to compensation. If passed, our legislation would ensure the tenant is compensated, no matter who wants to use the unit, if they are evicted for no fault of their own.

Sadly, my ministry has heard about increasing abuses of “own use” evictions, so we're proposing that if a landlord wants to evict a tenant to use the unit themselves, they would have to tell the Landlord and Tenant Board if they have done this before or if they have tried, even unsuccessfully, to do it before, so we could help our adjudicators look for patterns and so that they could identify landlords who may be breaking the law.

Madam Speaker, the Residential Tenancies Act is a very important piece of legislation. It directly impacts the lives of millions of renters across the province, countless thousands of landlords. The Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act proposes amendments that would make renting easier and fairer for both tenants and landlords. When people have a home, they can put down roots and they can be part of a community. They're healthier; they're more productive. That's why we're protecting Ontario's tenants and landlords and making life more affordable for individuals and families across the province.

C'est pourquoi nous protégeons les locataires et locateurs de l'Ontario et rendons la vie plus abordable pour les particuliers et familles de l'ensemble de la province.

We took a lot of time with our consultations. As I've said in this House before, the Housing Supply Action Plan had five themes: speed, cost, mix, rent and innovation. Bill 108 dealt with four of those themes. Our innovation guides dealt with one of those themes as well. Bill 184 deals with the words and the ideas that we heard from tenants and landlords across the province. It's a bill that has been mischaracterized throughout this process. We've tried this morning to set the record straight.

I want to thank all of the members on all sides of this House for the work that they've done in committee. There were a number of deputants at committee. I want to thank Chair Kusendova and the members of the committee for their work. I'd also like to thank both of my parliamentary

assistants: the member for Milton and the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Also, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore was involved as my former PA in the Housing Supply Action Plan consultations. All of them have done incredible work.

With your indulgence, Madam Speaker, I'll send it over to my parliamentary assistant for housing, the member for Milton.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Milton.

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the opportunity to speak to Bill 184 and how it would help the people of Ontario. I'd like to begin by highlighting that housing in Ontario varies widely. From home ownership and rental homes to community housing, housing in Ontario takes many, many forms. Across the province, about 3.8 million households own their home. We know that home ownership remains the goal for many individuals and young families in this province, but for many of them the price of owning a home has become out of reach. The dream of a home ownership is just that: a dream.

That's why our government launched More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan more than a year ago—because we believe everyone should be able to find a home that meets their needs and their budget. Our plan helps to build more homes more quickly by: working to speed up development; by reducing red tape to make it easier to build the housing that people so desperately need:

- reducing the layers of permits, government approvals and charges that add to the cost of housing;

- addressing the mix of housing by making it easier to build different types of homes to make sure people have a range of options to meet their needs;

- encouraging innovation by clarifying rules and helping people take advantage of creative housing solutions; and

- making it easier to build all types of rental housing, from secondary suites like basement apartments or laneway homes, to large apartment buildings, because about 1.6 million households live in rental housing in Ontario.

One piece of our plan is to defer development charges for rental and not-for-profit housing. Municipalities are able to collect development charges on every new building or facility to help pay for infrastructure projects like roads, transit and police stations. I want to be clear: We believe that growth must pay for growth.

We know that municipalities need a way to pay for things that growing communities need, and we have heard that there are ways we can reduce costs to help create more housing supply, including rental housing. Right now, home and condo developers can cover development charges by pre-selling units. Rental and non-profit housing builders don't have that luxury. They're stretching every penny.

By deferring development charges instead of paying up front, rental providers will be able to spread those payments over five years, and they would be payable at

occupancy. Non-profit housing providers will be able to spread those payments over 20 years. Deferring those charges would also encourage builders to create more affordable housing while ensuring that municipalities can still fund the essential infrastructure they rely on.

We propose changes to improve the rental housing system for both tenants and landlords with improvements to the Residential Tenancies Act, as the minister recently shared with this House.

But not everyone can afford to rent or buy a home, like people living in transitional housing or seeking help with addictions or mental health through supportive housing. They might be escaping human trafficking or domestic violence and need a place that keeps them and their family safe. And there are vulnerable people with no home or family who seek help from Ontario's emergency shelters.

Every person in our province has been impacted by COVID-19. Protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians continues to be our government's number one priority, and we understand the particular impact that COVID-19 is having on the most vulnerable people in our communities, including those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

For example, we know that people in congregate care settings like emergency shelters and some forms of supportive housing are at increased risk of COVID-19. That's why our government is investing \$350 million in 2020-21 through the new Social Services Relief Fund to help protect the health and safety of some of the province's most vulnerable people. This includes funding to help municipalities adapt their local housing and homelessness systems to the impacts of COVID-19, including purchasing personal protective equipment, ensuring physical distancing, improving cleaning, increasing staffing and developing long-term housing. This funding may also be used to make local community housing systems safer from COVID-19.

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This investment complements the approximately \$1 billion we invested last year, and will continue to invest in 2020-21, to help sustain, repair and grow community housing and help end homelessness in Ontario.

As communities continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, it is becoming even clearer that we need a strong community housing system that can meet local needs. However, our community housing system is under pressure. There are too many families living in places that are overcrowded and run down. I know that some families don't even feel safe. And as housing providers' operating agreements and mortgages expire, we risk losing much-needed community housing units. That's why our government has been taking action to renew our community housing system.

Last spring, we launched Ontario's Community Housing Renewal Strategy. It focuses on sustaining, repairing and growing the community housing system. Our plan is to transform a fragmented and inefficient system into one that is safer, more streamlined, sustainable and easier to navigate to help the people who need it most.

We need a community housing system that meets people's complex and changing needs. That's why, since the Community Housing Renewal Strategy was released in April 2019, our government has delivered on a number of commitments under the strategy.

We've heard housing providers' concerns about long and complicated rent-gear-to-income calculations, so we've simplified them to make rent easier for providers to calculate and easier for tenants to predict.

We've also protected tenants who receive child support payments from being penalized financially and removed rules that punish people for working more hours or for going back to school, because we want people to seek opportunities, go to school, accept work and become economically self-sufficient.

And we're reducing red tape because our partners asked us to, because they want to spend time working with their community, not buried in paperwork.

All of this will help make community housing more stable for the future.

We're also doing our part to shorten the wait-list for community housing. Under the old system, applicants could refuse multiple housing offers and still stay at the top of the waiting list, hoping for a different unit to become available. Meanwhile, a unit sat empty, waiting for someone to accept an offer. That's why we've required tenants to prioritize their first choice and accept the first unit they are offered, while allowing service managers the flexibility to make exceptions in extenuating circumstances.

We've also listened to our partners' concerns. Municipalities and housing providers have told us that when they evict tenants from community housing for committing a crime, some simply move right back into the same building. These are serious crimes like drug trafficking or committing acts of violence or human trafficking. So we gave housing providers the tools they needed to help keep their building safe. Now, if a tenant has been evicted for illegal activities and they try to come back to community housing, housing providers can say no. If they pose a threat to the community, housing providers have the ability to turn them away, keep them out, and make their building a safe place to live and play once again. Our government is sending a clear message that dangerous criminal activity is not welcome in our community housing. It puts our communities and families at risk. Parents shouldn't have to worry about their children's safety when they're playing right outside of their front door.

These early steps are already in effect, and service managers may choose to implement the rent-gear-to-income changes now or next year. This would help give communities and housing providers the time they need to make important business decisions and plan for implementation.

In Ontario, the province sets the legislative framework for community housing, but community housing operations are managed by non-profit housing corporations and housing co-operatives, by municipal governments and

district social services administration boards. These organizations are important partners in community housing renewal. They play a critical role in providing affordable housing through subsidized or low-end-of-market rents for people who simply can't afford to find homes in the private market.

Many housing providers' operating agreements and mortgages are coming to an end, and some housing providers are unsure if they will be able to continue to provide these much-needed homes. This uncertainty creates a significant risk for those households that rely on rent-geared-to-income assistance.

As part of the second stage of the multi-year strategy to stabilize and grow Ontario's community housing sector, our government is proposing enabling changes to the Housing Services Act, 2011, that would create a new legislative framework for community housing providers to enter when their original obligations end and to improve the access and accountability systems for community housing to better serve people in need.

Our proposed changes, if passed, would help maintain our community housing supply by giving housing providers with expiring operating agreements ways to transition to a new system. This new system would encourage current operators to remain in the community housing system and encourage others to offer community housing.

We're also proposing ways to protect vulnerable households and make sure they don't lose their homes if some providers decide to leave the system.

Madam Speaker, we recognize that Ontario's community housing system is diverse. It includes large and small housing providers with different needs and capacities. A one-size-fits-all approach does not work here. We're proposing to tailor our approach for different categories of housing providers to ensure that all providers get the help they need.

We also recognize that many community housing units are in need of urgent repair. That's why we're allocating funding so that tenants are living in safe and sustainable conditions. With our federal and municipal partners, we are working to repair and expand community housing. Through the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative, launched in April of last year, \$81 million is available in 2020-21 to repair, regenerate and expand community housing and to support affordability for tenants. At the same time, we launched the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative, which will see \$65 million in funding available in 2020-21.

We believe that municipalities and communities are better able to decide where these resources need to be spent. So we have made this funding flexible so service managers and Indigenous program administrators can direct it to local priorities, from housing supply and affordability, including new affordable rental construction, to community housing repair, rental assistance and rental support, or affordable home ownership.

Another new initiative to help people afford the housing they need is the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit. It is a portable benefit, so individuals and families can use it to

pay the rent, not just in community housing, but in any home they rent anywhere in the province. This \$40 million in funding, which will roll out over the next year, gives people real choices on where they live and helps them find housing that better meets their needs. Madam Speaker, it will help some people remain in the communities they love but can no longer afford. They can use it to help with the cost of rent so they can keep the housing they have, or they can use it to move anywhere in the province so they can choose to live close to family, friends and their support network.

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Our affordable housing program and funding is putting decision-making back in the people's hands. It lets individuals and families decide where they want to live, giving them more flexibility and more choice. And it also means we can act more quickly to help the people who need it most. Some 1,900 families and households have already received funding since April, and this could increase to 5,200 by the end of the year. The number will continue to grow every year.

Madam Speaker, our government believes everyone deserves a place to call home. The proposed legislation before you today provides many ways to improve community housing. Our approach is based on four core principles:

- matching people with the right housing based on their needs;
- building effective relationships between all levels of government, housing providers, tenants and Indigenous community partners;
- promoting innovation and long-term sustainability; and
- ensuring supports and services are flexible and that rules reflect local realities.

Building on that fourth principle, Madam Speaker, service managers know their communities best. That's why they are responsible for managing applications and local wait-lists for community housing. We want to improve access to housing assistance for people who need it most, and to modernize accountability approaches to put people first. And we want to help service managers. That's why we're proposing to require service managers to have certain local eligibility rules for rent-geared-to-income assistance, to reflect their community's unique needs. This would also help service managers identify and prioritize applicants' housing needs, to ensure that rent-geared-to-income assistance goes to those who need it most.

We are also proposing to require service managers to have an access system for housing assistance, beyond just rent-geared-to-income assistance. Over time, this may enable service managers to better match people with the housing and supports they need. We're also suggesting broadening the types of housing assistance that could be included in their service level standards, to encourage creativity and local flexibility while maintaining accountability and deep subsidies for those who need it.

We know how important this is and that we need to get this right, and we know we need to help our partners to

make this plan a reality. If the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act passes, we will consult with the service managers and stakeholders on regulations to protect our existing housing stock and create new community housing supply. We'll work with them to improve the community housing access system and encourage innovative, business-like approaches.

We want to strengthen the community housing sector's capacity, and help service managers to move to this improved system and help them successfully manage through this change. That's why we're proposing a phased, incremental approach to change, in partnership with service managers. We will work with our partners to make our community housing system more efficient and sustainable, and to ensure that people can access the affordable housing and supports they need today and in the years to come.

But Madam Speaker, improving the community housing system is just one important aspect of this bill. I'd like to give our parliamentary assistant for municipal affairs the opportunity to discuss proposed changes to the Building Code Act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today, we've heard the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing speak once again about important aspects of the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act. He carefully explained how our government's approach will strengthen protections for tenants and also help landlords, while also encouraging dispute resolution amongst the two.

We also heard the parliamentary assistant for housing speak about another key piece of our proposed legislation that would see the creation of a strong community housing system that can meet local needs, giving vulnerable families and individuals the security of knowing they have a roof over their heads.

I'm very pleased to speak on a third piece of the proposed legislation. Our proposed changes to the Building Code Act would enable the transformation of how building code services are delivered to the public, municipalities and the building sector.

Building regulations have a long history in our society. The earliest building code dates back thousands of years, to about 1800 BC. Throughout history, building codes have regulated how a society's structures are designed and constructed.

Today, building regulations in Ontario are crucial to our safety and well-being. Most of us don't appreciate the impact Ontario's building code has on our daily lives. It helps ensure that our homes, workplaces, hospitals and schools are built to design and construction standards that allow us to live comfortably without concern for our health or safety. It also helps to ensure that public health and safety standards are consistent across the province.

But Ontario's building code is always evolving and is growing increasingly complex. It is a living document.

Before the establishment of Ontario's building code in 1975, building regulations and standards were generally

left up to each municipality. This created a disjointed collection of regulations across the province, making it more complicated for builders, architects, contractors and engineers to work and build in multiple jurisdictions. Designers, product manufacturers, suppliers and contractors also found it very difficult to develop cost-effective, standardized products to conduct business in more than one region.

Through a legislative framework governing the construction, renovation, change of use, and demolition of the province's buildings, the Building Code Act superseded existing building codes and helps promote construction uniformity and consistency throughout the province. While the province has responsibility for administering the building code, including developing legislation and regulations, municipalities enforce it.

A new edition of the building code is released regularly to ensure that Ontario remains at the forefront of building standards and innovation across Canada. Changes can also be made in between editions to support emerging issues.

In 2019, changes were made to Ontario's building code to harmonize it further with the 2015 National Model Construction Codes. These model codes are created by the federal government and form the basis for minimum building requirements for provinces and territories across Canada. Provinces are not required to adopt the federal codes but can choose what, if any, codes to incorporate into their respective provincial codes. Currently, 60% of Ontario's building code is already harmonized with the federal codes.

We are working with other provinces and the federal government to further harmonize building codes across Canada. This will strengthen Ontario's economy by reducing red tape and regulatory burdens, and it will eliminate barriers to businesses nationally.

By continuing to evolve, Ontario's building code can respond to technological developments and the ever-changing building sector.

I know that our building code is one of the most comprehensive and innovative in North America. And when our building code has more advanced standards than the national codes, we will keep our advanced standards. It is a critical tool not only for municipalities and the public, but also for the building sector—a sector that contributed over \$38 billion in 2019 to our economy and is a driver for industry innovation. So it is essential to Ontario's safety and prosperity that those who use building code regulations—the building sector, the municipalities and the public—have the best support possible to fully understand, implement, maintain and enforce it.

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As buildings become more and more complex, the building code's scope and complexity has continued to grow, and we need to respond to that growth in an effective and timely manner. Today, besides creating minimum building standards for health and safety, fire protection, construction materials, structural integrity and plumbing, the Ontario building code also reflects evolving social priorities, including accessibility, environmental integrity and energy efficiency.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the body that currently provides building code services to municipalities, the building sector and the public, is challenged to meet the service delivery needs of stakeholders. Our government recognizes that the building code services need to be transformed and modernized and that these services need to be responsive and provided in a more timely manner. So we must deliver services to our building sector that work for them and support their continued economic growth by strengthening public safety, streamlining customer service and approval processes, delivering services that the building sector needs, providing timely and modern tools and products, promoting consistency across the province and enhancing integrity in the system.

As part of our plan, we are proposing legislation that would allow us to enable the future creation of an administrative authority. This authority would help deliver faster and better building code services that support our building sector, municipalities and the general public. We are still working on the details of what that authority would look like and what services it would provide. We remain committed to continuing discussions on this with our building sector partners, about how the authority would be governed, funded and the scope of services it could deliver. We know how important this is, and we will take the time necessary to get it right.

Our proposed changes to the Building Code Act, if passed, will help the building sector get much-needed housing to market faster and help create jobs—two things that have become even more vital to Ontario's prosperity since the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Bill 184 provides certainty for both landlords and tenants—something that we've heard loud and clear during our consultations.

Although I believe the bill to be quite clear, I heard statements from the members opposite that made it clear that they did not understand the parts of the legislation concerning evictions. I was very pleased to hear the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, provide a real-life example of the requirements of the landlords, the tenants and the Landlord and Tenant Board. I believe it provides the protections and the certainty both groups have been asking for. We would accomplish this while continuing to ensure public health and safety is protected.

Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to speak this morning.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to address my first question to the minister. Why did your government vote against an amendment that we put forward at committee that would have banned all COVID-19-related evictions?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for the question. As the member who has been spreading the most misinformation regarding COVID-19—

Ms. Suze Morrison: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay, let's stop the clock. I'll ask the minister to withdraw.

Hon. Steve Clark: Withdrawn.

This morning, Speaker, I tried in my half hour to explain to the members opposite that the issues within Bill 184 that still allowed a tenant who wanted to have a hearing before the Landlord and Tenant Board—that they would still be able to have that hearing. It's very, very important to set the record straight. I want to make sure that tenants and landlords who are watching third reading debate realize that we still are providing that opportunity for our tenants.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: More than 45 legal clinics and legal experts signed on to an open letter calling Bill 184—or as my constituents call it, the eviction bill—the wrong bill at the wrong time. In this letter, they said, “Aside from the landlords, speculators and developers, no one is protected by the provisions of Bill 184. The changes proposed to the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) are a collection of pro-landlord amendments that will impoverish and displace tenants.”

To the minister: What do you have to say to those 45 legal clinics and legal experts that have all challenged how this bill will actually protect tenants—and is, in fact, just a pro-landlord piece of legislation?

Hon. Steve Clark: The Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act strengthens protections for tenants. It's going to make it easier for tenants and landlords to resolve disputes. As I said in my address this morning, adding mediation to the Landlord and Tenant Board process is a measure that is used in many other provinces. We want to reinforce the necessity to look at a repayment agreement between landlords and tenants.

There are a number of measures regarding renovations that members opposite asked for that we've put in this bill. They asked for strengthening language on renovations, and we've added it. We have added strengths in this bill. Plus we are responding to the Auditor General's recommendation on our Community Housing Renewal Strategy.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to your discussion there, Minister, and also there's been some conversation back and forth in the House, especially yesterday. There have been some concerns from members opposite about what our government is doing to support people who have no homes right now.

Minister, my question to you is, what are you doing currently and what is our government doing to support people who have no homes and to support homeless shelters, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Hon. Steve Clark: Speaker, I want to say, through you to the member for Carleton, my neighbour in eastern Ontario, I want to thank you for the question.

Our government responded very early during the pandemic to provide \$200 million to our local service managers. These are the municipal employees who are on the ground helping our most vulnerable. Some \$148 mil-

lion of that came from my ministry to help those community members respond to local issues. Some increased rent banks, increased utility banks. Others helped with physical distancing in our shelter systems. Many rented hotel and motel rooms to ensure that our most vulnerable had a safe place during the pandemic.

Then we added an additional \$150 million just a few weeks ago to, again, help those people on the ground who know their communities. We're doing a lot during the pandemic, and I want to thank all of our municipal partners for their assistance.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: Respectfully, I'd like to counter the statement made by the minister that we've asked for anything in this bill. That, quite frankly, is not the case. In fact, when it comes to renovictions, we heard over and over again from tenants and tenant advocates at committee that the root cause of renovictions—the perverse financial incentive to kick long-standing tenants out to jack up the rents, lies in the fact that we do not have vacancy rent control between tenants in the province of Ontario. Tenants and tenant advocates begged us to implement rent control between tenancies in this province, and we in fact put forward an amendment to this bill that would do just that. This government voted that down.

We also brought in an amendment that would have increased fines even further than what was proposed in this bill, for the truly bad corporate actors in our system. Again, this government voted against that.

Can the minister say why he voted against both of those amendments?

Hon. Steve Clark: So let me get this straight. This member is standing up this morning to indicate that she is against, that tenants who are being renovicted—she is against our proposals to increase fines. She is against our proposals to raise compensation. And she's against our rules that are tightening the system to encourage everyone to follow the law.

We believe on this side of the House that there needs to be access to alternatives at the Landlord and Tenant Board, like mediation, where appropriate, so that the landlord and tenant can resolve their issues without going to a hearing. But make no mistake, as I said many times—

Interjections.

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Hon. Steve Clark: And she can laugh all she wants, but if a tenant requires a hearing, they will get one. It's clearly in the act. It can happen.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to applaud the minister and the government, because with some of the work with More Homes, More Choice, we're actually increasing the supply of purpose-built rentals, which is an important part of our plan to make sure we have affordable housing for all.

Minister, I would just like to talk about some of the things the members opposite said. When people hear what the opposition is saying, they're concerned and they're

worried. Can you explain to us a little further on how this bill is going to protect tenants?

Hon. Steve Clark: The proposed changes double the maximum fine amounts to discourage unlawful evictions. They also increase compensation for tenants who have been evicted in bad faith. And we want to help adjudicators identify landlords who have a history of renovictions. These are concerns that have been expressed by all members of the House to me as minister. When tenants are evicted for causes beyond their control, most landlords must offer compensation. We are strengthening this for tenants. We want the issue between landlords and tenants to be worked out. We have seen tremendous co-operation between landlords and tenants, as I said this morning in my half-hour address, and we will continue to encourage that collaboration.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: Stakeholders told us at committee that moving post-tenancy debt collection from Small Claims Court into the Landlord and Tenant Board, as this bill proposes to do, will cause even further delays at the board. As the minister has stated, their goal is to speed up processes at the Landlord and Tenant Board, and this will have the exact opposite effect. So is it the minister's intent to stand here in this House today and inform us of some sort of new substantial amount of funding increase that will be going to the Landlord and Tenant Board to support the board to handle this substantial increase in caseload? Because from where I stand and where stakeholders in this province stand, this is a move that looks to just massively increase the number of cases before the board without actually providing the board any resources to handle them.

Hon. Steve Clark: The Public Appointments Secretariat that oversees our government's appointments to provincial agencies, community boards and organizations to ensure that the process is fair—several members have been reappointed to the Landlord and Tenant Board since early 2019, and recruitment for members of the board is an ongoing issue with our government. I spoke to the Attorney General last evening, and I'm pleased to report that, as of June 2020, there are 30 full-time and 10 part-time adjudicators to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Since June 2019, the government has appointed 18 new adjudicators and reappointed 17 adjudicators, and there will be ongoing appointments to this process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There's not enough time for further questions.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize that it is members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Jessica Bell: Erin Clifford and her partner, Jon, both work from home full-time. Their daughters, Addison and Cara, attend Montrose Junior Public School. During a remote emergency learning, Addison, a grade 1 student,

struggled to keep up with her class. It has been heartbreaking for the family to watch Addison's confidence disappear as she falls further behind. Erin and Jon have done their best to support Addison, but it has been impossible to keep up with the demands of work, child care and learning at home. If schools don't reopen full-time in September, Erin is considering leaving her job at the University of Toronto to ensure that Addison gets the one-on-one support she needs.

This story, Erin, Addison, Cara and Jon's story, is happening all across Ontario. If school does not reopen in September, there are working mothers, especially working mothers, who are going to be losing their job. There are parents who are at their wits' end. They are frustrated, they are exhausted, they are worried and they don't know what they're going to do if school doesn't safely reopen in September.

Now this government has put forward a "Work it out yourselves, board" plan with no real funding commitment and no real support for school boards to allow teachers and kids to return safely. That is not a plan; that is an abdication of responsibility. Parents, teachers, kids: They want this government to come up with a real plan, a real, fully funded plan, that will get kids to return to school safely. Please do that.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Mr. Vincent Ke: When we see instances of racial discrimination and hatred towards Chinese Canadians during the pandemic, like the disturbing video of a shopper at a Mississauga store last week, it is hurtful and offensive to us all as Canadians.

The victim of the racial abuse I referred to was told to "Go back to China" simply because he asked the patron to wear a mask. In response to the racial slur, the victim proudly and clearly stated, "I am Canadian."

Speaker, I too am Canadian. There are several hundred thousand Ontarians, people just like me, Canadians of Chinese descent who proudly call Canada home and contribute richly to our economy and culture.

During the pandemic, Chinese Canadians united and organized to help people from all different backgrounds out of the goodness of their hearts. They kindly donated PPE, food and money while also promoting and following health and safety guidelines to protect others. They acted in the true Ontario spirit as proud Canadians.

Speaker, here I call for all Canadians to stand together to denounce racism and show the world what it means to be a Canadian. Just like the victim stated: We are Canadians.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Last week, I had the pleasure to meet with a group of early childhood educators, the Thunder Bay ECE Unite group. What a great group of dedicated and devoted women. This group is concerned with this government's lack of a concrete plan for child care, and so am I.

Kim Kivi, an early childhood educator, told me, "Our before- and after-school care is licensed for 30 children. According to the ministry, we now can only take 10 people." There are eight children and two educators. That means there are 22 children who do not have care. We were already in a crisis in Thunder Bay with child care, with years-long lists. Now, post-COVID, we're worse.

Despite the government's announcements of a sustainability plan for child care, child care operators have not received concrete funding agreements. Throughout the pandemic, this government didn't communicate critical changes to rules around funding to ensure the continued payment of staff. They also did not consult with the centres on a safe reopening strategy or provide funding to help centres adjust to the new safety requirements.

This government needs to stop paying lip service to the importance of child care and start actually supporting them so that they can keep their staff and avoid massive debts. A safe reopening of Ontario will not be possible without a clear plan for child care.

ANTI-VAPING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Parents in my constituency of Oakville North-Burlington are very concerned that too many young people have taken up vaping.

Since January, we've held two round table meetings that included Halton's Medical Officer of Health. These participants at these round tables expressed their concerns to me and asked for all levels of government to take action.

A 2019 CAMH survey found that vaping used by youth has almost doubled in two years. Almost a quarter of students in grades 7 to 12 have tried a vaping product in the past year, one in eight were vaping weekly or daily, and 83% of users aged 15 to 19 report using fruit- or candy-flavoured vapes. These numbers are alarming to me and to parents.

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Our government heard the concerns of parents, and we took swift action. As of July 1, the Ontario government has restricted the retail sale of most flavoured vapour products and those with high nicotine concentrations to specialty vape stores and licensed cannabis retail stores, and specialty vape stores now must ensure that any indoor displays and promotions of vapour products are not visible from outside these stores. Those who break the rules could face fines between \$4,000 to \$150,000.

Vaping is a serious risk to the health of our young people, and it's important that parents find out more about the dangers of vaping and make sure their teens have all the facts.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Catherine Fife: Throughout most of the pandemic, we've seen a disproportionate impact on women. Women are more likely to work in caring jobs as nurses, PSWs, early childhood educators, midwives or in the retail

or service sector. All of these women are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19, putting them and their families' health in jeopardy. Women also make 78 cents on the dollar when compared to men; for racialized and Indigenous women, it's even less. Whether there is a global pandemic or not, women always disproportionately bear the greater responsibility for child care.

So yesterday when the government announced that, in a few days' time, much of the province would be moving to stage 3, women across the province were left with lots of questions: "What about my health and safety at work? What am I going to do about child care this summer? How can I go back to work full-time if my kids only go back to school part-time this fall?" Lots of questions with few answers from the government.

The government announced that child care will be allowed to reopen at 90% capacity as of July 27. Why 90%? Is that threshold safe? Has the government provided extra support for ECEs and child care centres for PPE? No, they have not. Before any of these reopenings happen, questions need to be answered. Women and parents deserve answers, and they need support. Our health and, indeed, our economic recovery depend on it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. John Fraser: Ontario's children need to be back in school full-time in the fall. This must be our collective priority. It's not just important for our kids' education, their development, their mental health; it's a cornerstone of our economic recovery. Getting kids back to school full-time enables parents and caregivers to get back to work, to fully participate in the workforce in Ontario's economy.

This is especially true for women who, more often than not, have been carrying the freight with our children out of school. For many, their careers have been disproportionately impacted.

Speaker, just like we did in our hospitals at the beginning of this pandemic, we need to invest more in our schools. We need more educators, more supports, extra space for children to learn so we can keep our class sizes smaller and safer. We must also ensure that our local public health units have the resources and tools they need when schools open up, and just like in health care, the government needs to establish a command table that includes parents, students, school boards, teachers' federations and public health.

Our party has put forward an action plan to invest in our schools because, simply put, it's the most important thing we can do for our families and for our economic recovery.

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that other than our health and safety, COVID-19 has heavily impacted our economy. I had organized town hall Zoom meetings since April and continued until June to support

businesses in Richmond Hill. I am grateful that MPP Stan Cho, Minister Lecce and Minister Prabmeet Sarkaria joined me in Zoom meetings with businesses and families, working with them on their challenges.

I also joined the Recover Richmond Hill Task Force, working with the city of Richmond Hill and the Richmond Hill Board of Trade, as well as the Markham, Richmond Hill and Vaughan Chinese Business Association. Working together, we identified programs and strategies to assist them to realign their operations and re-establish normal business. We provided individual support and hosted a series of seminars to prepare them on handling their challenges.

It is really encouraging to see how some Richmond Hill businesses and corporations also stepped up to support the community with PPE and other materials. What a difference it made during this difficult time.

Today, when I visit the local businesses to promote the shop-local program, I am touched by the positive attitude, determination and willingness to put in extra time to make up for the challenges caused by COVID-19. I know that our economy is on its path to recovery.

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. John Vanthof: We are going through never-before-seen times with COVID-19, and some parts of the province face different problems than others. I'd like to focus on a unique problem that one of our towns is facing right now: Kirkland Lake. They are facing a lot of problems with black bears. Black bears haven't heard about physical or social distancing. In Kirkland Lake, there's actually a Facebook group where they keep live track of where the bears are going.

If this was happening in a town in southern Ontario, this would be provincial, perhaps national, news, but it's just another day in northern Ontario. Keep your kids inside—just another day. Could you imagine in southern Ontario if there were bears roaming around and they were told, "Keep your kids inside," as Bear Wise suggests?

The bears are hungry. We're not anti-bear. MNR is doing what it could with the budget it has, but keep in mind the differences in this province. There are huge issues in this province with COVID-19, but there are parts of this province who have to wonder if there's a bear outside the door on a regular basis. We have to look at all our issues.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Saman and Charlie Lokuwaduge, a father and son who fled civil strife in Sri Lanka two years ago and bought East N West Diner in Richmond, donated commercial grade disinfecting products to the Ottawa Police Services Leitrim station.

ROSSS in Manotick, an organization supporting rural seniors, has, among other things, been providing transportation for essential medical appointments, delivering frozen meals and offering grocery deliveries.

Allan Ryan, president of the Stittsville Business Association, teamed up with Ross and Corleen Bradley to provide gift cards, lunches, dinners and more to the Ottawa Police Service Huntmar station, Ottawa Fire Services station 46, Ottawa Paramedic Service, and staff at local pharmacies, retirement residences and grocery stores.

Manotick Village and Community Association started a community Facebook page that, among other things, helps single-parent families or health care workers who may not have time to shop, coordinating with the Kiwanis Club of Manotick, which created a community pandemic volunteers' list.

Greely and Metcalfe Lions Club partnered together, pledging \$5,000 to a matching-funds campaign of all other donations to the Osgoode Care Centre.

John Stacey, owner of Stagra Automotive in Greely, donated funds for a special staff meal at the Osgoode Care Centre.

Gerry Crepin donated N95 masks to the Osgoode Care Centre.

Ron Miller, owner of Miller's Farm, Market and Garden Centre in Manotick, bought a meal for every single resident at Hyfield Apartments in Manotick.

The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, I don't have enough time, but I'd like to thank everyone in Carleton who stepped up to make a difference during the COVID-19 pandemic. You're an inspiration to everyone.

FRANKLIN HORNER
COMMUNITY CENTRE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Today, I rise to bring attention to an important charitable, not-for-profit community centre in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, the Franklin Horner Community Centre. Franklin Horner hosts a variety of programs, services and meeting space for community organizations, groups and individual members. They welcome groups of individuals of all ages—a multitude of activities for all. But just like everyone here, they had to reinvent themselves during this unprecedented time.

1030

Last week, I had the pleasure of joining their dedicated team as they kicked off their new weekly meal service for seniors called Food with Faraway Friends. It's a program to get seniors out of their homes if they feel safe to do so. Hot meals can be picked up at the centre or delivered to individuals' homes. They also have a tent set up outside called the Big Top Café, where you can enjoy some snacks and drinks and a socially distant conversation with a new friend or an old friend.

Franklin Horner Community Centre offers recreational and leisure activities, including health, education, fitness, an amazing woodworking room, day trips, crafts, art, and congregating dining for our seniors. I had the opportunity to visit this centre earlier this year with the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, Minister Cho, where he participated in an exercise program and shared some fun stories.

I would like to thank Laura Latham, executive director, and her team for the amazing work that they're doing in

south Etobicoke and looking after the mental wellness of our seniors.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for members' statements this morning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Timmins.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I seek unanimous consent in order to stand down the leads until the Premier shows up.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins is seeking consent of the House to stand down the lead questions for the official opposition until the Premier is present in the House. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier announced his plan to move Ontario into phase 3. Unfortunately, the Conservatives' refusal to include a province-wide plan for child care and education is going to make life even harder for workers and business owners in every corner of our province because it's going to make it next to impossible for working parents to get back to work. Does the Premier accept the reality that Ontario won't be able to get back to work if working moms and dads can't rely on schools and available child care spaces?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I was proud to join the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Finance to announce our stage 3 reopening, part of our broader plan to get our economy back on track. Part of that obligation is for the government to ensure that child care remains sustainable and accessible in every community in this province. It's why we have taken action in conjunction with working closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Williams, to expand those cohorts.

Based on the incredible work of the people of this province, the risk of COVID has been reduced, and that is a demonstration of all of our collective efforts as a population. As a result, we've been able to expand that capacity from 10 to 15. That represents in and around 91% of pre-COVID capacity, to assist those moms and dads, the very people you speak of, to ensure that they can get back to work with confidence and remain safe. Our health protocols remain in place and our funding remains in place to ensure that child care remains accessible and affordable for people in this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday the Premier claimed that it was entirely up to school boards whether they would

be able to open all day or all week. But last week, an email to school boards made it clear that the government wasn't offering boards a choice and that boards were to adopt a model in which kids would be in school as little as two days a week. The Council of Ontario Directors of Education was told, "The government is not flexible on this matter." So can the Premier clear this up? Was this memo inaccurate, or did the Premier get it wrong yesterday?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We need to prepare for all eventualities and adopt a prudent flexibility for whatever path this outbreak takes. It's why we are ensuring that in September we are prepared for three circumstances. As we see around the world in jurisdictions that have reopened their schools, from Hong Kong to Germany, we've seen risk when they have done so. We have an obligation to the people of this province to ensure it is safe.

The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, yesterday said in a press conference attacking the minister "for not knowing what September will look like." I'd like to ask the member in her supplemental, could you provide us with the transmission risk and the data of what September will look like?

In the absence of knowing that risk, Speaker, we have an obligation to ensure that we're prepared for every circumstance, to ensure that the continuity of learning is not impeded, so yes, day-to-day conventional learning with heightened safety and an online option, should it be required, in a hybrid of 15 kids cohorted, based on public health advice. This is not a time to, in any way, infuse a sense of politicizing the circumstances. We have an opportunity to work with public health, to work together as parliamentarians to keep kids safe. That's exactly what the government will continue to do.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's this government's obligation to actually put a functioning workable plan together for parents and kids for the fall—a safe plan. That's going to mean investment, and maybe that's what they don't want. Maybe they think that seven cents a kid is enough investment to get our kids back to school safely and our moms and dads back to work. But we don't think that that's good enough, and neither do parents and neither do educators and neither do children and neither do school boards. So there's an announcement for the minister right there.

The fact is, they have been left on their own to confront this challenge, and they're doing their best to come up with solutions for kids. But the government is not doing their part, Speaker. The boards have been clear: They're eager to return for five days a week, but they need additional funding, they need additional staff and they need additional space, and the government should be providing it.

Is this government prepared to support school boards and parents that want schools open five days a week come this fall?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government continues to work with the school boards under the guidance of the Chief Medical Officer of Health to ensure that, when

parents return their children to class in September, it is safe. That is why we have added \$730 million more in the Grants for Student Needs to ensure that the restart is safe. It is why we've enhanced mental health funding by an additional \$10 million. It's why we've added more money for technology—an additional \$15 million. The per-pupil funding is up. Every single board in our province is getting more funding to ensure it is safe.

But, Speaker, beyond the investment, it's preparing for three circumstances because, like the majority of provinces within the federation, we are unaware—unlike the member opposite—of what that risk will be with precision in September. To get this right, to be prudent, to be ready for all circumstances, we're asking boards to prepare for in-class day-to-day, for online, and for an adaptive, blended model of the two. That is the right thing to do to keep kids safe.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is back to the Premier. But I've got to say, a wait-and-see approach is not going to get people back to work. It's not going to get employers having their staff coming back to work, because those staff are parents and they need predictability about what's happening in the fall. What they're all saying—the majority are saying—is that they want five days a week, and they need child care. This government has been crickets when it comes to that kind of commitment. It's their job to put something in place that is actually safe and meets the needs of students, parents and the employers of our province. It's shameful that that hasn't happened. "Wait and see" is not a plan, Speaker. We need a predictable plan.

In Ottawa-Carleton, the parents were clear that the Premier's plan to have kids out of school for most of the week in one of their models is not going to work. It's simply not going to work. Is the Premier prepared to start hiring teachers and education workers and finding more space so that the eager folks that want kids back in the schools five days a week actually get that to happen?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The government, under the leadership of the Premier, is preparing for all circumstances so that a child's education is not in any way undermined or impeded. We have a duty to get this right.

We have to ensure that public health data informs our planning. The member opposite is asserting to the government—this is the recommendation of New Democrats—to plan absent public health data. We are saying to the people of this province that, in order to be responsive to the risk that is not linear province-wide and is moving each and every day, we have to plan for all three circumstances. That is a sensible proposal to ensure that no child's education is at risk in September. We're looking around the world, and if we benchmark Ontario versus every other industrialized economy—like Israel, like Hong Kong, including Germany—they have reopened with challenges.

So let us learn from those lessons. Let's put the funding in place. Let's work together to keep kids in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We're waiting for that. We're waiting for funding for PPE. We're waiting for funding for more staffing. We're waiting for funding for protective equipment for transportation, for technology and for mental health supports. Seven cents a student, the Ottawa-Carleton board says, is not enough.

When you look at schools in northern Ontario, they're facing challenges too. Yesterday, teachers in the Keewatin Patricia board told Global News that the general guidelines developed by the Minister of Education don't take into account the lack of resources in the Far North. Remote schools don't have extra staff to deal with COVID-related emergencies. They can't access WiFi for remote learning.

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Kim Douglas, a teacher in the Keewatin Patricia board told reporters, "When there's no administrator on site, and a kid gets sick, what do you do? Who's gonna be responsible for that child?" It's a very good question.

Is the Premier ready to admit that the government's plan for schools is not working, and they need to step up and provide the support that schools need?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Indeed, we understand that in remote and northern communities they face increased challenges. That's why, under the leadership of the Minister of Infrastructure, we have set aside \$315 million to expand broadband in all communities in the province of Ontario. It's why I joined the Minister of Infrastructure to call on the federal government and the CRTC to invest and to achieve the commitment they set of high-speed Internet for all Canadians. We agree and we asked them to expedite that delivery to help more families in remote parts of the province.

Speaker, every high school in Ontario this September will have Internet. In addition, Speaker, we've allocated an additional \$15 million in funding for technology to procure around 37,000 devices.

We understand the challenges within the north. It's why we're funding and investing in those communities to get them to connect to the Internet so that their kids could, as well, be learning no matter what challenges take place in the fall.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I've got to tell you, parents are really worried that this government is forcing them to choose between their jobs and their livelihoods or their children's education. That is an unacceptable choice.

Yesterday, the Premier claimed that parents were thanking him—thanking him—for being forced to quit their jobs and shell out thousands of extra dollars for child care costs, just like he claimed that teachers were thanking him last year when he announced 10,000 of them would be fired.

You know what? Working parents and their kids deserve so much better than this, Speaker. Will the Premier stop ignoring this crisis, agree to cover COVID-19 costs such as personal protective equipment, extra staffing, transportation, cleaning supplies and school retrofits and maintenance, and start working with parents and school boards who want to see schools open five days a week, open safely, and make sure child care spaces are there for parents who need them?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of a government that is investing over half a billion dollars to rebuild schools and build new schools, after a decade of closure under the former Liberal government.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is investing over \$1.3 billion in renewal, achieving what the Auditor General has required us to do: 2.5% in renewal funding to ensure our schools are maintained and ultimately safe for kids.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has increased the Grants for Student Needs and the vehicle funding to school boards, a net \$730 million; more funding for cleaning; more funding for technology, mental health and special education. These are the investments that are going to make a difference.

Speaker, we've also set aside \$200 million in the Supports for Students Fund to hire more educators, to hire more custodians. Some 2,000 more custodians can be hired in school boards as a result of that investment.

We understand the importance of getting it right. We are working closely with the chief medical officer to do that to keep all staff and all students safe in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. Order. The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order. The member for Carleton will come to order. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville will come to order.

Restart the clock.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This morning I met with Lisa, who's a front-line worker in our long-term-care system. Lisa is a dietary aid. She spent the last four years working tirelessly to sound the alarm on the crisis in Ontario's long-term-care system. She notes that one of the key issues, one of the key factors that workers in long-term care are facing is severe understaffing, which has only gotten worse, of course, during the pandemic.

Workers in our long-term-care system, Speaker, are left physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted from being stretched far, far too thin on the job, working long hours and literally putting their lives on the line for vulnerable seniors.

The Premier has a responsibility to protect these workers by mandating a standard of care of four hours per

day, per resident, and increasing wages for these workers and protections permanently. He has to take steps forward to ensure the safety and security of these essential workers.

The front-line workers are there, not only during the pandemic but also afterwards. Will the Premier make a commitment to make those permanent changes for those health care heroes?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government's number one commitment is to the safety and well-being of residents and staff, and that has been consistent throughout this pandemic. It was consistent before—every measure, every tool taken. We started as a new Ministry of Long-Term Care. Our government showed its commitment to long-term care and staff in long-term care to understand the staffing challenges.

I've stood here and said this before. We know the ward rooms played a role. We know that the staffing crisis that was pre-existing, leading into the pandemic, was a serious obstacle for our homes to overcome the difficulties they were having in controlling the spread. Staffing was an issue, and our government took measures to create flexibility in the staffing, to do everything possible—matching portals, \$243 million to help homes address the staffing.

We took every measure possible. The safety and well-being of staff and residents is paramount.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, experts are saying that the matter of a second wave isn't an if but, rather, a when. So while the government spends its time ramming legislation through—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —that gives a lot of goodies to their developer friends, they are doing nothing to make permanent the changes that we need to see in long-term care.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education, come to order. Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA), come to order. Government House leader, come to order.

Restart the clock.

I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, these brave, front-line heroes have literally given their lives—given their lives—in the fight against COVID-19, but it never should have come to this. We all heard that the minister went and asked for more money but was refused. We all know the Premier's claim about an iron ring around long-term care certainly wasn't accurate.

By legislating standards of care now, sustainable staffing levels now, fair wages now, the Premier can provide these workers with the safety and security they deserve. So will the Premier listen? Will he listen to what Ontario's front-line heroes have been saying for years,

which the Liberals ignored? But will they do that, adopt these measures now, change them permanently or will we see the vulnerability continue and this deadly virus go through our long-term-care system again a second time?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you once again for the question. When our homes were affected by COVID-19, our government took every measure—

Interjection: You did not.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: —and we continued to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Leader of the Opposition, come to order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We continued to take every measure possible. Day after day, we were at work putting dollars behind emergency orders, amendments to regulations, \$243 million—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I ask the minister to take her seat.

The Leader of the Opposition has to come to order.

The Minister of Long-Term Care can conclude.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: This is a global issue, and we will continue to do everything we can that is possible.

The previous government had 21 reports highlighting staffing—that a fix was needed—and they did not act, and you, as the Leader of the Opposition, supported that government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The House will come to order.

The next question?

ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

Mr. David Piccini: My question is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. As Ontarians think about the new normal, many of them are happy to hear that they can enjoy patio season with families and friends.

Mr. Speaker, when I say the “new normal,” and when Ontarians think about that, behind the new normal are stories; stories like George, who came to Canada as a Greek at the age of 14 and started Olympus Burger, which became Canada's best burger, which I took the Minister of Finance to last week; Maria and her husband, who started Railside Restaurant; or many of the ma-and-pa shops who serve folks in Northumberland–Peterborough South on a day-to-day basis with a smile.

1050

As Ontarians explore their communities and the province this summer, business generated by patios will be a huge help to our food service sector and the remarkable men and women who work in that that sector.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share with us just how significant Ontario's patio access and expansions are going to be to this province over the summer months?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I want to say thank you to the hard-working member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. I'm looking forward to joining him on a patio in his community. I also want to thank him and all the members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, who identified this as an issue early on to make sure that Ontarians could reconnect in their communities.

That's very important to our tourism sector, but, Speaker, as the member noted, we are now in a new normal. We want to make sure that we travel this province and travel in our own communities as safely as possible. I can tell you, as the member has been obviously circulating in his community to support his community, that I had the opportunity as well to join the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of the Environment and the MPP from Cambridge on patios in their communities. I can tell you, from the contact tracing to the level of sanitization to the physical distancing that's happening in our areas, it's very safe to start to circulate around our communities. And as we go into phase 3 across the rest of the province, we're starting to see that even in dine-in activities.

So I want to say to all Ontarians: Let's get out there. Let's support our local economy. This has been a triple threat, of a public health crisis, an economic crisis—but this is a great—

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

Mr. David Piccini: My follow-up question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The majority of Ontario, as we moved into stage 2—

Interjections.

Mr. David Piccini: We're spreading it all around, yes.

The members opposite have no plan for restaurants. They would rather give them handouts than give them a leg up. But that's not what the hard-working businesses of Northumberland–Peterborough South want. They want flexibility and a government that supports them.

Minister, I know that patio space can be especially limited in rural Ontario. Can you tell us about steps that you've taken to help expand patio space so that these small businesses, hard-working men and women, can get back to work and that we as Ontarians can continue to enjoy their restaurants?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to really thank the member for Northumberland–Peterborough South for all of his advocacy. He has done a tremendous job for his riding during the pandemic. On behalf of his constituents, I want to extend my thanks to him for his advocacy.

He's right: Restaurants and bars are a very important part of our economy and our communities. We know that Ontario's patio season is short, so that's why our government is cutting unnecessary red tape and speeding up the process. I think it's critical. We issued a new emergency order to allow municipalities to pass temporary bylaws to create and expand patios to serve customers during this short patio season. Our changes are going to shorten the approval time from several weeks to several days.

I want to announce this as well, Speaker, because this is very exciting: At the request of Toronto city council, I issued a new ministerial zoning order to more easily expand patios across the city and to allow the launch of their new CafÉTO project.

My message to Ontarians is: Get out and enjoy a patio at a local restaurant this season.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier refused to answer my questions—some really simple questions—around how a private health care provider was given contracts to do mobile COVID-19 testing.

The Premier also refused to answer my questions as to how his former PC Party caucus executive director, Jeff Silverstein, was able to secure a contract for this company, Switch Health. Instead of transparency, they dodged. If this government truly had nothing to hide, they could have done the right thing and, as I requested, tabled all relevant information on this contract.

Today, will the government do the right thing and table all the documentation of how it selected this private health care company to handle COVID-19 testing?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. Again, in actual fact, what happened was, the contract was given by Ontario Health. This was not something that had direct responsibility for the ministry; it was done directly by Ontario Health, with a group. It was selected from a group of applicants, and that is how the contract was given.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The government overlooked its own capable public servants in order to outsource to a friendly provider. We certainly heard that before, in the previous government, the Liberal government, the arm's-length disconnection, but we know that the Premier is now playing from that same playbook. Migrant workers and the whole region of Windsor-Essex deserved a coordinated public health care approach to get testing done months ago—not waiting after a private provider showed up with just the right lobbyist connection to get the Premier's attention.

Speaker, today I wrote to the Auditor General to ask her office to review these contracts. The Premier has the power to order a review from the auditor. Will he clear the air today and join me in asking the auditor to look into it?

Hon. Christine Elliott: I can assure the member through you, Mr. Speaker, that the contract was granted in accordance with the required procedures that were necessary for this to happen and that the people of Windsor-Essex can be assured that they will receive the testing in the way that they need it. We know that there still are a number of agricultural workers who need to be tested; they will be tested.

We receive the reports on a daily basis about the levels of testing, and right now, Ontario stands as a leader in Canada on testing. We are surpassing over 20,000 tests every day. We are increasing our capacity to 50,000, and that is going to continue until we make sure that we have tested the agricultural workers and we make sure that people are going to be safe and secure in their own homes.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Minister of Education. I'm asking this question, of course, in my capacity as a politician, but I'm also asking it as a mother and a grandmother who is extremely worried about the well-being of children and educators of this province.

There's an enormous amount of debate, and we've heard some of it this morning, around the reopening of schools. A common thread throughout that debate is that everyone wants a full return to school, but not if the safety of children and school staff is at risk—I've heard government members say that. What is missing from the debate is a thoughtful proposal from the government on how those two might be reconciled.

I'm hearing from constituents—parents—who are worried sick that their children will not be supported in September. Mr. Speaker, if the government were willing to invest the necessary money in helping boards find community space, develop outdoor classroom space, hire additional staff to keep class sizes low, invest in the protective cleaning measures necessary, children could return to school safely, full-time, in September with smaller class groupings. It would not be easy; I understand that. But it is possible with adequate funding. I ask the minister to explain to the children of Ontario why they are not worth that investment.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The students of this province are worth investing in, Speaker—\$730 million more to do just that: to ensure that students in September, when they return, can do so with confidence that it is safe. There is more funding for PPE, more funding for cleaning, more funding for custodial staff, more funding for more specialized teachers in the areas of math, mental health and special education. That is the reality, Speaker, because we acknowledge that it is going to be increasingly difficult for school boards to operationalize these plans, given the risk.

We also know—and I appreciate the member opposite has acknowledged the unknown of September—that we must be preparing and planning for all circumstances that may manifest in the province. As we look globally to other jurisdictions that have reopened schools, they have seen challenges—in France as well. The lesson learned is to be prepared for three circumstances. Indeed, daily, conventional delivery is our preference. The investments will be in place, the training will be in place, and of course the continued support for all school boards will remain in place to ensure they can be safe in September.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's very encouraging, but the trouble is, we're not seeing the hiring that needs to be done. We're not seeing the planning that would need to be done. It's the middle of July; school starts the first week in September. Mr. Speaker, we started raising these issues in May; it's now the middle of July, and in the intervening weeks there's a lot that could have been done to ensure safe return to school.

The implications of not getting the reopening of school right are different for different children. Children who were struggling before will struggle more now. The inequities that exist among kids have been laid bare and exacerbated by the pandemic. Schools need more support in order to be able to address those inequities. Most of the money that the minister has announced is money that was already going to schools. There's a little bit of new money, but most of it is a re-announcement of money that was already going. That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker.

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There is no successful economic recovery without the health and well-being of the two million students in Ontario and their families. I ask the minister, again, why he is not working with teachers and their unions, support staff, administrators, school trustees, parents, students and medical health professionals to determine the investments needed to provide for a safe, healthy, full school reopening this fall.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you again to the member opposite for the question. Indeed, we are working with all stakeholders, federations, boards of education, listening to parents and, indeed, the chief medical officer. I spoke to him as recently as last night, to Dr. Williams, to inform us on the way forward, because at the end of the day, our obligation as a government is to keep our children and our staff safe. We have an interest in ensuring kids can continue learning, however, taking action to reduce the risk in September to them, to their families and to the broader community spread that we seek to avoid.

What our government has done, yesterday, for example, in child care, is safely and methodically increase capacity based on public health data available to us that demonstrates that we can indeed cohort kids, keep them safe and provide that assurance to parents, as they return to the labour market, that they can do so with confidence. We're going to continue to seek the advice of the chief medical officer, indeed work with educators and front-line workers to ensure that when they go back in September, they can do so knowing full well that their children will remain safe.

NATURAL GAS

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: My question is for the Associate Minister of Energy. But before I ask my question, I can't help but comment. There's a reason the Liberal Party is in the corner, in the penalty box. They talk about our government investing in children. Well, where was the member for Don Valley West when they shut down Munster Elementary School—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask you to stop the clock. The purpose of question period is for members of the Legislative Assembly to ask questions of the executive council and hold the executive council to account. They might be government backbenchers asking the question. They might be opposition members. But it's not to take potshots back and forth across the floor against other members.

So I'm now going to start the clock and allow the member for Carleton to place her question to the minister.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Associate Minister of Energy please talk about phase 1 of our government's natural gas expansion program, which is helping Ontarians in rural and remote areas and in Indigenous communities who have access to natural gas, giving them even more connections coming soon? Our government knows that making the switch from electric heat, propane or oil to natural gas results in significant savings. So could the associate minister please update this House on the status of the natural gas expansion program?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you to the honourable member for Carleton for the question and the great work she does on behalf of the people of Carleton.

We are making life more affordable for communities across Ontario through the natural gas expansion program, with projects completed and under way through the first phase of the program.

Last year, I was honoured and pleased to announce that we would be moving forward with a second phase to expand access to natural gas to even more communities across the province. The Ontario Energy Board is currently in the process of collecting information about expansion opportunities through phase 2 and will develop a report on eligible projects.

Due to the pressures faced by municipalities and utilities as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, our government extended the time for proponents to file their project information. Proponents now have until August 4 to file project information with the OEB.

We know that municipalities and utilities across Ontario, and the people that are going to receive these facilities and services, are excited about this program. We encourage all interested communities to partner with their local utility to submit projects for consideration—lowering the costs of their energy bill and providing jobs across our great province.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the associate minister for that response. I want to also thank the associate minister and the minister, who came to my riding of Carleton on February 28, prior to the pandemic, and hosted a very informative round table to learn more about what our government can do to support the people of Carleton. So I really appreciate hearing that update on the status of the program and measures taken by his ministry to accommodate municipalities facing increased pressure due to COVID-19.

I know that many communities across the province, including my own, are excited about expansion projects that have connected them to natural gas, and projects that are currently under way to connect even more communities. Could the associate minister please give us an overview of the benefits that communities in Ontario are seeing from this great program?

Hon. Bill Walker: Again, it's a great question, and thank you for inviting us first-hand to be up there and see what was needed in Carleton. I'm pleased to say we're responding.

Through the first phase of this program, unserved areas and communities like Chatham-Kent, southern Bruce, Chippewas of the Thames and Scugog Island are set to see the benefits of this program this year, Mr. Speaker. Residents in these communities will save between \$800 to \$2,500 on home heating costs, with businesses also set to see significant savings.

Just last week, I was proud to announce up to \$1.8 million to expand natural gas access to households and businesses in Saugeen First Nation through the natural gas expansion program, with my colleague Lisa Thompson. Residents and business owners are eagerly awaiting the completion of this project and are excited to get started.

The natural gas expansion program is making a real difference in communities right across Ontario. I'm excited that we are moving forward with phase 2 of the program, and I'm eager to get more shovels into the ground as quickly as possible and help as many people across this great province as we possibly can.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. Garden City Manor is a long-term-care home in my riding that is in the middle of another outbreak of COVID-19. At least 10 people are sick. Three have died. The home has been inspected 14 times—let me repeat that: 14 times—and each and every time it was found that they had failed to comply with COVID-19 prevention protocols. Staff are doing their best, but they are overwhelmed and they are run off their feet.

Why won't this government commit to doing something, literally anything, to fix long-term care today? Lives are on the line here. Why? What are you waiting for?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Let me assure you that we are not waiting and we have been actively working on creating a modern 21st-century long-term-care system that puts the resident at the centre. Ever since the Ministry of Long-Term Care was created in the summer of 2019, we have been at work addressing the neglect of the past 15 years, and that is no small piece of work, let me tell you.

We have and we will continue to use all our means to build capacity. We will build capacity. We are in the process of using multiple solutions to create the environment in which our residents can be cared for with respect

and dignity and where staff can be appreciated for the amazing work that they do in long-term care. That is much more than anybody did for long-term care in the last 15 years. Every long-term-care home has the duty to maintain standards of care. That is not negotiable.

Our government has conducted over 2,800 inspections. The 14 inspections that you refer to are through the public health units. That is—

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: The assurance has been over there for two years.

Again to the Premier: The Niagara acting medical officer of health is pointing the finger at both the government and the private, for-profit long-term-care operators. He told us, “What you are seeing is the systemic problems that have caused problems for long-term-care homes in Niagara are at play here.” And according to the medical officer of health, Revera, the big corporation profiting off the care of our loved ones, only operates a “skeleton staff.” But still the Conservatives continue to go out of their way to protect the bad operators like this one.

What is it going to take? How many more lives—how many more families will lose a family member before this Premier finally cracks down on these for-profit homes?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question.

The evidence is demonstrating that it is the systemic issues, because of the neglect. We have ward rooms that are continuing to exist because the redevelopment did not occur under 15 years. The previous government only managed to build 611 beds between 2011 and 2018. That is the unfortunate reality that our government is dealing with as quickly as possible.

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The reality is that we are overcoming the shortcomings that were left behind by the previous government, supported by the NDP, including the staffing. As I mentioned earlier, 21 reports on the staffing fixes that were required—never acted upon by the previous government, supported by the leadership of the NDP.

Older homes had more ward beds. That is the problem. The staff was in a—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier announced phase 3 in the reopening of Ontario’s economy. For families and for our economic recovery, there’s a piece missing, the single most critical piece: the plan to get our kids back into school full-time in the fall.

Speaker, there is no plan to invest in our schools, and no plan to invest in extra educators or extra spaces so that

we can keep our class sizes smaller and safer. There’s no plan for students with special needs.

Investing in our schools is actually the cornerstone of Ontario’s economic recovery.

Speaker, through you: Just like we invested in our hospitals in March to make sure that there was space and that they were safe, is the Premier prepared to do the right thing, the same thing, for our schools?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Indeed, the Premier is absolutely committed to ensuring the safety of our staff and our students. It’s the basis for why the government announced, in the Grants for Student Needs, the highest and most-increased investment in education ever in the province’s history. It’s why we have put more money in the GSN, the Grants for Student Needs, to enable all school boards, public and Catholic, English and French, to succeed in September. It’s why we have set up a command table of the best doctors in the province and country to advise school boards on their plans. It’s why we’ve asked them to prepare for three circumstances, out of an abundance of caution, to ensure that no child’s education is impeded because of the challenges of the outbreak in 30, 40, 70 days from now.

Speaker, we are putting investments in place. I accept the premise: The most important thing a government can do is to protect our most vulnerable. It’s why the money is in place. It’s why the compulsory training is in place for September. It’s why we continue to work co-operatively with Dr. Williams, the chief medical officer, the command table, the federations and school boards to get this right to keep kids safe in September.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I appreciate the answer from the minister, but he does know that his increase is related to increasing enrolment and labour costs that have increased this year and last year, and it’s not going to fix what we’re talking about right now.

Parents are concerned. They don’t want their schools to be like long-term care, where the government waited a month to raise the wages of the lowest-paid workers and to stop them from working in more than one home—or migrant workers.

We’ve all seen the results of the government not doing what it needed to do when they knew they had to do it. Parents don’t want that to happen here, and there’s a big risk of that. Parents, mostly women, have been carrying the freight since our kids have been out of school. It’s affected their jobs and kept them out of the workforce, and that’s bad for our economy.

Speaker, through you: Is the Premier prepared to do what’s right for the economy and for our families and invest in a plan for our schools right now to keep class sizes small and safer and get kids back into school full-time?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The answer, in short, is yes. The government will continue to make those investments in school boards right across Ontario to ensure that our kids remain safe.

Speaker, when I announced some weeks ago additional investments in schools—that was set aside to respond to the challenges taking place around us. For example, we've seen increased stress and challenges, mental health challenges imposed on our students and our children in the province of Ontario. That's why, in addition to the historic doubling of mental health funding one year ago, we've announced an additional \$10 million to hire more psychologists, more psychotherapists, more social workers within our schools. That's why, when we acknowledge the potential for students to have to be learning online, given the unknown of the fall, we've invested \$15 million in new funding to procure tens of thousands of more devices.

We recognize the challenges for school boards, and likewise the ministry, in preparing for September, but we will ensure funding is in place, training is in place, so that we can keep all of our staff, all of our kids and, most importantly, all communities safe in September.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: My question this morning is for the Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions.

Minister, COVID-19 has affected so many Ontarians in different regions across the province, especially when it comes to their mental health. In many cases, Ontarians have spent the past few months isolated and alone. For the past few months, Ontarians have understood and supported our shared goal of stopping the spread of COVID-19 so we could move further towards reopening the province.

Constituents in my riding of Oakville North–Burlington are concerned about the mental health of their loved ones, and they know we have taken and are continuing to take action.

Minister, could you please update the members of this Legislature about the actions our government has taken to address the mental health of Ontarians during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: Thank you to the member from Oakville North–Burlington for that excellent question.

I want to begin this morning by thanking the front-line mental health workers that have pulled it together and kept the people in the province of Ontario safe during this difficult time. They adapted programs, and they changed to using virtual services and online supports to deliver these services to Ontarians. I congratulate them for the great work and the continued work they're doing.

The COVID-19 outbreak in Ontario has been difficult for so many Ontarians. The unfortunate reality is that in difficult times, there's a tendency, when we have these disruptions and stress, for people to not always look after

themselves, and that includes mental health. That's why our government, under the leadership of Premier Doug Ford, took immediate action to respond to this challenge. We invested \$12 million in mental health, and we've seen the expansion of several notable online virtual supports, including ConnexOntario, Kids Help Phone, Good2Talk and BounceBack Ontario.

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

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Minister, for that great answer. It's very reassuring to know that, even during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario, our government has remained committed to making mental health and addictions a priority.

Minister, we know that, in addition to those Ontarians who may be experiencing anxiety and depression during these difficult times, many of our front-line workers may be experiencing burnout or even, in some cases, episodes of PTSD as a result of their heroic efforts during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Minister, could you please tell us how our government has been supporting those who may be living with anxiety and depression, including our front-line heroes, during the COVID-19 outbreak?

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: As part of our \$12-million commitment to mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak here in Ontario, we made a significant investment to significantly expand online and virtual therapy options for those living with mental health challenges. This includes Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy for Ontarians, including our front-line heroes, who may be experiencing heightened anxiety or depression.

Since the very beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Ontario, we've been working closely with the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence at Ontario Health, in addition to a number of hospitals across the province, to develop specific services for our front-line health care workers. This includes self-referral and intake services, weekly online peer discussion groups, access to confidential supports from clinicians and iCBT supports as well.

COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question today is for the Premier. Eric Sommer owns Spring Valley, a successful, innovative construction business in Ancaster. He's done everything possible to keep it open during COVID-19. He's applied for a Canada Emergency Business Account, accessed the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and extended his line of credit. But after all that, he still owes tens of thousands of dollars in rent because his landlord is refusing to participate in the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program. Now his landlord is demanding payment in full.

Clearly, the existing supports are not enough. Business owners are asking for and they need breathing room to recover from this crisis, and they need direct financial

support, not just more deferrals and more debt. So why won't this government give that to them?

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

Hon. Rod Phillips: I appreciate the question from the member and would always appreciate hearing more about any specific situation.

But this Legislature knows that this government has been four-square behind business through this very difficult time. That includes over \$1 billion in our partnership with the federal government that the member references. That includes a suspension of evictions that my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs led the way to support those businesses—and that includes our ongoing dialogue and discussions with business through a number of my colleagues, making sure we're understanding what the pressures are that businesses are under.

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Most importantly, that includes the safe reopening of the Ontario economy. That's why we were so proud yesterday, along with experts in the health community, to talk about moving to phase 3 so that those businesses are able to operate effectively. We hope that will be spread further across this province over the weeks ahead.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the Minister of Finance for his concern for small businesses. So I would say back to him that I'm sure Eric would appreciate a call. If you would like to give him a call to tell him how you're supporting him, I can provide you that information. I'm sure he'd be happy to hear from the Minister of Finance.

It's not just businesses like Eric's that are suffering because of this Conservative inaction. Brian Sloat owns Expressions in Wood, a furniture business in Hamilton, that has now been locked out of their business by a landlord who also refuses to apply for the rent relief program. There are supposed to be rules in place to prevent this, but the government has said that they aren't going to enforce them. Instead, they told Brian to get a lawyer.

The Premier promised to crack down on bad landlords, but it's clear that their so-called commercial evictions ban is completely toothless.

How many more small businesses will have to close before the government finally starts enforcing their own rules?

Hon. Rod Phillips: Again, if the member has specific examples of people violating the very clear direction of this government, I'd appreciate her passing them along.

When it comes to speaking to business, whether it was the Richmond Hill Board of Trade, whether it was the Ajax-Pickering Board of Trade, whether it was the Retail Council of Canada, the Scarborough-Agincourt board of trade, the Taiwan Canadian business board of trade, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ottawa Board of Trade, the Markham-Thornhill board of trade, the Duke Heights BIA—let's just say, a partial list of some of the conversations, and these are just the ones that my colleagues have shared with me.

Our government is in touch with business. We would like to hear about any concerns or anybody who is not acting within the rules, and we will take that very seriously.

But small business, medium-sized business, business owners and entrepreneurs know that this government, under the leadership of Doug Ford, stands behind them through this difficult time.

BIRTH ALERTS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My question is for the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. It has been reported that the practice of birth alerts disproportionately affects racialized and marginalized mothers and families. Our government has heard that the experience of birth alerts can be traumatic and can increase mistrust and fear of child welfare and health care systems by those in Indigenous communities.

For decades, these practices have deterred expectant mothers from seeking prenatal care and parenting supports due to the fear of having their child taken away from them due to an unfair practice.

This minister has spoken in the House numerous times about wanting to make positive changes, especially for women and especially for the child welfare sector. She has spoken in and out of the House about keeping families together and working to end systemic racism.

Birth alerts are a clear example of separating families and are a form of systemic racism. Can the minister please tell the House what our government is doing about this discriminatory practice?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for your advocacy for women and children in your riding.

The member is correct: Birth alerts have a long and ugly history of racial prejudice in Ontario and across Canada. Eliminating them is one of the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

I am proud to say that our government is ending birth alerts in Ontario. We have heard from Indigenous and racialized communities that this practice separates newborns from parents shortly after delivery and disproportionately affects racialized and marginalized mothers and families. No woman should be discouraged from seeking prenatal care or parenting supports because they are afraid their child will be taken from them if they do.

Going forward, the government is directing children's aid societies to end the practice of using birth alerts by October 15, 2020. This means developing collaborative approaches that involve families, community partners and service providers working together for the betterment of children across Ontario.

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the minister for that response and for acting against such a negative and

harmful practice. We know child welfare is in need of an overhaul, and birth alerts are just one part of that.

It is unfortunate that racialized and marginalized communities experience this practice far too often. Even worse, instead of celebrating a new child in the family, which is such an important day, these parents go through the trauma of fighting for their children simply because they were profiled. This also harms the family system and can lead to children being removed from their community and constantly moving, and we know that children and youth do far better when they're in a stable home.

Speaker, can the minister explain how this decision impacts the larger goal of transforming Ontario's child welfare system?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thanks again to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for this important question.

Our top priority is the safety and success of Ontario's children, youth and families. While we cannot go back in time, we can make progressive, positive changes moving forward. This means developing a system that supports and protects mothers and children—instead of being profiled based on racial identities, socio-economic status or other factors.

Let me be clear: Hospitals and other public services still have a duty to report if they believe a child is in danger of abuse or violence. However, instead of taking a reactive approach, we are directing CASs and hospitals to collaborate and create new protocols which support families and mothers every step of the way. This is the result of ongoing engagement and consultation with partners across the sector, including those with lived experience.

We are committed to building a child welfare system not only for today, but for future generations.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Minister of Education.

Speaker, I've heard from countless parents, business owners and students who are concerned about this government's lack of a concrete plan for September. It's like a bad Choose Your Own Adventure book. Education should never be voluntary. Instead, the government should provide spaces for students to learn, as they are legally required to do, and make provisions based on advice from health representatives. Students should all be able to go to school with a plan to keep them healthy.

One of my constituents, Kristina, told me, "This is not a realistic plan for families with two parents working full-time jobs. If students are to return with a model that includes 50% at-home distance learning, either my husband or I will have to reduce our work hours ... Our income and careers will suffer as a result."

Parents have made enough sacrifices during the COVID-19 crisis, Speaker. How can the minister propose a non-plan that demands parents sacrifice yet more?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Indeed, we have asked school boards to be prepared for three scenarios out of an abundance of caution and given that the member opposite—

likewise, his leader—will not know the risk assessment according to COVID-19 in 30, 60, 90 days. That's just the reality we face in Ontario. It's the reason why the majority of provinces in the federation are in the exact same position as Ontario, of requesting school boards to be prepared for a variety of circumstances, including online. I've said it before: God forbid we need to go there, we need to close schools again—we were the first province in the country to do so to maintain health and safety. We will do so again if that's the advice of public health.

The preference is conventional, day-to-day delivery. We've put investments in place. We have a training program in place for all schools, and we, of course, are making clear that the advice and the decision point to send children back will be made exclusively on the medical advice of the best pediatric doctors in Canada, to ensure that every student and every staff member remains safe in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: This illogical adaptive hybrid model will not reopen our economy nor is it good for education. The minister needs to plan for students to be there, all of them, safely.

The stress that London parents are feeling right now is made worse by the lack of affordable child care spaces in this province. Nadia, one of my constituents wrote to me, saying, "Many women have left work indefinitely to care for children. This must be addressed and actioned upon."

Dana, another London mom, agrees. She told me, "Child care remains the biggest issue and the government needs to address it. Parents are stressed and not sure how they will manage and feel no reassurance from the government."

Child care and education are fundamental to the operation of our economy. When will the minister give London parents the assurances they deserve and release firm commitments to education and child care in this province?

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Hon. Stephen Lecce: Well, Speaker, the member opposite proudly hails from the Thames Valley District School Board, one of the boards in his community. I'm proud to confirm that 35 million more dollars is flowing to his community to ensure students remain safe in September. That represents roughly \$952 million in total funding for that school board. It's another proof point; likewise, investments in Waterloo, in Toronto, in Hamilton. In every region of Ontario, funding is up. The reason it is so is because we recognize the challenges of reopening schools.

We also look globally to other jurisdictions who have just done it in the past weeks. We recognize we have to get this right. The single greatest preoccupation of government has to be the safety of kids, and I appreciate full well the impacts those decision points will have on the labour market and on parents. But I think all of us must prioritize, as the single priority, keeping kids safe. That is exactly what we're going to do, working directly with the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR SPORT

Mr. Deepak Anand: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. Over the last few weeks, Ontarians have received exciting news when it comes to our athletes, as well as professional sports. Thanks, Minister, for your previous highlights. We know that stage 3 will open up even more training and access to the games and sports our athletes love and champion here at home and around the world. Stage 3 will open up even more opportunities for Ontarians to once again host professional sports and the competitions and the championships that excite our country, build up our economy, draw us together and inspire us to challenge ourselves.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share the latest developments around the return of professional sports to our province and what Ontarians can look forward to, as professional athletes get back to the ice, diamonds and fields?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: The member for Mississauga–Malton has been an absolute champion, MVP, all-star when it comes to return of sport and return to play in the province of Ontario.

Let me be perfectly clear: We are working with our professional sport organizations across Ontario. We're working with the CFL to get them to return to conditioning. We're working with the MLB—and that's going to be very close—to get our Blue Jays back on the pitch very soon. We are working with the Maple Leafs, and I'm excited to say that we're going to be a hub city in this province, in the city of Toronto. And, of course, we continue to work with the NBA, in order to make sure that our athletes have been trained and conditioned.

I look forward to the supplementary.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate your updates and I'm excited to see some of our favourite teams returning soon, with caution, as health and safety measures are our top priority.

Mr. Speaker, we know that yesterday some major news was delivered when the Premier announced that parts of our province were on track to join phase 3 of our province's safe and gradual reopening of our economy. Both our professional and amateur sports are going to see really great measures that will help us define the new normal.

Research shows that sports boost self-esteem and develop leadership skills and discipline. From adapting our contact sports, to training and gym facilities, our province is taking a lead role when it comes to welcoming back play to Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please share the good news that our athletes, sports fans, coaches, trainers, children, parents and families can expect once their respective regions enter stage 3?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: That question really knocked it out of the park.

At ontario.ca/returntoplay, all Ontarians can check out how they can have a safe return to their sport across the province in stage 3. I'm excited, in particular, that we're going to start to see youth sports return in every community at some point this summer, so that we can get a return to normalcy.

But I must say, I am very excited to start to watch our Toronto Blue Jays, our Toronto Raptors, our Toronto Maple Leafs—maybe not so much my Ottawa Senators, Speaker—and of course our three CFL teams get back to what they do best, which is bringing pride to the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has informed me that he wishes to raise a point of order.

Hon. Steve Clark: Yes, Speaker, a point of order: I want to correct my record from this morning through debate on Bill 184. In response to a question on why our government didn't support a particular amendment, what I should have pointed out was that the member for Toronto Centre's amendment was actually on vacancy de-control, and it was declared out of order by the Chair.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is a valid point of order for a member to correct his own record, but not to make a political statement after question period.

DEFERRED VOTES

REBUILDING CONSUMER
CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR
LA CONFIANCE CHEZ
LES CONSOMMATEURS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection / Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection.

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

The division bells rang from 1136 to 1206.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote was held on the motion for third reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 61; the nays are 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): 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 Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1300.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. This is a petition entitled, "Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

"Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

"Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

"Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

"Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

"Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents' Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age."

I fully agree with this petition. I will sign it and pass it down to the desk.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: This petition is entitled "Framework for Reopening the Economy.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians have been working relentlessly to adhere to physical distancing guidelines, limiting themselves to necessary travel and protecting their loved ones; and

"Whereas our health care professionals are working long hours in our long-term-care homes, doctors' offices, community care, and hospitals; and

"Whereas other essential workers such as grocery store clerks, farmers, meat and produce processors and transport workers keep our shelves stocked and food on the table; and

"Whereas the province has made significant progress in the fight against COVID-19 with decreasing infection and hospitalization rates, domestic production of personal protective equipment, and crucial financial investments in health and social services;

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

"That the government continues its methodical, cautious approach to reopen the economy so that people can get back to work, businesses can recover and people can regain a hopeful optimism for the future of this great province."

I proudly affix my signature and will pass it down to the desk.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Jill Andrew: This is a petition to recognize comedy as an art form in Ontario, on behalf of Sandra Battaglini, co-founder of the Canadian Association of Stand-up Comedians:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"In Ontario, comedy is not recognized as an art form. In fact, comedy is not recognized as an art form in all of Canada. It is not included within our culture sector. This oversight ignores the cultural necessity, the sharing of characters, storytelling, and diverse narratives that is at the heart of comedy. Provincial recognition of comedy as part of our culture sector would give comedians access to grants and other funding opportunities other art forms receive to help create, disseminate and promote their art.

"Whereas Canada is known internationally as an exporter of some of the world's best-known comedians, such as Jim Carrey," John Candy, "Russell Peters, Andrea Martin, Arthur Simeon, Catherine O'Hara, and," of course, "Sandra Battaglini;

"Whereas comedians must often cobble together many precarious 'gig economy' jobs to make ends meet and are invaluable members of the live entertainment and cultural worker community which was first hit, hardest hit, and will likely take the longest to recover from COVID-19;

"Whereas in Ontario, comedians do not have access to arts grants that are available to peers in theatre, music, circus, dance, sports, literature and the visual arts. Access to these grants will immediately create career opportunities for comedians in stand-up, sketch and improvisation as well as Canadian television and film;

"Whereas the lack of recognition has not only left comedians out of professional advancement and development opportunities offered by these grants, but most recently the lack of recognition has left comedy as an arts form and profession out of consideration for culture COVID-19 relief and recovery funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize comedy as an art form in our province of Ontario and to include comedy within our province's culture sector and strategy."

I couldn't be more proud of this petition, and I'm going to sign it and hand it to the page.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE

Ms. Christine Hogarth: This petition is "Proposed Changes to Justices of the Peace Act Petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario remains committed to pressing forward towards a more accessible, responsive and resilient justice system; and

“Whereas the current process to appoint justices of the peace is outdated and slow. This has created obstacles to filling vacancies, resulting in delays for people wanting their day in court; and

“Whereas there is a need for greater transparency and the promotion of more diversity throughout the recruitment and appointment process; and

“Whereas maintaining the integrity of Ontario’s appointment process for justices of the peace is vital to the administration of a strong justice system;

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

“(1) The act is amended with respect to the composition and processes of the Justices of the Peace Appointments Advisory Committee;

“(2) The composition of the committee is changed to be leaner and more efficient while continuing to ensure local voices are present. The importance of committees representing the diversity of the communities they serve shall be recognized;

“(3) The committee may hold its meetings and conduct interviews in person or through electronic means, including telephone conferencing and video conferencing.”

I’ve already signed my name to this. I agree with this petition and I will hand it to the Clerk.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Save Eye Care in Ontario.” It was sent to me by my constituent Dr. Majewski from Owl Optometry on Roncesvalles. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition. The optometrists are at the table waiting for a conversation with this government, and I urge action.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

1310

I fully support this petition, and I’ll be adding my signature and taking it down to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to thank Frances Ranger for collecting these signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents’ Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

It is my pleasure, of course, to affix my signature to this petition, and I will be giving it to the page.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Protect Tenants from Illegal Air Conditioning Fees.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas air conditioners are important for health and safety of members of our community...;

“Whereas air conditioning fees are being charged by landlords without justification and in contravention to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006;

“Whereas landlords charging these fees illegally rarely face any punishment for their actions;

“Whereas tenants are often paying these fees that landlords are not entitled to out of fear;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit to proactively engage with the community to determine where landlords are charging such fees, and take corrective action against any landlord found to be in violation of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.”

Speaker, it's a hot summer. Tenants need their air conditioning units without fees, so I fully support this petition, and I hope that the government will take action.

PALLIATIVE CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled “Support the Nancy Rose Act—Paediatric Hospice Palliative Care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for children with serious or life-limiting illness, a palliative approach to care can increase quality of life and decrease their pain and suffering;

“Whereas there is currently no comprehensive, coordinated and funded provincial strategy to address paediatric palliative and hospice care;

“Whereas the Nancy Rose Act would require the province to develop a strategy with the goal of increasing access to paediatric palliative and hospice care across Ontario;

“Whereas the strategy contained in the Nancy Rose Act would include targeted supports for families of children receiving palliative care, including mental health supports and respite;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Nancy Rose Act and call for all-party support.”

I support this petition; I will be affixing my name. And I would like to remind all of the members in the House that this goes on during COVID—the struggle for parents who have children who are suffering life-limiting illnesses. This will only be made worse by the COVID condition, so I thank you for your support.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members simply to read the petition without the additional political commentary.

STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I have a petition entitled “Invest in Work-Integrated Learning.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's youth unemployment rate is consistently higher than the national average;

“Whereas it is increasingly common for even entry-level positions to require relevant work experience;

“Whereas work-integrated learning serves to develop the practical skills and professional networks that young people need to transition into the workforce;

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

“That the government of Ontario should create 27,000 new, paid work opportunities for students, recent graduates and unemployed youth in the public and private sector and the skilled trades so they can move into the workforce with real-world experience and a path to full-time employment.”

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

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have hundreds of signatures on this petition titled, “Stop” the “Eviction Bill.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government's Bill 184 would make it easier for landlords to evict tenants by taking away tenants' right to defend themselves at eviction hearings;

“Whereas Bill 184 would be taking away tenants' right to a hearing following a repayment agreement;

“Whereas there is an affordable housing and rental crisis in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act to reject any proposed changes that give landlords the power to evict honest tenants more quickly; and commit to immediate action to provide real protections from eviction so tenants can keep their homes even if they can't afford to pay rent during the pandemic; and provide protection from illegal evictions by bringing in real fines for landlords who illegally evict, and proper enforcement of the law.”

I support this petition and I will affix my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

Resuming the debate adjourned on July 14, 2020, on the amendment to the motion regarding the appointment of a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this motion, the member for Eglinton–Lawrence had the floor, I recall. She's here, and I appreciate her continuing her remarks. She still has time on the clock.

Mrs. Robin Martin: I was very close to finishing yesterday, so I would say: I move that the question now be put.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence has moved that the question now be put. I understand that there have been 16 speakers and

more than six hours and 11 minutes of debate on this particular matter, so I am satisfied that there has been sufficient debate to allow this question to be put to the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On division.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Carried on division.

Mr. Calandra has moved government notice of motion number 85 relating to the appointment of a Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, unless I receive a deferral slip, the bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for deferral signed by the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow, Wednesday, July 15, during the normal time of deferred votes. The vote is deferred.

Vote deferred.

REOPENING ONTARIO (A FLEXIBLE
RESPONSE TO COVID-19) ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020

SUR LA RÉOUVERTURE DE L'ONTARIO
(MESURES ADAPTABLES EN RÉPONSE
À LA COVID-19)

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 195, An Act to enact the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020 / Projet de loi 195, Loi édictant la Loi de 2020 sur la réouverture de l'Ontario (mesures adaptables en réponse à la COVID-19).

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the Solicitor General care to lead off the debate on second reading?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I would—thank you, Speaker. And, with the able assistance of my parliamentary assistant, I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

1320

I'm proud to be here today with my colleagues to begin second reading of Bill 195, the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act. Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to express once again my deepest gratitude and admiration to Ontario's front-line workers, who have served us with such dedication over the past several months during these unprecedented times. To our emergency responders, our health care workers, front-line enforcement, and indeed all those who

continue to serve the public by navigating the ongoing threat of COVID-19, thank you for your continued service.

I also want to acknowledge those who have lost their lives to this virus and those they have left behind. A single death is one too many, and our province has experienced far too many deaths. We mourn everyone we've lost and recognize the suffering of family and friends as they grieve for their loved ones.

Ontarians have experienced a long, difficult and, too often, tragic spring. Through it all, individuals and families have turned to each other for hope. Communities have worked together to adapt and respond. Thanks to the work of front-line heroes, we have reached a moment here where we are seeing signs that our collective efforts are working. While the global situation remains uncertain, Ontario's COVID-19 numbers are trending in the right direction. Ontario is now a North American leader in testing. New cases are down. Over 86% of existing cases are resolved. And for the first time in months, we have had a day where Ontario reported zero deaths. This is all proof of the progress we've made together.

Ontarians have shouldered an enormous burden. Since declaring the provincial emergency on March 17, our government has taken careful and measured action to protect the people of Ontario. The provincial declaration of emergency supported our comprehensive response to the COVID-19 outbreak and allowed us to implement time-limited emergency orders to keep our community safe and reduce the burden on our health care system and other critical services. It provided a temporary platform to take swift and decisive action that carried Ontario through unprecedented challenges and helped us initiate the first important steps of reopening the province. As a result, Speaker, businesses are putting Ontarians back to work, people are safely reuniting with loved ones, and communities are finding new ways to come together again.

Ontario is on the path to recovery, and we owe this progress to the people of this province. But we must ensure that the collective hard work of Ontarians is not undone. The declaration of emergency played an essential part in stewarding the province on the road to recovery. I want to thank my colleagues for supporting the necessity of moving forward with one final extension.

Through the declaration of emergency, we have issued more than 40 emergency orders that shared one guiding principle: to keep Ontarians safe. For example, we established an emergency order that limited long-term-care employees to working in no more than one facility, in an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19 among our province's most vulnerable people. Based on the advice of health care professionals and public health experts, we also knew it was important to make temporary changes that afforded hospitals the flexibility to redeploy staff where they were needed most.

But our close collaboration to bolster Ontario's world-class health care system didn't end there. Under the strong leadership of Premier Ford, we took additional action in order to boost the front-line capacity available to hospitals, clinics and assessment centres. This was done by establishing, for the first time, a health-workforce-matching

portal. The purpose of this innovation was to seamlessly bring together skilled front-line medical workers with employers and to provide the tools needed to respond to staffing challenges in real time.

Ontario is in a vastly different place today than we were four months ago, on March 17, when the declaration of emergency came into effect. We must recognize that the declaration served its intended purpose. While the temporary provincial declaration of emergency may come to an end shortly, as it was always intended to do, public health experts tell us that the danger posed by COVID-19 will continue for months to come. As we consider next steps, our government must continue to have the most effective tools at our disposal to responsibly reduce the dangers of COVID-19, protect Ontarians and reopen the province in a gradual and safe manner.

As legislators, we have a duty to deliver a practical and flexible plan that supports where we have arrived today while recognizing that COVID-19 will still be with us tomorrow. Speaker, this is exactly what we have done. The proposed legislation, if passed, would give us the flexibility we need to support our continued efforts to cautiously reopen Ontario in a way that recognizes that COVID-19's impacts may still be felt for an extended period of time. It would allow Ontario to continue its path to recovery by easing restrictions where appropriate while maintaining select tools to address the ongoing threat of COVID-19.

The proposed legislation would bridge the gap between the public health measures that were necessary to respond to the initial and immediate threat of COVID-19 and those now needed to support Ontario's safe recovery. Specifically, it would include the ability to extend orders currently in effect under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act for an initial 30 days. It would also provide the ability to amend certain existing orders, such as those related to labour redeployment, workplace rules and practices, restrictions on gatherings and events, closure or regulation of businesses, and compliance with public health advice. However, the government would no longer have the ability to create any new orders.

Furthermore, evidence-based advice from public health experts would continue to guide our government in determining when it is safe to revoke certain emergency orders maintained under the proposed legislation, if no longer needed. The bill would also limit the government's ability to extend or amend orders under the new legislation up to one year, unless extended by the Legislature.

Ontarians have responded in extraordinary ways over the past months to help stop the spread of COVID-19; we must not allow the progress we have made to be undone. If the data changes and the threat grows, our government will not hesitate to explore and exhaust all options necessary to protect Ontarians. Should Ontario experience a significant spike in cases or if a potential second wave of COVID-19 requires a more comprehensive approach, a new declaration of emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act could be enacted.

Our collective resolve and vigilance must endure beyond the immediate dangers we continue to face and the ongoing threat of a second wave. According to *The Economist*, it took more than three weeks for global cases of COVID-19 to reach one million and less than one week to add the latest million. This is the overwhelming magnitude of the pandemic we are dealing with, and we are doing it while living next door to one of the world's most affected countries. Until a vaccine or a treatment is widely available, we have to face the fact that COVID-19 won't be gone tomorrow and, as a province, we must remain vigilant; extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures.

A declaration of emergency was a temporary solution that provided the province with a set of powers to deal with the most urgent phase of the COVID-19 emergency. It is not a long-term answer to reopening the economy and bringing people back together. Provinces, territories and the federal government have all been squarely focused on reducing the spread and managing the risks of COVID-19, guided by the advice of our public health experts. Each of the 10 provinces and three territories have introduced a version of an emergency declaration. Alberta was the first to allow its public health emergency to expire on June 15. I once again wish to thank the government and people of Alberta for generously providing personal protective equipment to Ontario during our moment of need.

1330

With yesterday's extension, Ontario and Yukon are the last Canadian jurisdictions to be under an emergency declaration. Looking at population sizes and numbers of cases across provinces and territories, there are good reasons why we've extended our emergency to this point. It reflects our province's responsible approach to managing the COVID-19 pandemic and protecting the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Now, as the effects of COVID-19 on public services become less acute, it is time to recalibrate our measures in a way that supports the safe recovery process that has begun in communities across Ontario. Our government has taken great care to ensure these temporary measures are applied with transparency and accountability. That is why the proposed bill includes:

- the ability to extend all continued orders for limited periods of time;
- the ability to amend only certain continued orders within limited subject matters;
- no ability to create new orders;
- a time limit of one year on abilities provided by the bill; these powers can only be extended by this Legislative Assembly; and
- accountability and transparency mechanisms, including reporting regular updates to the public and at least once every 30 days to the Legislative Assembly on any order extensions.

Speaker, it is evident that the proposed Bill 195 would enable the government to act swiftly and nimbly but with actions tempered by accountability and transparency to the public and to the Ontario Legislature. Our approach is also

consistent with what other provinces are doing to continue the fight against COVID-19 now that most of their emergency declarations have been lifted.

Since the declaration of emergency, thousands of front-line health care workers, volunteers, businesses and Ontarians across the province rallied together to flatten the curve and stop the spread of COVID-19. The collective response by Ontarians is a source of inspiration.

We have been clear in explaining why the emergency orders were necessary and in demonstrating the reasons why those orders should not simply end in an abrupt manner when the declaration of emergency has concluded.

Ontarians care deeply about their families, their neighbours and their communities. They live in a province where people act responsibly and look out for one another, especially in the face of this ongoing threat to public health.

The new act, if passed, would provide Ontarians with renewed confidence that the measures to protect them remain in place once the declaration of emergency has ended, and that the province can continue to chart a path for a gradual and safe recovery. I can assure my colleagues in this House that our government will continue to take balanced action that allows Ontario to respond quickly and prudently as the public health situation evolves while supporting communities and businesses at every step of the recovery process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd just actually like to thank the Solicitor General and her team who have tirelessly, since this all started back in March, worked day and night. Having conversations with the Solicitor General, it didn't matter what day it was. You'd start the conversation with, "What day is it today?" because there were no days of the week, there were no weekends. Everybody was just working really hard. So I would like to thank the Solicitor General and her team for making that happen.

I'm pleased to join the debate and highlight how the government's proposed Bill 195 will help support the safe reopening of our province as we continue to recover and manage the risks related to COVID-19. I know that all members of this House share these objectives and they are the driving force behind the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020. This proposed legislation has been developed on the strength of the knowledge learned over the past several months as Ontarians have pulled together to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Since declaring our provincial emergency on March 17, our government has taken careful, measured actions to protect Ontarians. This temporary measure supported our response to the COVID-19 outbreak and carried us through unprecedented challenges, but it also helped us initiate the first important steps of the reopening of the province. Across Ontario, people have made sacrifices and dealt with hardships as they've rallied together to fight this deadly virus and prevent an even worse outbreak on a

greater scale. It has been a long road and we're going to feel the effects of this journey for some time. But thanks to the response by Ontarians and our collective efforts, we are gradually and safely reopening the province and we are beginning to take steps towards recovery.

Mr. Speaker, we're getting Ontario back on track. We owe this progress to the people of this province, and I thank them for it. It is our responsibility as a government to continue to take careful and measured actions to ensure that their hard work will not be undone. The legislation we're proposing would allow the province to continue its path to recovery by easing restrictions where appropriate while keeping in place important, select measures to address the continuing threat of COVID-19. Bill 195, if passed, will ensure that the government can continue to protect public health and effectively respond to this dangerous virus.

Our province is on a trajectory to a safe and gradual recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak. This proposed bill would provide the necessary tools to continue on this track. The passage of Bill 195, along with the current extension of the declaration of emergency, means that the pieces would be put in place to ensure a seamless transition from a temporary measure to a longer-term approach to managing the impacts and the risks of COVID-19.

It is my pleasure to now tell you more about some of the specifics of this proposed bill. The provincial declaration of emergency supported our comprehensive approach and response to the COVID-19 outbreak and allowed us to create emergency orders to address critical and specific needs as they arose. As the fight continues and the emergency declaration comes to an end, the need for many of these orders to remain in place, or for certain orders to be amended, persists. The proposed bill will maintain all emergency orders that continue to be necessary and that are in place under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. The emergency orders that are not deemed integral to the fight against COVID-19 during the recovery would be revoked and not be continued under this new proposed bill.

The initial time period for these orders as continued under the proposed act would be 30 days, with the ability for the government to extend any of those orders for subsequent periods of up to 30 days at a time.

An important aspect of the accountability measures we are proposing is the ability with which it would empower the Legislative Assembly to review the orders made during the declared emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Should Bill 195 be passed, these emergency orders that are not revoked would be continued under the proposed act as orders validated by this assembly.

This proposed bill would also allow certain orders to be amended if the amendment relates to a limited set of subject matters, such as closing or regulating places, such as businesses; prohibiting or regulating gatherings or organized public events; or work deployment, including workplace and management practices, and including credentialing processes in a health care facility, which we know are so important.

Amendments to these orders could ease or add restrictions and could address geographic considerations, as is happening now. This would allow the government to continue its gradual and regional approach to opening the province. The reason for this is that while COVID-19 is a dangerous pandemic and while we need to remain vigilant everywhere in the province, localized spread means that impacts vary from region to region. As we all come from different areas of the province, we all have our own stories to tell.

I would like to add that some amendments to continued orders may not be region-specific, and they could apply more broadly, to the entire province.

1340

Speaker, we must do what we can to avoid having our progress and our recovery derailed. Maintaining the flexibility to respond quickly to regional outbreaks will help control the overall spread to other parts of the province. Likewise, we anticipate public health units' regions could be between stages in different places based on their evolving circumstances. As we know, this is an unknown. This is new to us.

There is also the possibility that some areas of the province may need to temporarily move back stages to respond to or to prevent outbreaks. The proposed bill provides the flexibility to allow that, without impacting the province as a whole. Also, local medical officers of health will continue to have the ability to make communicable disease orders under the Health Protection and Promotion Act to support a targeted or local response to outbreaks or cases of COVID-19.

The declaration of emergency has also provided flexibility and responsiveness to help key sectors continue to deliver the critical services Ontarians need. Redeployment of front-line workers has been a key element in responding to this crisis. Before I continue, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to pause a moment with my colleagues to thank all of Ontario's front-line heroes for their incredible efforts in this regard.

Applause.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Last evening, we all had stories to share about our front-line heroes in our individual ridings and, really, people who have gone above and beyond in this case. We had a pandemic, and people rushed to help, and we can't thank them more, from the bottom of our hearts, for all the work they did in putting themselves on the line for our community. It really has made Ontario just a wonderful place to live, and it really has shown the Ontario spirit.

As we transition out of the declaration of emergency, we expect that employers and the labour community will continue to work closely with each other and with government to support the delivery of critical services to Ontarians. When deployment orders made under the declaration of emergency became unnecessary or obsolete, they would either not be renewed or would be amended and narrowed as appropriate. Bill 195 gives us the tools we need to do this, while keeping Ontarians safe.

We know that matters of this urgency and importance require appropriate oversight and accountability measures.

I would like to assure members that this proposed legislation has built-in levels of accountability and transparency and requires a report to a standing committee or select committee of the Legislative Assembly at least once every 30 days. The powers under the proposed legislation to extend and amend orders would automatically cease after one year of coming into force. Because we do not know how long COVID-19 will remain a threat to the province's well-being, these powers can be extended by the Legislative Assembly, if needed.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed bill would also include other oversight and accountability measures that are similar to those under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Since the outbreak began, Premier Ford has been absolutely clear and transparent in communicating with the province, saying, "You will know what I know as soon as I know it." The proposed legislation is based on these same principles. I know that the people of Ontario appreciate Premier Ford being in front of the cameras every day and rely on him being there to hear the news of the day, so I thank the Premier for taking his time every day to ensure that the community is informed of what's happening.

Under this proposed legislation, the Premier or a designated minister will report regularly to the public on this act and any orders that may continue to be extended under this act. Ontarians deserve a level of accountability and transparency, and that's what we're going to do. In addition, the Premier will be required to table a report, within 120 days after a year of the act coming into force, to provide information on orders that were extended and/or amended during this time and how legal tests and thresholds for amending orders were satisfied. If the power to extend and amend orders under the proposed bill are extended beyond one year by the Legislative Assembly, the Premier would be required to table an additional report within 120 days of each extension period.

Certain provisions, similar to those in the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, are included in the proposed Bill 195. These are considered necessary to safeguard the people of Ontario and limit the spread and impacts of COVID-19. They are:

- the ability to delegate powers to amend orders to a designated minister;
- the ability to make amendments to orders that would apply retroactively;
- that orders continue to prevail over other statutes with limited exceptions, such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act; and
- civil liberty protections would be imported for individuals acting in good faith.

Speaker, since the beginning of this emergency, our government has acted on the guidance of public health experts and the evidence that continues to be gathered day by day. Any updates to the order under this proposed legislation would continue to be informed by public health advice and our resolve to fight against COVID-19, to support front-line providers, and ensure the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

This evidence-based advice would also guide our government in determining when it is safe to revoke certain emergency orders maintained under the proposed legislation. This is not about big government trying to be more intrusive. The prudent and deliberate decision-making process that has guided the government's decisive actions to combat COVID-19 would continue with this new act.

Outlining a maximum time period for order extensions to a maximum of 30 days would allow certain measures in place to be maintained as necessary but at the same time ensure that a rigorous review happens in a timely manner to help determine whether they are still needed. That is the standard our government set from the start of the outbreak, and it is the approach we plan to continue with this proposed legislation.

For example, the limited scope and powers of the proposed bill remain focused on a targeted response, recovery and reopening of the province. And this means that we will not have the ability to make new orders under this proposed bill and we will not be able to make any amendments to some of the continued orders. Because of this narrow scope, a new declaration of emergency may be required should there be a significant spike in cases or a second wave of COVID-19, requiring greater flexibility or different orders. If this is the case, the government will respond as necessary to ensure Ontarians remain safe.

The abilities to extend or amend orders under the proposed legislation will automatically cease one year after the act comes into force, with the safeguard that these powers could be extended by the Legislative Assembly if necessary. I would also like to add that while the ability to extend or amend orders would end after one year, unless extended, other provisions of the proposed bill, such as reporting obligations, would remain in effect.

Speaker, it goes without saying that Ontarians want this situation to end. Profound impacts on our province and the losses suffered are unprecedented. This has been especially hard on Ontario families who have been separated from their loved ones or those who have loved ones working on the front lines and have had the added stress of coping with the threat of COVID-19 while continuing to carry out their duties with dedication and compassion. It has been even harder for those families and friends who have lost loved ones during this time, and my heart goes out to them.

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Transitioning from the declaration of emergency to the proposed legislation is an important milestone in our fight against COVID-19 and Ontario's safe recovery. We have made it this far by working together to flatten the curve and reduce the spread of this deadly virus, but the risk remains present and our fight is not over. The fight is not over, especially for our dedicated front-line heroes who have bravely carried out their duties in public service under such extraordinary circumstances. We will be there for them at every step of this vital work that remains.

Mr. Speaker, the actions of our government over the past four months have demonstrated a thoughtful and responsible approach to the COVID-19 outbreak. The

proposed legislation would continue that approach and facilitate our recovery from the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. The act would, if passed, provide the necessary tools to continue to support a safe and gradual reopening of the province to protect the health of Ontarians and to respond to the ongoing effects of the pandemic after the declaration of emergency ends.

That is why the proposed Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, is so important. We must all remain vigilant. We must move gradually but safely. Yes, we must keep on a path to recovery, but with caution and careful consideration of each step we make. We must recognize that every step forward is conditional in our quest to defeat this virus, and we must be ready to jump into action when needed. Mr. Speaker, the proposed Bill 195 provides us with just that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Questions? The member for—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Windsor–Tecumseh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. A pleasure to see you in the chair, sir.

My question is to my friend the Solicitor General, who started off this afternoon by paying tribute to those who have lost their lives during this COVID-19 outbreak. Down my way, I know that we've lost two migrant workers, and I believe there are at least three in the province. Temporary foreign workers come under a multi-jurisdictional regime of rules and regulations. No one is taking charge. There's a lot of buck-passing and a lot of wheels spinning but no one in charge.

Last week, the mayors of Leamington, Kingsville, Windsor, other Essex county jurisdictions and the public health unit decided to ask Ontario's emergency measures centre, the EMO, to fill that leadership gap and become the point agency for decision-making. The mayor of Windsor was at the finance committee this morning. We asked if he had had any response from that request, and he said no.

So my question this afternoon is: Will the Solicitor General commit to having the EMO—let alone respond—become that lead agency, so we can finally—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Response?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member opposite for his question. As he would know, PEOC, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, has deployed two individuals pretty much immediately to assist.

We don't want to be there to take over; what we want is the coordination piece. What we have done is to work with the municipalities, their head of emergency response—often the chief of fire, but it could be another staff member working within the municipality—as well as individuals from PEOC, the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre. Most importantly, the local health units are all now meeting pretty much daily to go over any emerging new issues and to manage the pandemic and the outbreaks that are happening.

He's absolutely—thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Questions?

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question to the Solicitor General: Last night, I spoke in favour of our motion to establish the select committee on our emergency response. I spoke in favour of that because I believe so passionately in ensuring that we have transparency as we bring about these emergency orders. I'm wondering if the minister could elaborate on her thoughts on why the proposed bill's mechanisms to report to a legislative committee are so important.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the question. I've had the honour of working on three separate select committees in my time here at the Ontario Legislature, and I really see that process as critical to ensure transparency of, and basically defending, the decisions that we are making as a cabinet and as a government. So I'm thrilled, frankly, that the select committee pathway was chosen. To me, it is an excellent way to ensure the transparency that is so critically needed during a pandemic and as we move forward in a recovery stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is in regard to PPE. In Kingsville last Saturday, the member for Essex and myself joined our leader, Andrea Horwath, who was down there working with Tracey Ramsey, a former federal member, who has made it her cause these days to go out and get hand sanitizer and masks for the migrant workers, because they are still in short supply. The government keeps saying that those supplies are being handled, but the bottom line is that the workers are working without masks, without gloves and without hand sanitizer in their bunkhouses.

I would just like to ask: When is the government going to have an adequate supply and make it available to those 8,000 migrant farm workers who keep coming down with COVID-19?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: In the member's previous question, he made reference to how, in particular, the migrant farm workers have some jurisdiction issues with the feds and the province. I am pleased to say that all investigations now at the farms are happening in conjunction with the federal government.

In terms of specifically answering the personal protective equipment question, the Minister of Health has made it very clear that when the requests are made, the orders are filled and they are delivered within 24 hours. So that is happening.

Most importantly, the co-operation between the federal and the provincial governments is happening so that inspections can occur jointly, because, frankly, some of it is federal jurisdiction, specifically related to the bunkhouses, and some is Ministry of Labour, which, of course, would be the actual workplace.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Questions?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the Solicitor General's debate. She spoke a little bit about how the proposed bill would refine the tools that are available to government by not allowing the creation of new emergency orders. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I was just hoping the Solicitor General could maybe describe a

little bit more about why that might be especially important at this stage of the fight against COVID-19.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is a very important piece of the transition. As we move into the recovery stage, we are sending a clear message to the people of Ontario that they have done an excellent job. We have been able to flatten the curve; however, we also need to say that there are certain orders that must remain in place. Having said that, it is equally important to say that we are not imposing any others. So, Bill 195, if passed, would not allow us to create any new additional orders. I think that for the people of Ontario, that's an important piece to say, "You're on the right track," but we still have some protections that we need to keep in place, particularly for our vulnerable citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Questions?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To the Solicitor General: In the same vein around the migrant worker issue, just recently we've learned that the province has contracted out mobile testing with a private consortium that is doing that testing on-farm—that's as of this week—whereas our community has been asking and begging for some sort of capacity building for mobile testing for months now. In fact, the chief coroner offered five units of mobile testing. Was that ever delivered? Did the provincial government ever make any initiatives to connect our community with the public mobile testing units that were made available or offered to our community? Why instead has it been contracted out to a private consortium to do that testing?

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Hon. Sylvia Jones: In terms of the ability to test the widest number of people possible, Ontario Health has moved into an additional contract. As was raised with the Minister of Health this morning, that was a decision made by the health table, Ontario Health.

But I will say, when we started doing mobile testing—I will speak specifically to the Solicitor General piece—we were able to physically go to every single jail and institution in the province of Ontario. And we were able to truly increase our numbers in a very exponential way of how many people we're testing—all voluntary, of course. But the fact that we were taking it to their workplace, to where they were, made a big difference in our ability to increase the numbers.

Look, there's no doubt that we needed to be able to react quickly with the outbreaks that were happening in your community, and having that ability now to continue to do that has really made a difference in terms of being able to monitor and track where the outlets are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Questions.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Something I've heard from my constituents is concern over the continued use of emergency powers by governments across Canada, both provincially here in Ontario and at the federal level. Constituents in my riding say that the system we're using currently works and that parties are working together. Can the minister expand more regarding how they think that this bill responds to people's concerns?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I've had more than a number of people say to me, "There is no playbook for a COVID-19 pandemic." We are reacting and responding as quickly as we can. That is, frankly, why Ontario was the first province, in fact, that declared the declaration of emergency, because we needed to have the ability to shut down certain businesses that we believed, that the command table told us, were going to be at a much higher risk, and that was why we used those emergency orders. You saw as we brought forward those orders that there were a number that were directly responding to what was happening on the ground, in our long-term-care facilities, closing schools because—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. David Piccini): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to put on the record that New Democrats will be voting against this piece of legislation. I want to lay out, as well as to other members of my colleague, and I see our friend the member from Frontenac—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Lanark—well, it's very long. Mr. Hillier, anyway, is here, and I'm sure he's going to have something to say about it as well.

There's an old English saying that says, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." This is exactly what the government is trying to do. They're trying to pretend that they're fixing something that's not broke.

I think people need to understand what the government is really up to here. This is not about trying to fix something; this is about trying to consolidate power on to themselves to be able to do what it is they are going to do and possibly utilize some of the powers in this act way beyond what is intended under the current regime, under the current legislation that allows us to declare emergency orders.

We know that under the current act the government has the ability to suspend certain rights that individuals have, such as the rights under a collective agreement, such as the right of mobility, such as the rights to be able to do a number of things that are guaranteed under our constitution, and they're done in the name of public health. They're done in the name of making sure we're able to protect the public—to isolate themselves somewhat from the spread of this contagion.

What this government is doing is that, rather than have a system now like we currently have, which is the government has the ability to do that but only if they bring to it the Legislature, only for 30 days and it has to be approved by this assembly—every government of every stripe would know, if they try to use this current act, that if you don't have the support of the opposition, you probably don't have the support of the public either and you would be very moderated in your use of that act. In other words, there is an onus of only doing what is necessary when it comes to standing on or withdrawing people's rights is very—how would you say? Governments are a bit shy to go down that road under the current

system because of the way the current legislation is drafted.

What the government is proposing to do now is take all of this behind closed doors. Essentially the government is saying, rather than doing an extension of emergency orders by way of an act of the Legislature where the entire public gets to see it because these are televised debates—we don't meet in private. The Legislature has very little occasion to meet in camera. Only if there's a national emergency would we do that, and even then I've never seen it in my 30 years here.

We're going to move to a system where cabinet is going to decide in a private conversation with itself when and how to extend emergency orders. How is that good? How does that give the public any kind of reassurance that the government is doing the right thing?

Does the government intend on doing the wrong thing? I don't know. I think people need to come to that conclusion themselves. Maybe they do; maybe they don't. I think the public will have to determine that, based on the current actions the government has taken and which they will probably take in the future.

But moving the decision-making behind closed doors I think is a very, very dangerous road to go when it comes to standing on people's democratic rights as guaranteed in our Constitution. For example, the government, in this new regime, could decide to override the rights of workers in collective agreements to things like vacation, where you work, various conditions in your current collective agreement—and I'll go through them a little bit later in some detail. But the government could do that essentially by an order in council. In other words, cabinet would decide, "Because we say so, it will be made so," and a particular right of the individual in a collective agreement could be superseded.

The only mechanism the public has to protect themselves is the faint hope that, under this creation of a select committee that we're going to be voting on tomorrow and that is going to have the ability to call the Premier, or his designate, before the committee for 30 days, that (a) the government majority members actually decide to do what's right, or (b) the Premier actually decides to answer the question. There is no safeguard under what the government is proposing.

Currently, you have to come to the Legislature, so, in the full light of day, your emergency order has to stand public scrutiny. That's the way this is currently set up, and it was done like that for a reason: because we're asking this Legislature to make very serious decisions that have ramifications on people's individual and collective rights.

We have the ability, under the current legislation—and it has been done—to limit how many people can gather in a particular place. Now, think of that. Under normal circumstances, it's unconstitutional to do that as a Legislature. You're not allowed to limit the mobility of people in such a way, according to our Constitution, but we understand, under this act, and because there's public scrutiny, that there's some logic to making sure that people don't gather in crowds larger than whatever in order to try to curtail the spread of the pandemic.

But the government is giving itself the right, by order in council, to make those decisions. What public scrutiny do you have? Do you think that any cabinet minister is going to come out of the cabinet room saying, “Oh, my God, did you hear what the government is going to do?” If they want to hang onto their cabinet spot—and they all do, and everybody wants in, and those who are there want to stay—nobody is going to come running out of the cabinet room saying, “Oh, my God, look what the government is doing.” They will be complicit in their silence. I say that that is a recipe waiting for something to go wrong. Initially, the government may not do anything that is terrible or completely out of order, but as they say, the more you give people power and the more they use it, the more it becomes intoxicating. Eventually a government could decide to take advantage of these particular powers, and by the time the public is able to react, it’s too darn late, you know? I think that’s just a really dangerous place to go in a democratic society such as ours.

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As I said at the beginning, if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. What was wrong with the current system? Did the opposition at any time refuse the ability for the government to extend an emergency order? No, not at all. Has the opposition filibustered your ability to do so? Not us; you did. You guys were filibustering your own legislation yesterday, which I thought was kind of interesting—a government acting as an opposition. I’ve been here 30 years and I always thought it was supposed to be the other way around, but maybe I was wrong.

But my point is that the government is giving themselves extraordinary powers that can be abused, and it doesn’t have to be that way. We have never, in the opposition, in the history of this pandemic or any time before, refused a government the ability to do what has to be done under the current legislation. There has been reasonable debate in the Legislature—a couple of hours at the most; two or three hours—in order to put on the record what people think the government should be doing that it’s not doing, because it affords you that opportunity.

You ought to ask yourselves the question: Why? Why would the government take these powers on if they’re not necessary in the first place? You can draw a couple of conclusions, and I think the public will have to ask themselves that question. They’re doing it because they know something we don’t—maybe they’re not sharing—and are thinking that things are going to have to be done that people are not going to like, and they’re going to try to do whatever they’ve got to do as quietly as they can, maybe. I don’t know.

Could it be that they’re trying to pretend that there’s no emergency out there by calling this something different and continuing the same measures under a different name? Maybe. Or do they intend to use the powers under this act in order to deal with some of the ideological issues that they would like to deal with in other ways?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Ding-ding-ding.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I heard the ding-ding-ding too. That’s the bell that rings pretty clear through this whole

thing. Listen: We have a way of looking at things as New Democrats, and Conservatives have a way of looking at things. When it comes to collective agreements, we each have a very different way of looking at that, and fair enough. You know, you believe in what you believe in, a free-market system where collective agreements probably don’t exist and people have to negotiate their own way through the workplace and what the conditions of work should be. We tend to think not. We think that collectivity is a better way of doing it.

So is this an attempt on the part of the government to be able to deal with things that they’ve never been happy with, especially in our health care system, outside of the bargaining table, and doing it by way of order of cabinet, such as the rules by which we engage and we employ people in the health care sector? Currently there are collective agreements in place that say, “This particular worker works in this particular institution and does this particular job,” and there’s some logic to that, because as we know, in health care there are all kinds of specialties, and you don’t want the wrong person working in the wrong specialty. That could be in nursing, as it is in medicine, as it is in treatment, as it is in any part of the health care system.

Is the government saying, “Well, do you know what? We want to create more mobility in particular classes of jobs within the health care sector and move people from sector A to sector B to sector C”? Could it be that that we’re up to here? We know that government members have made those kinds of comments in their speeches and out on the hustings before. I have to ask myself: Why is it that they would bring this legislation forward if they didn’t think that maybe this is something that they want to do?

Again, I just go back and say that it is very chilling. It is very chilling to see a government utilize the legislative authority that they have to do this type of legislation. I think the unfortunate reality is that a lot of people aren’t going to find out about what the effects of this legislation are going to be until after it’s done, because most people are out doing what they do in their daily lives. I would suspect that this bill is going to rush its way through the House fairly quickly. I would imagine that if there’s any committee, it will be very limited, if at all, and it will be limited time at third reading once they time-allocate this legislation. I predict that there will be a time allocation motion tabled by 5 o’clock this afternoon. I don’t know why I feel like that—not that the government would have ever done that in the past. But I’ll tell you—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Amazing Kreskin.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Kreskin; I had forgotten about him. No, I was thinking more—anyway, I digress; I’m not going to go there. But Carnac the Magnificent—that’s who I was thinking of—from Johnny Carson; that was even funnier.

The point is that the government can very much abuse this particular power, and I think that is dangerous.

The minister said yesterday, and kind of referred to it again today, that you can do the analogy that the current legislation versus the proposed legislation is like the

difference between a switch and a dimmer. The argument was: For example, if there is currently an order that says that people cannot gather in crowds larger than 10, you're not allowed to amend that order. So they paint this picture that they're in a box and they can't get out of the box. There's no way of making it 15 or 20. What poppycock. All you have to do is cancel the order and write a new one. There is nothing at all that prevents the government from saying, "You know what? Things are getting better; instead of 10, we're moving to 50"—as they announced yesterday. They did that under the old legislation, Madam Speaker.

For the government minister to argue that this is a switch-and-a-dimmer kind of approach and that there are things currently we can't do that we will be able to do in the new legislation when it comes to amending orders—you can amend orders now by cancelling the old order and writing a new one. That's all the government has to do.

Again it comes back to: What is the government trying to fix here? I think it falls in the category: It's an overreach of powers. The government has decided, for whatever reason—and I think part of the reason is their ideological bent; I think that's part of it. I think there's another part of it where they want to be able to impose their view on things and how they should be done and do it in a way that's out of the light as much as possible so that maybe nobody will notice.

I see a point of order coming, Madam Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Point of order.

Mrs. Robin Martin: The member opposite is imputing motive, and has been throughout this speech, and just did it again. I resisted rising, but he has done it again. I'm objecting on the basis of: You're not supposed to be imputing motive.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you. I will continue to listen intently to the member from Timmins. Please continue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, I say again: Why is the government trying to do this if the current system works? I propose, and I think others have proposed—I'll come to that in a little bit—that this is really about the government overreaching and moving power onto themselves in a way that there will be less accountability when it comes to the decisions they make when it comes to these particular orders. I think it's as simple as that. That should be chilling to anybody out there, be it on the left or the right of the political spectrum.

I would think that Conservatives, who are the party of small government—right? They're the party that believes you shouldn't have big governments. They're acting like a big government's oversized shoes. I heard the Premier the other day, when somebody asked him a question about this, say, "Oh, I don't believe in big government, so you can trust me." Well, you're the guy who's bringing Bill 195 in. Why should I trust you? Come on.

1420

The Premier loves big government when it's his big government. He just doesn't love government when it's

somebody else. That's really what he's saying. Because if you look at the actions of the government since they've been elected, they've been overstepping like this time and time again. The Premier didn't like the way the city of Toronto council operated, so what did he do? He used extraordinary powers in order to usurp the size of the—"usurp" is the wrong one—to change the composition of that council to his liking. So he likes government in his own style; he just doesn't like anybody else's government.

Mr. Randy Hillier: In his own image.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In his own image. Good point. I thank you for that. That was very helpful. It's okay; it was a helpful heckle. I'll take it.

The point is, the government is really overstepping. What they're doing here is, they're acting like Big Brother to a certain extent. It's Orwellian, almost, to an extent. I'm just shocked that Conservative members would come to the House and not only bring this legislation, but stand up and speak for it, because it goes against everything you believe in.

Conservatives are supposed to be about, "Let's get the government out of the lives of people," and now you're telling yourselves, "We want to give cabinet the ability to dictate to people all kinds of things" that, normally, you would not have the right to do: how many people can gather, where you can gather, where you can worship—all of these things. What are you guys doing? It's really something, and it's actually a pretty chilling thing to look at.

If you look at some of the people that have looked at this bill and what they've had to say about it, you're going to find out very quickly that it's not just New Democrats, Andrea Horwath and others, who are concerned about this legislation. You have a whole bunch of other organizations who have cred in this line of work, as far as civil liberties, the Constitution and people's rights, who are saying, "Whoa, what are you guys doing?"

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has significant concerns when it comes to this legislation. They're saying that for the government to take these types of powers is truly problematic and is an overreach in the government's ability to do these things. We're not—okay, don't listen to me. The civil liberties association is people who know a heck of a lot when it comes to these issues. As a government, you pride yourself on saying you want to listen; well, why not listen to them? If they have major problems with this legislation, shouldn't that at least give you reason to pause and invite them to committee and hear what they have to say? No.

Like I said, we may have some committee, but if we do, I don't think it will be very much, because the longer the thing sits here in the House and the more people mobilize in order to ring the alarm bell about what you're doing, the bigger problem you're going to have. They're going to find out that the Conservatives are the big-government party, that the Conservatives are the Big Brother party. Yes, they're the ones who want to have extraordinary powers to tell you how and when you should do things. The government will get up and say, "Oh, it's nonsense.

We'll never do that." Wait. The way this legislation is drafted, you'll have these powers until the end of this term. The government will be able to do things, and who knows what those things might be. In a democracy, in a vibrant, lively democracy, that kind of stuff can't happen. Government can't overreach in the way that you are.

Take a look at what the people who represent hospital workers and various people in the health sector have said: that this particular Bill 195 is going to override complete sections of collective agreements. Grievance and arbitration rights can be put on hold. Seniority rights can be put on hold and negated. Contracting out, work of the bargaining unit, sick leaves, hours of work, holidays, vacations—how is that a good thing? If the government wants to do a reform of the health care system and do the types of things they talk about in their press conferences but do absolutely nothing about other than talk about them at their press conferences, bring it to the Legislature. You will have partners with New Democrats, who want to see major reforms in our health care system, especially the over-privatization that started with the Harris Tories, on to the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal era and now on to the Ford Tories. That's one of the things we have to deal with.

We found out just recently by my colleague the member from Essex—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Just Essex.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just Essex, okay—that the Premier's former head of PC caucus services has now got a contract in order to be able to do the testing of migrant workers in his area.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Yes?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I've been listening intently to the presentation. It's starting to stray now outside of the parameters of the legislation and the bill. Can we please bring the debate back to the bill? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Thank you for the point of order. The table officers have confirmed that the member is speaking to the bill, and he can continue.

Please do so.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think this demonstrate my point, to what degree the government may abuse the powers under Bill 195. When the government whip gets up and tries to shut down debate from the official opposition—and I would imagine he's going to do the same with my good friend the independent from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Can't wait.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —saying, "Oh, my God, he's straying off and he can't talk about these things"—it's perfectly my right to talk about these things, as it will be the right of the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston, or any other member. This is central to what this bill is all about, and if the chief government whip is saying, "Oh, my God, they can't talk about those things," how are we going to know what decisions you're going to make in cabinet? You're not going to be the first guy running out of cabinet saying—

Mr. Lorne Coe: Talk about the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —"Here's the alarm bell. The government is about to do something bad."

Mr. Lorne Coe: Talk about Bill 195.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's all about 195. See, there goes the government whip again. I think he's making my point, Madam Speaker. I think he's making my point.

If the government whip is upset with my talking about Bill 195 and being on topic—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In the chamber.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —in the chamber, imagine what the heck that means for our chances when things are talked about in closed doors in the cabinet room. Boy, I'm telling you, we're in deep trouble. This thing is a lot worse than I thought. Again—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Imagine what they'll do to the public.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's exactly what they're going to do to the public.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What the government whip is doing now is what they're going to do to the public; I agree. That's the central part of what bugs us about this bill. You're trying to fix something that's not broke. You're trying to fix something that has transparency. Nobody has refused you the ability to extend an emergency order. You haven't seen a police officer, a court officer or a public official of any type who has really had great opposition to what the government has done in its dealing with the pandemic when it comes to the extension of emergency orders.

There isn't a problem. You guys are going to create a problem. This is big government like I never thought I would see the day. I remember Mr. Ford, when he was running as the then-to-be Premier in the last election, talking about, "Oh, them crazy socialists are going to take over and they're going to do ideological things." This is as ideological as you can get.

The government is proposing in this legislation to give themselves power that they currently don't have and shouldn't have. The government says, "Well, don't worry. We're going to have a select committee, and that select committee is going to be able to ask questions to the Premier for 30 minutes, or his designate, and that's going to solve everything. But don't worry. We have a majority on committee. You can trust us. We'll always do what's right to the public. We're not going to worry what the Premier says or the cabinet says."

New Democrats proposed a simple amendment to that motion yesterday, which was defeated. We never even got to vote on it because the government called the question on the main motion, but that's a whole other debate.

1430

We said, "All right, if you're going to have the committee, make it so that it's half and half: half opposition, half government, with the government chairing, so that there is at least a semblance of impartiality when it comes to that

committee.” The government didn’t even let it get to a vote. They filibustered their own motion until 12:30 last night. They rang bells on themselves in order to be able to prevent the vote from happening. I’ve seen everything. I always thought it was the opposition who rang bells. This government is oppositional to itself.

If I was a government member, especially a deep-seated Conservative who believes that government is too big and government’s taking too much power and government’s too much of an intrusion into our lives, I’d be worried about this bill. It isn’t something that is going to be, quite frankly, warm and fuzzy if it’s abused. If the government decides to go down the road that they may very well decide when it comes to this, you might rue the day that you decided to speak in favour of this bill and decided to vote for it. I know, because by my own stupid example, when I was a member of the government, I was in favour of rule changes—stupidest thing I ever did. I’ve said it in this House before and I’ll say it again. Because in the end, you have to allow Parliament to work. Parliament is an institution that gives the public say about what government policy, both public policy and fiscal policy, can be, and be the deciders of how that should work and what it should look like. And once we—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Better or worse, exactly. And if you start taking away that power from the Legislature, I think that’s a very, very difficult thing in the long run when it comes to how democracy should operate.

So you’ve got to ask yourself a couple of more questions about this particular grab for power. The government says that they need this, as it’s part of their strategy on how to cautiously open the economy. Tell me how you cannot cautiously open the economy currently, with the current legislation. What is it that you can do that you can’t do now? What is it going to be able to do that you can’t do now? There really is no example.

There’s not been a case where the opposition has refused the government the ability to be able to declare emergency orders. As long as those orders are clear and they’re in the public interest, as legislators we support the government moving in that direction. But the minute that you move this stuff into backrooms and to decisions of cabinet, which are not minuted to the public because you cannot request minutes from a cabinet discussion, you will be in a position where you’re going to have to defend things as far as decisions made in cabinet and there’s no transparency. So even if you meant to do nothing wrong, you can be in a position of trying to defend yourself for something you haven’t even done. Why would you do that? It just doesn’t make any sense.

The other part about this whole session, as far as we’re dealing in this extended session this summer, in regard to Bill 195 and Bill 197, is that the government has said that these bills are necessary in order for them to be able to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet the very things that the Premier talks about at press conferences when it comes to dealing with the problems in our long-term-care system, dealing with problems in the reopening of daycares,

dealing with problems when it comes to underfunding for municipalities who have been dealing and struggling to pay for the additional costs because of this pandemic, the government is not bringing forward initiatives that actually deal with that. We’ve got Bill 195 that deals with them being able to give themselves extraordinary powers to decide what this Legislature should rightfully decide. You’ve got the government that is going to call, within the next week or maybe tomorrow, Bill 197, which gives them all kinds of other abilities to do things to help their friends in the development industry, curtail environmental assessments and different things, but nothing when it comes to dealing with those issues that the government has enunciated as a result of the press conferences that the Premier has had.

I’ve listened intently to the Premier and his press conferences, and he often says the right things. I’m not going to argue. Should there be air conditioning in long-term-care facilities? Absolutely. Andrea Horwath has been raising that issue since she’s been here. Is there going to be any more air conditioning in long-term-care facilities by next summer? I doubt it. I very much doubt it, because if the government wanted to do something, they’d be talking now about what that was going to be, talking about either a funding announcement or a funding announcement is coming or legislation or whatever it might be, or a regulation that may or may not be passed.

Is the government prepared, rather than dealing with Bill 195, to deal with the reforms in our long-term-care system that we need to deal with? We have staff who are moving from one institution to the other, who are causing, in some cases, infections from one institution to the other. We have an understaffing of our long-term-care facilities that is chronic. It wasn’t this government that created that problem. I understand that. That’s been a problem that’s been around for a while, from the other administration, previously, under Ms. Wynne and Mr. McGuinty, who underfunded the system to the point that we’re at where we’re at now. How are we reforming the home care system in order to prevent people from going into long-term care? None of that is being dealt with, Madam Speaker.

Instead, we’re dealing with Bill 195, that puts forward the government interest, but doesn’t put forward the public interest. It just seems to me that is not the way that this place should operate. Whoever sits on the other side—I don’t care which party it is—it should always be about the public interest. Yes, we will do things ideologically as governments. New Democrats, Conservatives, Liberals on the other side, on the government side will do things that are ideological to what they believe. We understand that. But it always has to be guided by what is in the public interest.

In this particular case, the government has a very hard case to make trying to argue that this bill is necessary in the public interest. Because when you look at the powers that this bill is giving them, by being able to do emergency orders by order in council rather than by an order of the House, you’re giving yourself pretty extraordinary powers that allow you to do things that, under normal circumstances, you wouldn’t be able to do.

The key here is transparency. Yes, the government is creating a select committee that's going to allow members to call the Premier or his designate up to 30 minutes before committee to ask questions. But it's going to be a government-controlled committee, and the Premier could decide not to answer the question. If I decide to say, "Well, that's contemptuous," as a committee member, I don't have the majority to cover that, to be able to win that argument. The government will just keep on moving and saying, "No, no, no. That's not the case." So there isn't the transparency that's necessary.

Again, I just go back to that it's so counter to what Conservatives are all about. Conservatives are about making sure that government is not an intrusion onto your life, about making sure that government is not this huge, monolithic thing that has powers that are extraordinary over things that you would normally think would be decisions of individuals. The government, I think, is overreaching, as we said, as a number of us have said from the very beginning. But again, it's a question that the government is really good at saying one thing but doing the opposite. The Premier and the ministers of the crown, if you listen to what they have to say, you'd think, "My God, they're doing a great thing."

I listened this morning to the debate by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in regard to housing. Oh, my, they're doing all kinds of things for tenants. But when you look at the details of the bills, it's really about giving landlords more ability to do what it is that they've got to do. Now, should landlords be well taken care of? Of course. They have investments that they want to protect. Landlords need to be able to manage their buildings and make sure they get paid for the rent that they're charging. But they also have an obligation to make sure that they're respectful to the tenant, and some of what was in that bill is completely opposite to what the government is saying it is.

It's the same thing with Bill 195. The government is saying this is all about making it easier for them to be able to deal with the management of emergency orders. I don't know what's complicated with the management of emergency orders because, quite frankly, the government has done a number of them now and they've never been refused, and it's worked quite well. I don't understand the argument there. It really is about a consolidation of power.

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Again, let's go back and take a look at what some of the others are saying in regard to this legislation. Not surprisingly, a lot of the labour unions are opposed to this, because part of what this will do is it will allow the government to be able to override collective agreements and provisions within collective agreements. The government will probably say, "No, we would never do that. Trust me. You know you can trust me." Be careful, because at the end of the day, if somebody has this type of power, at one point it will get abused. There has not been a case in human history where power like this has been consolidated onto an authority and the authority hasn't abused it.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Father of the social contract.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I freely—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, you're right. To my good friend, my honourable esteemed colleague on the other side: I learned. The social contract is exactly the reason I'm having this debate now.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, but I am saying I agree.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's good to see the Conservatives modelling their legislation after the NDP.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's funny. The issue is that it takes a while, I think, for people to be humbled in this place, and it takes a couple of elections at times to be humbled and to understand that you have to be moderate in your approach to your legislative authority.

Does government have an obligation to make decisions? Absolutely. Does government have an obligation to manage our way through this COVID-19 pandemic? Absolutely. Has the government done some things that are good? Absolutely. But this is an overreach. The government does not need this to manage what's happened and what's maybe going to happen if we get into a second wave on this particular pandemic.

I can't foresee a circumstance where the government would come before the House this August, September, October, whenever it is, and say, "We need an extension of emergency orders," and that they be refused. Ain't going to happen. But be careful: Give cabinet that authority, and who knows what it's going to be used for, because there is a real lack of transparency when it comes to it.

I was talking to my good friend the finance critic from the New Democrats earlier, and I was saying—she was reminding me of a historical figure we both like to refer to every now and then, the Sun King, Louis XIV, who said, "L'État, c'est moi." "L'État, c'est moi" is "The state is me," and it's very à propos for this particular bill.

The government wants to speak in a language that makes this sound like a moderate move, but like Louis XIV, it's far from being moderate. Louis XIV sure knew how to run things, and he ran them according to what he needed, and it wasn't about the public interest; it was about the interests of Louis XIV. The government that purports itself to be the government who believes in small government and believes in not intruding into people's lives is making one of the largest intrusions into people's lives that we've seen in a long time.

I want to deal with another aspect of this legislation, and I made this comment yesterday. I just want to go back to it, because in reading the legislation, it is a real interesting route that the government has taken in order to deal with this legislation, specifically with the creation of the select committee.

As we know, I believe it's standing order 25—yes, 25(e) says, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she..."

"(e) Anticipates any matter already on the orders and notices paper for consideration." If you read the legislation, the legislation refers to the right of individual members to be able to refer a matter decided under Bill 195—in other words, by order in cabinet—to a select

committee. I think it's interesting. It's a fine argument. I will agree with the government House leader or anybody else who wants to make that argument that it's a fine argument. But when the legislation is very specific—it says that there will be a mechanism under the legislation to allow a member of this House to be able to refer and ask for the Premier or a cabinet member to come before committee to answer questions about declarations of emergency orders. That's what the legislation contemplates.

Then, yesterday, we were debating, and again this morning, a motion to create that select committee, which, in a way, anticipates what the bill is calling for. Again, I think it's just indicative of the government. The government, I have to imagine—and I don't know if this is the case, but I would think it is—wanted to be able to call Bill 195 yesterday, but because we filed the reasoned amendment and they couldn't have the debate yesterday, they had to call something and they decided to stay on their timetable by calling their motion. They wrote the motion in such a way that they didn't refer specifically to Bill 195 in order to get around it.

Again, it's a skirting of the intent of the rules. The rule of anticipation in the standing orders is there for a reason, right? The government must have been aware of that, and when they drafted the amendment, either the Clerks pointed it out to them or they figured it out themselves, and they drafted the motion for the select committee in such a way that it didn't specifically refer to Bill 195. But the problem is, when you look at Bill 195, it specifically makes a reference in this bill to a member's right to be able to refer to a select committee or a standing committee of the Legislature. It's clear that the government understood it was skirting its way around the rules when it came to creating that committee and calling that debate yesterday.

Is it a big deal? To a certain degree, it is, because you also have to not just live by the standing orders but by the spirit of the standing orders. The standing orders and the rules of the Legislature are there for a reason. It's like having a hockey game or a football game: You have to have rules. If you don't have rules, you have mayhem. When the government is prepared to skirt the rules in order to get its way—I understand the temptation to do that. I've been around here long enough to understand why you would do that. But is it right? I just think it's a rather sad thing that the government went down that way because, in my view, clearly the government was aware it was a problem. They drafted the motion in such a way, and the legislation under Bill 195 specifically refers to it.

So was it the right thing to do? For the government, probably. The government was trying to achieve a tactical “where we're going to be and when,” and they got to where they had to be. But in the end, was it the right thing to do? I don't think so. I think that was, unfortunately, the wrong thing to do.

We started out this extended session back last March, May or whenever we came back, and what we were told by the government was: Let's deal up until the beginning of June with things that are just COVID-related; and then, once we got past June and into the extended session that

we are in now, the government was going to deal with other things, but primarily COVID-related again. The government, quite frankly, never lived up to that commitment. We dealt with things that were not COVID-related prior to June 5 or June 6, when we rose from here, and we're primarily not dealing with COVID-related legislation. You can argue that Bill 195 is COVID-related—that's, I guess, a bit of a sop for those who say, “Yes, we're doing COVID-related stuff,” but I think it's an overreach in the power of the government. But if you look at the rest of the legislation that we've been dealing with in this House, very little of it has to do with COVID-19 and the pandemic.

The Premier has said, ministers of the crown have said, and the opposition has said that there are things that need to be dealt with when it comes to what we have learned: what not to do when it comes to how our institutions are run; when it comes to the possibility of infections due to pandemics; how we run our long-term-care institutions; how we run home care; how we run our hospitals; how we run our schools etc. Do we see legislation being tabled and brought to the order paper that allows us to deal with those things so that the public can have confidence that this Legislature and the government have its interests at heart? No. We're dealing with the government essentially consolidating power onto itself. I just think that's a sad thing.

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I have to say, because it was raised here yesterday, that this whole idea that this is akin to a dimmer switch versus a light switch is, to me, a false argument. And it was again said today. We currently have the power to do what needs to be done, so why are we doing this? It brings you to the question to answer—you can draw your own conclusions, but it is an overreach, to say the least.

I'm hesitating going somewhere because I don't want to be too partisan here. I'm sort of trying to figure out how to structure something. I'm going to do it the best I can. Yesterday, one of the government members was going on about: The reason they're acting the way they are and the reason they're not working with the official opposition is because myself as the NDP House leader hadn't been treating them well and had been breaking agreements—which is not the case. The Premier had announced clearly, a week before we sent a letter to the government, the details in regard to the legislation that dealt with the ability to prevent evictions in rentals for commercial buildings. It had been made public. The Premier had made that public.

We sent a letter to the government. Why? Because they had been giving us, at the last minute, whatever legislation it is that they wanted us to contemplate, and there was no time for us to be able to move amendments or to get their attention to deal with amendments. So we sent them a letter saying, “Here's what we would like to see in this legislation,” and the government took offence. Fair enough; they have the right to take offence. I'm not going to argue that they don't.

But through this entire process, the part that I find somewhat troubling is that the government member on the

other side then suggested that he was still having House leaders' meetings with the Green Party and the Liberal independents. He was just not having them with the official opposition. Well, who's telling the truth here? The Liberal opposition—no, I take that back; I withdraw. I withdraw before you go there. I did use the word improperly.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You have to ask yourself the question: Which is it? The Greens and the Liberals say, "No, there are no House leaders' meetings." The government says, "There are House leaders' meetings, but only with them." But the "them" say there are no House leaders' meetings. So it brings into question why somebody would say something like that. I don't think it serves the House any purpose to go down those particular—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member for Timmins, can you please speak to Bill 195?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Fair.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I didn't—no, no, you're using that word. I'm not using that word. You're using that word.

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

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, that's good. That's good.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Timmins has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just wanted to make the point, because it was said here yesterday in the House. I just wanted to make the point. One party says one thing; the other party says the other. You have to ask yourself the question, is the point that I was trying to make.

I've only got a couple of minutes left. Just to finish what I was saying, there are plenty of organizations and people who are coming before us and are starting to contact us regarding Bill 195 who are seeing this much in the same way, and that is that the government is very much overreaching when it comes to the authority that they're getting under this bill.

The public and members of organizations like CUPE, people such as the civil liberties association, various law professions are getting hold of us and saying, "This should not go forward. This is a bad idea." I would just hope that the government, quite frankly, would take heed of that and ask themselves the very simple question: "What are we trying to fix here?" If you're currently able to pass emergency orders by way of the legislative process that we have now, why is this even necessary? I would just say to the government that it's a simple question that has to be asked.

What we need at the end of all of this is more accountability, not less. This particular legislation is going to provide less accountability when it comes to the ability for this Legislature, these members and, yes, the public to know what the government is doing and why they're doing it. You have to have transparency in these types of decisions, because they're very serious decisions. When

we talk about limiting the rights of individuals, to everything from how they gather, where they gather, how large a crowd can be, what their collective agreements are, those are really serious things. I think that the more transparency we have in the decisions that are made by the government, the better it is for the government and the public.

I think it would serve the government well to have increased transparency, and we currently have that in the current legislation. Yes, the government is going to say, "What don't you like about our select committee? We're going to have a select committee. We're going to be able to call the Premier or his designate or a cabinet member before the committee and ask them questions." Yes, at a government-controlled committee with a majority, who can decide whatever they want procedurally because of their majority and can decide to shut down any motion that an opposition member may have in regard to a legitimate concern.

We asked the government for a very simple amendment: If you really want to be transparent and you want to keep this in a way that provides confidence to the public, have a committee that is struck equally between the government and the opposition and leave the same provisions in place now so that at least then there has to be an understanding between the government and the opposition when it comes to being able to deal with these particular issues. So we asked them to do that.

I just end on this final point, and that is that the government, as I said at the beginning, is trying to fix something, quite frankly, that's not broken. I would ask the government to reconsider what they're doing, because at the end of the day it is an overreach on their authority as a government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): We'll move to questions.

Mr. Aris Babikian: I listened carefully to the member opposite's presentation. I don't think that, in the past or in the future, there will be any government more transparent and accountable to the public than this government. For the past four months, the Premier and the ministers have been at the forefront of this fight, presenting to the public the case, being accountable. If there were mistakes, they had the courage to come and apologize and try to correct those mistakes. So it is quite ironic that the member opposite is accusing this government of not being—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): Question?

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is: One feature of the proposed bill is that it would end the government's ability to create new emergency orders. Does the member opposite agree that this is an appropriate limitation at this stage of the COVID fight?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, first of all, do I believe that the government is being more transparent? Absolutely not. That was the whole point of my presentation. The fact that the government is moving these decisions from the legislative chamber to the cabinet table is making it less transparent and less accountable. Do I believe that the government shouldn't overstep its boundaries when it comes to utilizing emergency orders? Absolutely. That's

why we have a process now that brings all those decisions to the floor of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Hamilton-Ancaster-Dundas—Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Yes, you got it. It's a mouthful.

I can't describe this legislation as anything short of wicked. The reason that I say that is because of what is being taken from the people of Ontario with this bill. Democracy is not something that is owned by the government; it's something that we hold in trust. For example, if big government said to you, "Give me your bank card PIN. Why don't you give me your computer password? Why don't you give me the keys to your car or the keys to your house?", and you say, "What do you need it for?" and the government says, "Don't worry; trust me," would that be something you would want to do?

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My question is: I don't think that the people of Ontario understand what they're losing with this bill. I would suggest that maybe we could be more clear with that: what it is that they're losing in terms of the government's sweeping grab at power.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you for the question. I think it's kind of central to what's going on here. The government is going to rush this legislation through the House. If there is committee, there's going to be very little committee, and I think that's purposeful in the sense that the more the public finds out about this bill, the more uncomfortable they are. I make the last point that I made in the debate: This is the party of small government, and this is the largest reach of power that they've done in a long time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Oakville North—Burlington.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Thank you, Speaker. As a lawyer, one part of the bill which is important to me is in fact the sunset clause, that the power conferred would cease one year after it receives royal assent. This type of provision is very rarely used. Can the member from Timmins agree that this mechanism accomplishes a goal of limiting government powers during these extraordinary times?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Currently, the legislation—thank you for the question, by the way—that we have allows us to do what needs to be done to keep Ontarians safe, and, by and large, we've done a pretty good job of that in this Legislature. Let's all agree. And the public has followed suit and has followed many of the directives that have come out of here.

But this legislation doesn't just sunset after one year. You can extend it for another year with a majority of the House, and anything is possible after that. Once this bill is on the books, will this government or future governments decide to make this permanent legislation? It could happen, because you've established the precedent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): I recognize the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It was a pleasure listening to the member from Timmins. I would

posit this question to him: that a more appropriate title for the bill would be "the death of democracy in Ontario act." I think that would be a reasoned amendment to add into this bill. But I also have to question—as I look across at my former colleagues who are all recognized as champions of accountability, advocates for the rule of law and freedom, and I say to myself today: What have you become?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thank the member for the question. That's exactly the point I was making in this debate. New Democrats stand for something. Conservatives stand for something. They're different, but we both stand for something. One of the things that Conservatives have always stood for—they believe in less government, smaller government, and local decisions of individuals.

This is an overreach. This is extending a power to cabinet that it shouldn't have. It is currently a power that this assembly has, but we have a transparent way by which to enact it. To do what you're doing is contrary to what Conservatives believe in, and that's really the puzzling part about all of this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I listened intently to the member opposite—and obviously we do take this legislation very seriously. We take the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act very seriously. The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, which is an act that we are trying to restrict, gives us incredible powers. We're trying, with this legislation, to actually restrict what we can do. This gives us less powers, not more powers, than the current Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. That is what we're trying to move to because we do believe in less government.

Can the member give me one example—other than where the hearing is being held, which is a select committee versus the Legislature—of something we can do under Bill 195 that we can't do right now?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're making my point. You're transferring the power of the Legislature to cabinet. Essentially that's all you're doing here. Currently, you have the ability to make orders to stop people from doing certain things in order to stop the spread of the coronavirus. We all agree that those things are necessary. You're moving it from a process by which it is approved transparently through this Legislature to one that is going to be approved behind closed doors in cabinet. That, to me, is very scary and contrary to what Conservatives normally stand for.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Ancaster-Dundas-Hamilton West.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Good try.

I would just like to remind the House that Louis XIV—l'État, c'est moi—died of gangrene, with all of his subjects jeering him as he was being carried away from the castle. So there's that.

But I would like to say that the provision that you're providing the select committee is something that I have participated in. I have had a face full of this government's committees. They use their majority every single time to

bludgeon democracy. They don't accept any amendments. They don't listen. They don't let anything happen or come before them that they don't control. They're weak-kneed.

My question is: Is that your experience of the way that this government manages their select committees—and all of their committees, by the bye?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The government has been pretty good for itself at how it has exercised its power in committee. None of our oversight committees are sitting this summer: public accounts, public appointments, estimates. None of them are sitting. The government doesn't want to have transparency and accountability. They shut down the process of the committees that are there in order to keep them to account.

When you go to committee, the government utilizes their majority to do whatever. We have motions at committee now that says that nothing will be decided by subcommittee; it will all be decided by the majority, which is the government on committee. So do I have confidence they're going to do the right thing in committee when it comes to these decisions? Absolutely not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore—very quickly; one minute.

Ms. Christine Hogarth: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We talk about more powers, but this bill is going to refine down the emergency-making tools available to the government by eliminating decision-making powers of things like transporting waste and construction of new property, which could currently be done under the current declaration of emergency. Does the member opposite think that such powers are still necessary to combat COVID-19, and if so, why?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen: No member, no government and no public official can fully understand at the beginning of a pandemic what it may need to do to curb the pandemic. Will you need to control the flow of waste? Maybe. We can currently do that under the legislation, and you'll still be able to do that under the legislation proposed. Should the government have the ability to write those orders? Absolutely.

Our argument is that it should be transparent, it should be brought to the Legislature and it should be a legislative decision, not a decision of the majority of people on committee and the cabinet, to which they are only accountable to themselves.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Catherine Fife): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection / Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.

An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

Report continues in volume B.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioic Lim, William Short
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (PC)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
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Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Kaleed Rasheed, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stephen Blais
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, Randy Hillier
Mitzie Hunter, Andrea Khanjin
Laura Mae Lindo, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Robin Martin
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
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**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
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Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
John Fraser, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Norman Miller
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Stephen Blais, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell