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Jeudi
19 novembre 2020

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Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 19 November 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 novembre 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2020 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2020, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It is always a pleasure for me to rise in this House; it's actually an honour for me to rise in this House and represent the people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas. We've said it in this House—all of us—and I will say it again, that I couldn't be more proud of the people in my riding, the people that step up, that have done nothing but look out for one another to try and keep themselves safe, their neighbours safe, their families safe. I, in my constituency office, as many of you, I'm sure, will get lots of calls and emails, and I get stopped quite frequently by people who have serious challenges. But at the heart of everything that they're talking about is a fundamental desire to make sure that they help one another and that they improve the lot for people in our community. So, again, I just want to say to the people of Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, I'm proud of you, and I will continue to stand up and fight for what's right on behalf of you and all of the people across Ontario.

That brings me to the budget motion that's before us. The budget was tabled two weeks ago now, I believe. At the time that it was tabled, we were saying in the opposition that it, really, already was coming up so short to provide the kinds of things that people needed in the face of the pandemic, in the face of the challenges and the struggles that people were having in Ontario.

Since that time, things have gotten so much worse. It was two weeks ago, but it seems like a lifetime ago, because what we have now is a pandemic that is continually growing, and the numbers and the projections that we're hearing now are nothing short of frightening. I mean, we now are looking at the possibility of upwards of 6,500 cases a day in Ontario. It's almost unthinkable. And the contrast between this looming economic and health disaster and this budget couldn't be more stark. At the time, two weeks ago, we questioned the budget and said, "Where is the sense of urgency? Where is the sense of the

need to act now?" We couldn't believe at the time when we looked at the budget that this was the government's response to what people had been suffering for nine months.

We looked at this budget and said it just seemed like the Premier and the government had given up the fight on COVID-19, hoping, in fact, that people could survive this on their own with very little support from this government. This budget, and the budget motion before us, is telling families and workers in this province, particularly workers in the health care sector, people who are PSWs who are continually on the front lines now—telling those workers, telling the hundreds and hundreds, the hundreds of thousands, of small businesses across the province of Ontario that have struggled to remain open, struggled to keep themselves safe, their customers safe—this budget was telling them that they're on their own, because there was nothing in it to help people in their communities.

The government made clear that they don't want to pay for smaller class sizes. They certainly don't want to invest in public health measures that will keep people safe and have been keeping people safe. Clearly, there's no money in this budget to hire PSWs, or in fact to pay them what they deserve, to pay them the kind of wage, the kind of benefits and to offer them the kind of employment conditions that they deserve. They deserved it before this pandemic, and they certainly deserve it now, when we see the heroic efforts that they have been making to keep people safe in long-term care.

Really, given the fact that there's almost no—I'm going to say there are no direct supports to small businesses in this budget, in the budget motion; none are in here, despite months and months of hearing from small businesses about what they needed, about how they are so valiantly trying to keep their doors open, trying to keep their staff employed, and hoping that eventually the government would heed them, hoping that their patience would pay off in a budget that would finally provide relief. But instead, what we can see here is the government has said to small businesses, "You're on your own."

It really is shocking, Madam Speaker, that this government doesn't share as well the kind of sense of urgency that we share, and so I would like to make clear that we felt then, at the time, that this government, by not putting these protections in place, by not putting these measures in place, were really gambling with people's lives. We were concerned that if the government didn't get ahead of the second wave, didn't put the protections in place, we were going to be risking deeper, longer lockdowns, and certainly that's what we're seeing now; the fact that we

have now seen a government that had to, I'm going to say, flip-flop on the colour-coded protections that they provided for the province. After it became clear that the government was found out and not listening to all of the experts, they had to change the parameters by which they declared red zones.

I can only imagine that that was in order to cover or to justify their lack of investment, their lack of action in this budget. But now we see the evidence was clear, the cases were irrefutable, that this government had to change those orders to protect people, but they haven't done anything to change the budget. They go hand in hand. You cannot have a healthy economy without the health of the people of Ontario, and vice versa, and so this government has failed on both accounts. They failed to keep people safe by acting quickly, and they clearly are failing to keep people employed, to keep businesses open, because of the lack of investment that we see in this budget.

What I would say, for the people in my riding—the businesses, particularly, in my riding—the thing that I hear most is that they continue to be confused. The government changes orders all the time and doesn't provide clear direction to businesses. They struggle to do the right thing. They're trying to do the right thing. This government doesn't communicate clearly, in time and in an adequate way that will help businesses do the right thing. You only have to look at the fact that we have had, over the course of the summer and into the fall, the standing committee on finance hearings, and every single business that came before us said, "We need clear, concise information in order to do the right thing." They're trying to do the right thing. They want to comply. But this government's lack of clarity is making it very, very difficult for that to happen.

0910

The budget that's laid out—where do you begin with the shortcomings of this budget? But I think where we will begin is with the health crisis that is before us. How is it possible that, in a budget presented by this government in the middle of a pandemic, they do not provide enough funding for our hospitals in Ontario to even cover the deficit that they have incurred over the pandemic period? How is that possible?

Ontario hospitals have amassed a deficit of about \$850 million. They don't have the money to pay that, and this during a time when this government continues to sit on billions of dollars—billions of dollars—on the sidelines, stashed away in contingency funds and reserve funds, at a time when this needs to be deployed. This money needs to be in the field now—if not for businesses, for our health care sector.

The MPP from Willowdale likes to talk a lot about saving for a rainy day. Well, Madam Speaker—

Interjection: It's raining.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: —it is raining. I don't know what the government needs to hear about the disastrous circumstances that we are in—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Member from Willowdale.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: The member for Willowdale speaks up now, but I wish he had spoken up at the time when this budget was being prepared, to protect the people of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I feel that the government is particularly sensitive today, this morning, and that's most likely because this budget landed like a lead balloon in the province of Ontario. It disappointed small businesses. It disappointed workers on the front lines. It disappointed business owners in areas that are non-traditional, that struggle to stay open. Black-owned businesses, Indigenous people, people of colour have all been left out in this budget, and my sense is, this morning, that that's what they're very sensitive about.

What we see here is, we've got a budget that doesn't match up with the words of the Premier and of this government. This government seemed to make—we presented, numerous times, as the opposition, as New Democrats, a bill to ensure that people living in long-term care in the province of Ontario received a minimum four hours of hands-on care. The government supported this bill. It's the right thing to do. They supported it. Maybe the people of Ontario thought, "Well, look at that. The government finally saw reason that this is what we need."

But guess what they didn't do? They paid lip service to it, but they didn't put their money where their mouth is, because there isn't any money in this bill to fund the kind of staff that we need to ensure that residents receive four hours of hands-on care. It's that kind of contradiction—I struggled with my word there, Madam Speaker—that is the reason why people are so cynical about this particular government. They're starting to understand that the words, the tough words and saying the right words, don't matter when it comes to action.

In this budget, we don't even see—it's really, actually, identical to the budget that we saw in 2019. It doesn't even come close to undoing the cuts we saw from what has been termed a slash-and-burn budget in 2019. It doesn't do much. If you factor in population growth, if you factor in inflation, this budget continues to, in fact, be underfunding for the services we need most in the province: health care, education.

There are no emergency supports, as I said, for small businesses during COVID. There's no allocation for home care and community care. We know the continuum of health care, if we want to keep people in their homes longer—which is what most people wanted; it's just the healthiest choice for them, in many cases—we need to support home care. It's not in this budget.

It doesn't help the hospitals with the deficits that they have acquired and that they will continue to acquire. The Ontario Hospital Association has been ringing this alarm bell for years now, and the bell is getting louder and louder with COVID-19. With the fact that this government has done nothing to address hallway health care—layer on top of this COVID-19—it's no wonder that hospitals across

the province are having to take patients and put them into hotels across this province. How is that a thing in this province?

In the city of Hamilton, we have a hotel that is now being filled up with patients, essentially because hospitals are not able to meet the capacity of COVID-19, of ongoing routine surgeries for children in Hamilton. McMaster Children's Hospital is struggling to provide the kinds of treatments and surgeries that young kids need.

The tragedy of that, Madam Speaker, is it's very time-sensitive. Children need surgeries at a time when they need it in terms of their growth and their maturity, and we're seeing that children are now not able to access the surgeries and the treatments that they need to keep them healthy at a time when the government is sitting on billions and billions of dollars and hospitals in Hamilton are moving patients to hotels. How is that a government that sees a sense of urgency or sees that it is their responsibility to keep people safe in this province?

One of the very first things that this government did was to eliminate two paid sick days—thank you very much, MPP from London—Fanshawe. You're a lifesaver. Thank you very much. Water is life, which I will actually be talking about in a little while.

Two paid sick days is what people asked for in this province—two paid sick days. But this government considered that excessive, that people didn't deserve that. At the time, we argued that that was really short-sighted and a little mean, to be honest with you, and that the fact that there was a requirement for staff who are sick to get a doctor's note—these are common-sense practices that we, at the time, thought would ensure people were kept safe and were able to keep their workplaces safe, and they felt that they were able to stay home.

Now, during COVID-19, what are we telling people? If you are sick, don't go to work. But if you are sick and you can't go to work, "Guess what," this government is saying, "you are on your own. No paid sick days for you. Thank you very much." This is such a simple common-sense practice that would keep people safe in the province of Ontario that is missing from this budget.

If you actually strip away the billions and billions and billions of dollars in contingency funds and in reserve funds put away for a rainy day, if you strip out time-limited, one-time payments, strip those out, there's very little here. If you actually look at the \$6 billion-plus that this government is spending every single year to subsidize private hydro, that's a huge cost. Now, I stand here and I will be corrected, but I believe that is currently now the fourth-highest cost in the government's budget. I look forward to being corrected, but if it's not the fourth highest, it's certainly one of the largest expenditures in the province to subsidize privatized hydro.

This government ran on the promise to fix the hydro mess. Do we remember that? Does anyone remember that? It was clear. And we agree with you: Hydro was a mess. Hydro was a mess.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Still is.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: It's actually still a mess, as my colleague would say, but I would actually argue that it's

messier than it was then, because now the taxpayers are on the hook for this mess. Every year, taxpayers have to pony up six-plus billion dollars to subsidize this system.

But the second promise that this government ran on, and I'm sure we will all remember—we all remember the Premier saying, "We are going to reduce your bills by"—what was the percentage?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Twelve.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Twelve per cent; I know all of you remember that. And guess what? My constituents remember that as well. But what's happened? Have bills gone down? No, Madam Speaker. Residential hydro bills in this province continue to go up. People are struggling to pay their mortgages, to pay their rent, to buy food. They've lost jobs. If they haven't lost jobs, they have reduced hours. Businesses are shut down; they've lost revenue, all at a time when they could use a break on their hydro bill. But, instead, they get to pay for hydro twice now in the province of Ontario. They get to pay for hydro on their increased bills every month—and the government can say what they want, but my constituents can read a bill, and they know those costs are going up—and now they get to pay for it on their tax bill, because that \$6.5 billion hasn't gone to give them a break at all. In a time when the government could have offered something to individuals, to actual individual people in the province of Ontario, like a break on their hydro rates, that hasn't happened in this budget.

0920

It really, really is such a disappointment for this government not to seem to understand the precarious situation the people in the province of Ontario are in. There's very, very little here to help people. I've said it before and I'll say it again: We hear the Premier get up every day and say all the right words, all his kind of hokey expressions and his tough talk. But do you know what? If you follow the words and the actions, they don't match, and the people of Ontario are starting to see through this.

There is nothing in this budget to keep our kids safe in school—nothing. And the cases, the outbreaks in schools are alarming. We have been saying that not providing a 15-student cap in schools in the province of Ontario meant that teachers and children and education workers of all kinds were at risk. We warned the government that this was not a safe return to school and that they needed to fund a healthy and safe classroom for our teachers, our students and for parents.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A youth worker just died yesterday—a child and youth worker.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Sadly, and tragically, the MPP from London—Fanshawe has reminded me—and it is an absolute tragedy—that an education worker in this province has died. This was an entirely, entirely preventable death. If the government had taken to heart warnings that came, not just from us, but from education workers, from health care experts, that their plan was unsafe—this was a preventable death. It's an absolute tragedy, and it can be connected directly to the lack of investment on the part of this government in this budget to make sure that our

schools were safe. How can this not be a priority for the government? I don't understand how keeping our kids safe isn't a priority for our government.

In my riding, in fact in one of my little relative's schools, there's a classroom of 30-plus kids—30-plus kids. And we know—it's common sense—that there is no social distancing in this school, none at all. At the same time, because of this risk, because of the fear, because of the evidence that outbreaks are starting to occur—I think we're at well over 2,000 infections in schools, well over that—parents are starting to take their kids out of classrooms. Instead of taking this opportunity for the government to retain smaller class sizes, they're collapsing classes. They're making them even larger. So now it's getting worse in terms of what we provide for our kids to be safe.

If the government really doesn't seem to take to heart the moral obligation to keep our kids safe, that's their choice, but they might want to consider the economy, because if there isn't a safe place for families to take their children, to leave their children, people won't be able to go to work. We've been saying that for years and years about safe daycare spaces, and it is now true about schools. So it is an economic argument as well as a moral obligation, and the government, with this budget motion, has failed entirely.

The Minister of Education likes to stand up and talk about the money that they've invested, but let's be clear, let's parse through that: The money that they're allowing for in this budget actually comes from the reserves of school boards across the province. Just like they like to take credit for the billions of dollars—almost 97% of the investment that is COVID-related came from the federal government—they now like to take credit for the reserves of the school boards as a contribution from this government. We could strip that away, as well. Schools, Madam Speaker—our students are still on their own, as evidenced by the investment in this government.

That brings me to public health. How are we having a conversation about underfunding in public health, in the middle of a global pandemic? But apparently, we are. There's no new, significant money for public health. And we know what public health does. We know; most people in Ontario now know, if they didn't know before. I'm sure the Premier understands now that public health does more than put little stickers on restaurants. I'm sure that he at least now understands that they are absolutely on the front line of public health. We saw that with Dr. Sheela Basrur during SARS, and we're seeing evidence of the public health officers that are showing true leadership in this province. So we understand the critical role of public health.

But public health is struggling to keep up. They're struggling to do the testing. We all know it still exists. This government's testing regime was an abysmal failure. People waited days, and weeks and weeks. They're still waiting to get tests and to get the results back. That still goes on, despite outcries to improve it. And so many public health units are not able to, and don't, do the kind of contact tracing that we would expect, because they

don't have the resources. They don't have the funding that they need to do their work.

We still also have, on the table, mergers of public health units across the province. You would think that the government would at least say, "You know what? We're going to take this off the books right now to allow you to focus, absolutely, on the crisis that's before you." But that is still on the table. The public health units continue to operate in an environment of unpredictability, uncertainty and underfundedness, if that is a word, at a time when they should have all of the support that they need.

We just heard the Minister of Long-Term Care. It was really just mind-boggling that the Minister of Long-Term Care would stand up and download the responsibility to public health to keep people safe in this province, that it's their job, in terms of people in long-term care. How is that possible? How is the Minister of Long-Term Care now, after all these months of not providing public health with the response and resources they need—how is this minister now saying, "Well, actually, we're going to download the actual responsibility. It is the job of public health, not this ministry," and clearly, then, by extension, not this government?

In addition to this budget motion that provides no significant resources that public health needs, the Minister of Health continues to announce more Ontario health teams. More Ontario health teams have been announced. This was a highly controversial move. It was not clear to communities how this was going to roll out. It was a reorganization that was very, very confusing.

In my community of Hamilton, it's still unclear what Ontario health teams are funded to do, what roles they're taking on. There are agencies that thought that they would be part of the process, and not clear what their role is. I imagine this confusion of changing roles and responsibilities—if that's happening in Hamilton, no doubt this is happening in cities and public health regions all across the province. Is this what we need public health to be focusing on, in the middle of a pandemic? I think not, Madam Speaker.

Those are the areas that people are most concerned about right now, and rightfully so: keeping our kids safe, keeping people in hospitals safe. There's also the failure, the ongoing failure, of this government to protect our seniors in long-term care. It is nothing short of shameful. We had a first wave where we saw over 2,000 deaths in long-term care, and we thought we had learned lessons. We thought we understood what we needed to know about long-term care in this province. We had the heartbreaking report from the Canadian Armed Forces. We heard from the government's own panel the need to invest in more PSWs. Experts agree, we agree, apparently the government agrees that we need to fund four hours of hands-on care in long-term care. We knew the second wave was coming; I don't know about the government, but we knew. And you did not take the opportunity then to hire PSWs in long-term care, and you haven't done it now in this budget.

0930

The province of Quebec hired 10,000 PSWs; BC, 7,000 PSWs. How many PSWs has this government budgeted

for in this budget motion before us? My feeling is that the people of Ontario, if they knew there was nothing in here—there's absolutely no human resource plan; there's no budgeting for it. The tens of thousands of PSWs that we need, the army of PSWs that should be on the ground now protecting our seniors—they're not provided for in this budget. But as we know, instead, we have Bill 218 that the government prioritized, which is a bill that will protect for-profit long-term-care operators—corporations—from any accountability for deaths that happened in long-term care. So rather than putting an iron ring, as the Premier talked about, around long-term care—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Where is it?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Well, there is an iron ring, but it is around the for-profit corporations, the CEOs, the lobbyists, the insiders. They have benefited from an iron ring while we have continued to leave our vulnerable residents and our workers exposed during this pandemic.

You know, Madam Speaker, it's almost too difficult to discuss, to be honest with you, because deaths are happening every single day in the province. I had a long-term-care town hall just last week, and people were almost in tears. I had a worker in long-term care who started by saying that she loved her job, that she loved working with the residents. She's worked for many, many years. She likes knowing their stories, their families. She loved her job, but then she was almost in tears by saying that she feels sick that she can now no longer provide her residents—her people, she actually called them—the care that they deserve, because they're so, so dangerously understaffed. They call it “working short.” They cannot provide the basic services—feeding, bathing, even just spending time with the residents—that they expect in normal circumstances.

Now we see instances where we have ward rooms, where there are still four-bed ward rooms in this province in long-term care. In this budget bill, is there money in there for that? No, it is not there. So really, this budget tells staff and tells residents and their families that help's not coming this year, not in this budget. They were on their own in wave 1, and they're still on their own.

Let me just say, Madam Speaker, that a budget from this government that really continues to underfund the public services that people rely on is not a surprise. The cuts that we saw in 2019 have not essentially been undone in this budget, shockingly. But do you know what I'm not shocked about, Madam Speaker? I'm not shocked about a Ford government omnibus bill that sneaks in another attack on our environmental protections. What would a government bill be without trying to furtively sneak in a schedule that continues to water down the protections that we have in this province for our environment? If we didn't know before, this budget motion continues to be disturbing proof of the reality that Ontarians face with this government: that we have a Premier who is dragging us backwards when it comes to our environment and the climate crisis. This budget motion tells it, but this is absolutely nothing new.

We've seen all of the previous assaults on our environment and our environmental protections. The list goes on

and on. Let's start with tearing out charging stations on 400-series highways. If that wasn't vindictive, I don't know what that was. Ending programs that would encourage purchasing of electric vehicles: That flies in the face of any of the things that the government is saying now. And then, right now, they're tearing down windmills. These cost hundreds of millions of dollars that taxpayers will have to pay for these cancelled contracts.

We know also that the Premier can't take his eye off the greenbelt, but not in a good way. He has tried to pave it over not once, not twice; three times he has tried to pave over the greenbelt, but he has been stopped on that.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the—well, the clock isn't on, but stop the clock.

I recognize the member on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, I just want to talk about motive and relevance here—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry, I am unable to hear a member who is raising a point of order because of the side conversations.

I am sorry. Back to the member.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to raise a point of order on relevance, as well as motive, with the member opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I hear your point of order. I disagree that there was a comment about motive, and I will remind all members that we're debating the budget bill; anything to do with budgetary policy is fair game.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The budgetary motion—I beg your pardon—and therefore it's fair game. I return to the member.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Yes, schedule 6 in the budget motion is a furthering of previous actions on the part of this government to attack our environment. You don't have to take it from me; we had the Auditor General who weighed in on this, who weighed in on the government's past practices. Currently, with schedule 6 before us, we see that this is a pattern from this government.

Schedule 6 essentially is going to take away the ability of conservation authorities across the province to protect our wetlands, to protect our flood plains. That's what they were put in place for. There was a good reason for this, and they are doing a good job to protect not just our wetlands, not just our protected watersheds, but they're also protecting infrastructure. The work that they are doing protects infrastructure in this province.

When I said earlier the government is putting away for a rainy day—let's talk about rainy days in the province of Ontario. We have seen so many extreme weather events that have caused flooding, that have damaged not only people's homes—for people in my riding, in Dundas, Dundas was practically under water downtown at one point because of an extreme weather event.

People understand the role of the wetlands to protect their homes, to protect their streets. That's a natural, natural function of wetlands. If that is eroded, not only do people have to pay the price—people have to pay for flooded basements, being denied on their insurance claims or not being able to get insurance to protect against future events; individual residents have to pay out of their pocket for these flood events, and that is the role of the conservation authority, to prevent that.

Flooding is also a huge cost to taxpayers through infrastructure degradation. We know that we have shoreline degradation. We know that we have culverts that are overrun. We know that in agricultural communities they struggle with their bridges because of water damage. They struggle with roads that have been washed out. These costs are borne by who? These costs are borne by municipalities and municipal taxpayers.

If, as in schedule 6, we diminish the role of conservation authorities to protect our wetlands, to protect our communities and our municipal infrastructure—if we do that, who pays the price? Who pays the price are taxpayers in the province of Ontario.

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Wetlands are important not just as flood plains, and to protect them—and conservation authorities also do that work. But they're really important, that we rely on to protect biodiversity in our community. These are things that people value. The vast majority of people in the province value biodiversity. They value our green spaces. They value our environment. The conservation authorities are on the front line of that. So why does this government have this bill attacking the conservation authorities? That's a question that the government is going to have to answer and hasn't answered adequately at all.

I would say that Environmental Defence has provided a rationale as to why this government, in a budget bill intended to protect people from COVID, instead has taken an opportunity to attack the conservation authorities and our environment. Environmental Defence had this to say: "These provisions, long demanded by developers, will allow the accelerated destruction of wetlands, forests, wildlife habitat and natural spaces. These changes will increase flood risk, and reduce oversight over illegal dumping of toxic soil ... at a time when we need natural spaces to help protect us from the growing effects of climate change."

Madam Speaker, that's what people think. People think that the reason that the government has schedule 6 in here is because they want to ensure that developers have a speedier and direct path to build on our protected spaces and our wetlands. We know that the greenbelt continues to be a prize for this government, and this is just a small step in that direction.

I had a town hall in my riding previously, and it was about the role of water and protecting the water. It was actually called the Water is Life Town Hall. At that, on a Sunday afternoon, there were hundreds of people—200, 300 people came, because they know that this is an important issue. I also want to tell the government that this

move to attack our environment is so unpopular. It's so unpopular.

Who spoke at this town hall was Chief Arvol Looking Horse. Chief Arvol Looking Horse is the spiritual leader for Standing Rock. He's the 19th generation of spiritual leaders in his community, and he was in Hamilton. We were blessed to have him there speaking to all of us. His speech was that Standing Rock is everywhere. By that it means that we all, no matter where we live, have a responsibility to protect our water. Schedule 6 in this bill does exactly the opposite. It endangers our water.

Let me take a few minutes to share some of the wisdom that Chief Arvol Looking Horse shared with us that day in my riding in Hamilton. He said, "Standing Rock is everywhere. Our collective water has been assaulted for many generations to the possible point of no return.

"Our elders foretold of a Black Snake and how the Water of Life—'Mni Woc'oni,' which is our first medicine—would be affected if we did not stop this oncoming disaster. Mni Woc'oni is part of our creation story, and the same story that exists in many creation stories around Mother Earth.

"When we say 'Mni Woc'oni'—Water of Life—people all over the world are now beginning to understand that it is a living spirit: It can heal when you pray with it and die if you do not respect it. We wanted the world to know there have been warnings in our prophecies and, as we see it, those warnings are now taking place. It was said water would be like gold. It was said that our spirit of water would begin to leave us."

Those are words of wisdom from a spiritual leader, but I share with you that the notion that we have an obligation to protect our environment and to protect our water is shared by the vast majority of people in the province of Ontario. This attack in schedule 6 is something that the government will live to bear, to wear, because the sum total of their attack on the environment—they do something small here, and they bury another attack here and there. The sum total of what they're doing is telling on the fact that you don't respect the environment, that you value development over our environment, over our waters and over what people value in terms of our green space and our environmental protections.

But if you don't want to protect the environment because it's something that people value, you need to understand that there is an economic argument as well, and that is another thing that this government has failed to understand. We have clear evidence that conservation authorities also are at the forefront of good, green infrastructure and good, green development. That's what we need in this province. We need innovation. We know that a green recovery could be one of the greatest economic opportunities facing us in the province of Ontario, and by taking away the role and diminishing the role of conservation authorities and prioritizing the interests of developers over people that protect our environment, it's so very short-sighted. It takes us backwards in the role in the province of Ontario that we would like to play in being part of a green strategy, a green revolution that's happening around the world, whether this government wants

to get on board or not. If they want to bury their heads in the sand—if there's any clean sand left for them to bury their heads in—this is happening around the world.

I would like to share with you that Green Infrastructure Ontario has just put forward a report in April 2020 and talked about the 2018 impact of green infrastructure in the province of Ontario. I'll just read some of the highlights: "In 2018, Ontario's green infrastructure sector generated \$8.6 billion in gross output (revenues), \$4.64 billion in direct GDP, and employed 84,400 people. Comparatively, the green infrastructure sector in 2018 was larger than Ontario's wood product manufacturing sector ... the pharmaceutical and medicine manufacturing sector ... and the computer and electronic product manufacturing sector." So this is a significant sector, and conservation authorities innovate and play a role in this.

In Hamilton, the conservation authority has developed at Saltfleet—they're creating a natural diversion in the wetland to prevent flooding. In Hamilton, there's an escarpment. Here's my geography lesson, but the escarpment is the same escarpment which Niagara Falls flows over. It's the Niagara Escarpment. It's a beautiful, bio-diverse area. But when there's flooding, the water runs down the Hamilton escarpment and floods businesses and streets and residences in that neighbourhood of Hamilton. So the conservation authority has spent millions of dollars, funded by RBC—they provided a contribution. Industries understand that this is an important innovation and they would like to see it move forward, because it saves money: It saves insurance costs, it saves municipal infrastructure costs; it saves residence costs. That's the kind of work the conservation authority is doing in Hamilton and doing across Ontario.

But instead of that, the government thinks that they know best and that they will take away the authority of conservation authorities. Further weakening the power of the conservation authorities just risks further flooding, further hazards, further degradation to our protected areas. Really, it's clear evidence of a government that was wanting to politicize development approvals. They just want to be able to fast-track development approvals. It's a government that has shown itself to listen to their insiders and their lobbyists more than they do to the people of the province of Ontario. There's no environmental case for this, and there really is no business case except for the business case, perhaps, of private interests. The only reason I can think of, and that people can think of, is that Ontario is really beholden to private interests, because common sense is being thrown out the window with this move. It makes no sense.

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I would say that the most difficult part of this government trying to pull a fast one in the province of Ontario by slipping this into a budget bill—while people are busy trying to protect themselves from COVID-19, while people are, in good faith, doing what they need to do in the community, while they're looking the other way, the government sticks this in a bill that didn't do anything to help them but certainly is clearly providing favours. The

worst part of this, Madam Speaker, is that it actually contravenes the environmental protections that the people have in the province of Ontario. It goes exactly against the Environmental Bill of Rights that the people of Ontario are proud of and that they use.

You don't need to take my word for it, Madam Speaker. We had an Auditor General's report that was just released yesterday, and the Auditor General slammed this government on their role in the environment. Essentially, this bill does not put notice for people on their Environmental Bill of Rights, and that is precisely, among other things, what the Auditor General has said about this government and this ministry's role when it comes to the environment, conservation and parks. She said they need to lead by example. This is certainly not leading by example.

Again, don't take it from me. Let's hear what the Auditor General has to say about this. The Auditor General said that "the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks needs to do more in leading by example on the environmental front by supporting, promoting and administering the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR Act) in a more fulsome manner." This is what she concluded in the recent report.

"The report found examples by multiple government ministries of non-compliance with their responsibilities under the EBR Act that prevented its effective operation in 2019-20. The report states some ministries are still not posting environmentally significant proposals on the Environmental Registry or giving the public enough time to respond when they do.

"The ministries," and this government, "have an obligation to embrace this legislation and include Ontarians in the decision-making process. The EBR is critical in ensuring meaningful public participation and better decisions affecting the environment."

The government has lost many lawsuits in court. Their cap-and-trade program that they cancelled was ruled by courts to have been illegal—and now in this bill, this government is evading their legal responsibility to provide notice to people about a change that is significantly important to our protected wetlands. It is possible that the government doesn't really understand their role. In fact, that is what, at some point, the Auditor General does say: that the government has failed on their responsibility to educate and inform residents of Ontario about their rights under the Environmental Bill of Rights. So it's quite possible that the reason they failed to inform Ontarians is maybe because they themselves don't understand that they have an obligation. It's clear they don't seem to understand, or if they do understand, they're evading; they're non-compliant in their obligations—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): You're walking a fine line, to the member's earlier point. I've been listening very carefully, and I would say that the member has to be very careful not to suggest that she knows what the government is thinking or their motives. Please continue.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Really, I wouldn't suggest to have any idea what the government's thinking.

But clearly the Auditor General has weighed in on this. This is clearly connected to the bill, to schedule 6 in the bill. It really speaks to ministerial zoning orders that this government is newly liking to take over, evading their responsibility to put things—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm going to encourage the member to stop using that word.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Which word?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm not going to say it. It suggests an untoward motivation.

I'm going to have the member continue.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: "Avoiding" their obligation? One letter—oh, no, more than one. Yes. I know, yes—avoiding their obligation under the Environmental Bill of Rights. These were put in place for a reason. They were put in place for a reason, and so I don't understand why the government does not feel it's their responsibility or their obligation to follow the law in the province of Ontario. This bill is clear evidence of a pattern on the part of this government to use budget bills, omnibus bills and now COVID-19 as cover to attack the environment and to provide opportunities for people who have the ear of this government.

What I would like to say is that not only are people hugely disappointed by what this government has not done in this budget—people are now well into the second wave of this pandemic, and any hope that they had that this government would understand their struggles has clearly, clearly evaporated. What we have now is a budget that in so many ways leaves so many people out.

Small businesses: Let's just talk about the failure of this government to support small businesses. We have heard—time and time again, we said it in the House; in the summer and into the fall, extraordinary amounts of consultations with small businesses. And what did they ask for? They asked for direct funding, direct support. They explained that nine months into the pandemic now, businesses have done everything. They have done their part; they have done everything they can to keep their doors open and to keep people employed. They availed themselves of the loans that were offered by the federal government. They availed themselves of any programs that were available, slim as they were and difficult as they were to access—and confusing. They've done their part. They have used up their lines of credit. They have no cash reserves. Some businesses are using credit cards to fund their programs.

Their concern is making payroll, and that is always a fundamental concern of small business, because small business, as we know, while it is the backbone of the province of Ontario and employs the vast majority of people in the province of Ontario—they operate on such slim margins. During this time, the government has listened, held all kinds of consultations, but people are now disappointed to see that what they have been patiently waiting for is not in this budget at all. It's not here.

Where is the sense of urgency from this government? Businesses are closing up now—closing up now, Madam Speaker, as we speak. We hear a lot about people who grew up in convenience stores, as their families ran a con-

venience store in this province. But the Ontario Convenience Stores Association just shared with us at finance committee last week that five convenience stores a week are closing their doors. Five convenience stores a week: That's a lot.

The thing about convenience stores: As a small business, they are such a vital part of the community. We know convenience stores, they often—they live in the community. We know their family; they know our family. We know the stories of their struggles and we share with them news of our family and what's going on in our community. Five a week are closing up in the province. But you wouldn't know that; you couldn't tell that from this government's budget. There's no support there for them. I mean, there's a \$1,000 grant for PPE, but that falls so short of what people need for PPE in this province. One of the businesses in my riding one time did a thorough cleaning of their business, and that one cleaning alone cost \$4,000.

The government is not providing direct funding to keep these businesses open. Businesses know, in a time of uncertainty, that they can't even weigh the risks. They can't even make a sound business decision as to whether they should close or stay open in this time of uncertainty. The government's own public health advice is essentially, "Everything's open, but stay home." So businesses are really supposed to open at limited capacity, but then the government is saying, "Stay home. Make your own choices." I heard that was an answer, that people have to make their own choices, but so do businesses, small businesses, and their choices are, "If I open, with the cost to open, I'd survive nine months. I can't access any more credit at all." Banks and financial institutions see that we're in a risky time to extend credit. They're rolling back, tightening up the parameters by which they will extend credit or loans.

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Businesses in this uncertain time I'm sure would have appreciated one solid piece of help from this government, to help them make the decision as to whether they should stay closed, open or fold up altogether. As we know, entrepreneurs take on risk, and that's why we love them. Small business owners work their tails off, as the Premier likes to say, day and night. But they need from this government some help. They need from this government some clear direction. They need to hear that this government understands their pleas, and this budget clearly shows that they do not.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to end by saying that we had an opportunity here, with a budget like this, to offer hope to the people of Ontario that the struggle that they have had for nine months was not in vain, that while they struggled, while businesses struggled, they could have expected that help would have been on the way. But it is not here on the way.

The government again started by offering tax deferrals. Other levels of government, the federal level of government, as we know, provided almost all of the support. Governments knew that's what they were provided, and they said, "Well, deferrals and loans still have to come due one day," and so they were concerned about that. And

now, with the tax breaks that the government is offering, what essentially the government is saying to businesses is, “Listen, we’re not going to help you right now, but if you can make it on your own to the end of the year, then we’ll offer you a tax break.” But people needed help now. Businesses needed help now. Education workers needed help now. Long-term-care employees needed help now. We don’t see it in this bill.

I would urge the government to take the time to go back and think about what you heard and take the time to respond to the urgent needs of the people of the province of Ontario. It’s your responsibility, and it’s not too late to put it into this budget.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: It’s my 896th day since my election, and I’m sitting here listening intently to the member opposite’s debate. I can’t help but be reminded of my inaugural speech. In fact, I believe you were in the chair when I said it’s a privilege to serve here, and I still hold that. It’s an honour to stand here every single day to debate and to talk about the important policies that affect Ontarians.

I still understand the opposition’s job is to be critical of the government, but today, I can’t help but be disappointed. In this time of crisis, in this time of great need for the people of this province and around the world, I wish we could hear less rhetoric. I wish we could hear more ideas, solutions. How about some figures from the budget? But we don’t hear that, Speaker.

It’s clear that the member opposite hasn’t read the budget. She asked in her comments to be corrected, Speaker, and I heard dozens of places she can be corrected, but I’m going to pick five. I’m going to pick five corrections to the member’s comments about the budget. Let’s start with, “The government is sitting on billions of dollars.” I believe she referenced \$9.3 billion in unused funds when the people of this province need it. So I’d like to refer the member’s attention and remind her that she was briefed on this in the technical briefing in the budget lock-up on November 5. But I’d like to direct the member’s attention to page 173.

If she could follow along. Table 3.4 on page 173: About two thirds down the page, there are three line items. One reads, “Drawdown of the standard contingency,” “Drawdown of the COVID-19 health contingency,” “Drawdown of the support for people and jobs.”

If we go to page 187—this is where those figures sort of tie in—and we look at the bottom of the page, it says, “Total remaining balances” on the contingency: \$2.6 billion. Speaker, this government has invested the contingency in an adaptive way as we move through this very uncertain situation. The objective evidence is here that we are not sitting on billions.

Another false assertion from the member is that there have been cuts to long-term care. This is nothing but political game-speak, because it is categorically false. Let’s start with page 194. If you go to page 194—please follow along—you see in comment number 9, it says, “For

presentation purposes in the 2020 budget ... COVID-19-related spending has been included separately”—separately—“instead of within the ... Ministry of Long-Term Care.... This change in presentation does not impact ministry allocations.”

This is important, because now, if we go to page 173 and we look at the actual spending—actual spending—in the long-term-care sector, we will see increases every single year, including this fiscal, next fiscal, to every out year for the next four years. Categorically false.

In correction number 3—

Interjections.

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

I would remind the members that while they are welcome to state facts on the record, challenging those of other members or what has been stated is not allowed. So let’s just keep things parliamentary, folks. Thank you.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will refer to page 183, then. Instead of saying it’s categorically false, I will say—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock.

I would ask not to be challenged. I think that’s a fair ask. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Stan Cho: Okay, Madam Speaker.

On page 183, we see that the spending—and this is the third assertion that the member made, that this government is cutting health care. I would like to direct her attention to page 183, to table 3.9, which says that the actual spending in the health care sector for 2019-20 is \$63.7 billion. If we look at the 2020-21 year, we are at \$64.6 billion. If we look at 2021-22, the spending in health care is \$67 billion. If we look at 2022-23, the spending in our health care sector is \$68.5 billion. These are increases every single year.

Let’s also take into consideration the note that I have on page 183, on bullet number 2, which reads, “For presentation purposes in the 2020 budget ... health sector expense of \$3.1 billion,” as it relates to COVID-19, and the health contingency of \$5.3 billion, have not been included in the ministry allocations.

Once again, we have evidence that there is increasing spending in the health care sector separately bucketed from the spending set aside for contingency. Speaker, these are figures. These are figures that we are looking at right now. These are real, tangible figures. They are an absolute proof that we are not cutting in health care; we are not cutting in long-term care.

The other assertion that the member made around hydro was that rebating hydro is the fourth-largest expenditure. Yet again, we have evidence to the contrary. Going back to the line expenditures on pages 172 and 173, we see that is also false. The top four expenditures in this province are health care, education, social services, and the fourth, unfortunately, because the NDP sat and supported the Liberals as they racked up an incredible debt, is interest on the largest subnational debt on the planet. It is not rebates—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What's your deficit this year?

Mr. Stan Cho: Here we have the member from Timmins criticizing what our deficit numbers are. On the one hand, they're saying that we're not spending anything and we're cutting services and funding, and on the other hand, he's claiming that we're spending too much. They're speaking out of both sides of their mouth.

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Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The House will come to order. Stop the clock. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Stan Cho: I withdraw, Speaker.

In yesterday's debate, the member opposite said that these numbers that I had referenced, and I am paraphrasing her debate from yesterday—she had alleged that the government numbers were false, that they were somehow made up in this budget. I'm wondering why on earth she would make that assertion. Who is she calling a liar? Is she calling the officials who worked on this budget—tireless, tireless efforts for months and months, thousands of hard-working, non-partisan officials, public sector union employees who worked on these figures; is she asserting that they are lying?

Speaker, this government has had three clean Auditor General reports in a row, something that the last government cannot claim. These numbers are worked on carefully because we take every fiscal responsibility that we have in this province with the utmost seriousness. That's why I sit here on nearly my 900th day in government, and I find myself quite disappointed in the debate we're having with the members opposite. The job is to criticize, but the job must be to criticize based on fact, and so I've corrected the record of the member five times—five times—based on the figures that have been presented.

I was also very disappointed to hear the member opposite refer to this budget as, I think—yes, I wrote it down—she is saying that it is a lead balloon. She even referenced my family's personal story, which I'm very proud of, Madam Speaker. When you were in the chair and I was talking about my parents and their hard-working little convenience store and talking about saving for a rainy day, I wasn't expecting any member to take my personal story and treat it out of context, saying that I talked about saving for a rainy day. But she didn't listen to the story. What I've said repeatedly is that the rains are here, and the government must spend to protect the health and safety of those we serve. We are absolutely spending to protect that number one priority.

I also want to talk about how the member has unfortunately not mentioned her story. I've heard her talk about how she sat on the board of a credit union. In fact, she stood next to me at receptions advocating and saying that she would continue to promote the credit union sector. We've had some important legislation in this budget around credit unions. We've updated an act that hasn't been updated significantly in nearly three decades.

We all know that credit unions serve very important rural communities throughout this province, provide

amazing services to their members and are going to be a crucial part of our recovery plan when we move out of this pandemic. She has not mentioned those initiatives once—once—and I find that incredibly disappointing. It makes me question, will she be voting against this budget and saying that she doesn't support the credit unions? These credit unions are sophisticated financial institutions—I've heard that out of the member's own mouth—who deserve to have expanded business powers for their very members. I haven't heard a single peep about that.

I find myself continuously hearing the debate from the members opposite, and I cannot help but be disappointed, because we are not debating on the numbers that have been presented. I didn't hear a single figure quoted, not from the pages of this budget. There are 239. It leads me to ask: It's either that the member doesn't understand how these government finances work—and I mean this earnestly. I am happy to sit down with the members or any member opposite and walk through those very figures with them. I am happy to do that. We did it during the budget lock-up and I'm happy to do that again. Or—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I see the member, on a point of order.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I would like the member to return to the budget motion before him rather than impugning my skills and my ability—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I don't agree that he was impugning motive. We are discussing the budget motion. Anything to do with budgetary policy is fair game, as was my ruling earlier when you were speaking.

I return to the member for a very short period of time before members' statements.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you. I realize we're running short on time, Madam Speaker, so I'll conclude my comments by saying, in all earnesty, for any member opposite, I am happy to sit through and talk about this budget based in the facts, because we either need to do that or the members opposite are simply misleading Ontarians, and I—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member will withdraw. You cannot suggest that the—the member will withdraw.

Mr. Stan Cho: Withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, it is indeed time for members' statements.

Debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSEMARY HARDEN

Mr. Joel Harden: Rosemary Harden, my mother, was born on this day in 1949. Speaker, let me tell you about her.

My mom is a community leader through her love of the arts and care for others, which is one of the most powerful combinations I believe human beings can achieve. For decades she has worked tirelessly to create wonder and magic through holiday concerts, community choirs and piano and vocal teaching. Our family house was literally a hub for music education throughout my whole life, and it still is today.

My mom has always been there for others. Growing up, it was common to have people staying in our home, often for weeks at a time, when they needed help. But, Speaker, I'll also tell you this about my mom: She's fierce. Do not stand in the way of her children, grandchildren, students, friends or pets, or expect to hear about it.

She believes queer and transgender people should be faith leaders if that is their calling. She thinks and acts on our obligations as treaty people in Canada. She has supported students in our small hometown of Vankleek Hill who have been organizing Black Lives Matter protests. Yes, Speaker, I know what you're thinking and you're right: The apple in our house doesn't fall very far from the family tree.

By any measure, my mom's life has been an enormous success. It reminds me of three lines from the great American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, who once wrote that to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a little bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

You're a success, mom. Thank you very much.

BRUNO GENDRON

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: It is my honour to rise today to share a true example of the Ontario spirit. Ottawa police detective constable Bruno Gendron, who also spent 17 years as a paramedic, tragically passed away recently after a cardiac issue. His funeral is being held today.

This news was especially devastating as he had championed the campaign to equip Ottawa police with automated external defibrillators, saving a number of lives.

His police and paramedic colleagues have come up with a touching tribute to turn this negative into a positive and honour his legacy. They've started a memorial "pup raiser" to cover the cost of training certified service dogs to help children with autism, veterans, first responders with PTSD and in some cases victims and staff at police stations or courthouses. The training will be done by National Service Dogs in Cambridge, who have previously donated a facility dog named Canine West to the Ottawa police. One colleague said of this initiative, "We see it as a way to empower others through helping paws."

After meeting their goal of sponsoring one puppy, a corporate donor agreed to sponsor another and told them to keep going. This fundraiser will continue until December 8. Thank you to Detective Constable Gendron for your many years of service in our region. My condolences to your family and friends. Thank you to his

colleagues for honouring his legacy through this fantastic initiative.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Students who enter post-secondary education do so to better themselves, to build a life and a future. Part of that equation is meaningful employment.

I rise today to tell our House about a commitment to students, employers and our community. I recently met with principal Dave Malloy and dean Joe Henry from King's University College in my riding. They just launched the King's Promise. They re-envisioned post-secondary education, emphasizing career building from first year, starting in 2021, so that students will better understand their talents and competencies while actively engaged in understanding how their gifts, talents and training translate into the world of work.

King's gathered feedback from students and partnered with the London Economic Development Corp. to design their innovative program, where students will undertake co-curricular career development activities each year while developing their portfolio.

What sets this program apart is the commitment. King's guarantee to students ensures those who do not gain employment six months after graduation will receive additional undergraduate courses and career preparation for up to one year post-graduation, free of charge. That's a solid pledge, a concrete promise to students, their families and our community.

1020

I look forward to the stories of success and accomplishment from the signature learning experience, this unique tailored approach to student success before and after graduation.

Well done, King's University College.

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Ms. Jane McKenna: More than 20 years ago, the transgender community came together to advocate for a national day to commemorate and mourn those who have lost their lives as a result of transphobic violence. To this day, transgender and gender-diverse people are still subjected to violence and prejudice because of their gender identity and expression. More devastating still, every year, many will lose their lives due to anti-trans prejudice worldwide.

Ontario's freedom and tolerance is a beacon to the world. Our diversity is a strength and provides a foundation of equality and acceptance for all. Bigotry and hatred have no place our province.

On November 20, the Trans Day of Remembrance, we reflect on and mourn deeply those lives that have been cut short. This year, we cannot do a flag-raising, but it is still important to remember the flag, which symbolizes awareness and respect.

To the trans community, their families and loved ones: Our government mourns with you. We say to all Ontarians, let's continue to work together to ensure that everyone can feel proud of who they are, be free to express themselves and safe to live their lives. Today and every day, we must remember and work to build a society where we treat one another with respect, regardless of gender expression and identity, and where hate has no place.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Every now and again, all of us meet with that special person, that one who lights a flame into your heart and your gut and makes you do the job that we do that we all love in this House.

I met Kennedy Quade. She's a beautiful young lady from Manitowadge. She prepared this petition. She collected almost 1,500 signatures. It reads, "Manitowadge 614 winter maintenance. To ensure that our highway is properly plowed, salted, and sanded, I am requesting on behalf of the community of Manitowadge—full time winter road care."

The reason why she did this is her locker buddy, who was Kobe Rochon—they used to play chess, Battleship. They used to listen to Ozzy Osbourne while they were in high school, and they were great locker buddies. They both grew up. In adulthood, they become teachers. They started teaching in Pic Mobert First Nation, the community just down the highway. Each and every day, they're required to take that highway, along with 50% of this community who have to take this highway. That one morning, in a matter of 30 seconds, an accident happened. Kobe passed away. It was directly related to the conditions of this road.

I've taken up this issue with the previous government. I've taken up this issue with this government. The winter road service agreements in northern Ontario are not working. People are dying on those roads, and we need to change that. It needs to be addressed. The biggest problem for this community is that the plow has been taken out of the community and assigned to Marathon. We need to fix that. Everybody knows that. Let's fix it.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm honoured to rise to speak on behalf of my constituents of Scarborough–Guildwood who have expressed serious concern to me about the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act in schedule 6 of Bill 229. One constituent wrote, "It's very frustrating to see the Premier waging a war on the organizations that were set up to protect our environment while COVID-19 is raging."

This government is continuing on its path of weakening environmental protections by opening the door for the minister to override decisions taken by conservation authorities, all under the cover of the COVID pandemic.

This government's track record on environmental protection is shameful. The Auditor General has just confirmed this. They've cancelled rebates for electric vehicles

and moved to open up our natural green spaces and wetlands for development. Some 95% of Ontarians live in watershed communities like Scarborough–Guildwood, which require careful and considerate environmental protection and management.

"Without these powers and the same powers as the provincial officers, TRCA is unable to effectively stop significant threats and impacts to environmentally sensitive areas and hazardous lands (e.g., flood plains), such as illegal large-scale fill operations." This is a quote from the TRCA.

This government is continuing on its path of weakening environmental protections by opening the door for the minister to override these important decisions taken by our conservation authorities for political reasons, and it must stop.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Last week, the Oakville Community Foundation released its Oakville Resiliency Report. This report shared the impact of COVID-19 on Oakville and outlined the great work that charities in Oakville do to better our community.

One of the lessons of COVID is how important it is for all levels of government, for charities and for businesses to work together in times of crisis. During the lockdown, the Oakville Community Foundation began distributing over \$625,000 to front-line charities through the Oakville Resiliency Fund. These funds were raised through donations from community members and played a major role in supporting vulnerable individuals, families and seniors and the organizations that help them. Some of the organizations who benefited from this funding included the Canadian Caribbean Association, Halton Women's Place and the Kerr Street Mission.

Our government knows how important it is to support municipal programs and social services, which is why we are investing \$200 million in social services relief funding to help and protect our province's most vulnerable people. This funding helps support shelters, food banks, emergency services, charities and non-profits, while also providing emergency assistance to families and individuals who didn't qualify for federal emergency benefits.

Thank you to the Oakville Community Foundation for supporting our community during this unprecedented crisis.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: COVID-19 is spreading throughout northern Ontario. Over the summer and into the fall, cases remained extremely low, but that's quickly changing. Almost overnight in Thunder Bay, we have over 50 cases, with one person in the hospital and an outbreak in a long-term-care home. Our local public health units and hospitals in Thunder Bay have done an excellent job containing the virus—but there is only so much they can do.

Frankly, this government needs to step up. The province needs to provide sufficient resources for contact tracing, rapid testing, quarantining—and also give clear instructions based on public health recommendations. We also need this government to focus more on northern Ontario, where we have far less health resources than the south. I hear about this from constituents calling and emailing my office every single day.

The province must lead—and not leave it up to local officials to figure things out the best they can, with insufficient resources. This is not a good strategy, especially as cases are rising. We can and must do better for the north, for Thunder Bay and Atikokan, and for all of us across this province. This government must take active steps to contain and end the COVID crisis.

EVENTS IN RICHMOND HILL

Mrs. Daisy Wai: COVID-19 has created many challenges in our economy and our daily lives, but when handled with a positive attitude and creativity, we can overcome it.

The city of Richmond Hill organized two successful events last week, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

The Richmond Hill Entrepreneurship Finance Conference was held last Wednesday, delivered virtually by the Richmond Hill Small Business Enterprise Centre. They connected entrepreneurs with the sources of capital available through the federal and provincial governments, as well as banks, investors and other financial institutions. BDC also gave a good analysis of our economic outlook and gave professional advice. They stressed on the increase of online sales and encouraged everyone to take advantage of technology. These are good pointers for our businesses.

1030

Last Saturday, we had our first Santa's Workshop Drive-Thru that replaced the Santa Claus parade. Not only was it safe, with proper social distancing, families with children and seniors were warm inside their car, driving through, waving and singing carols. Yes, if we keep a positive attitude, using creativity and innovation, we will come out of this pandemic stronger and better.

EVENTS IN SCARBOROUGH–ROUGE PARK

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: While we live during this pandemic, many of the things we often take for granted are suddenly things we no longer can do. This is especially hard for children and youth.

This incredible constituent of mine, D'Arcy, discovered this when her son was about to celebrate his birthday, but could not have a traditional party with friends and family. D'Arcy turned this predicament into something that now spreads joy to children all over the West Rouge neighbourhood. She organized a car parade to celebrate her son's birthday, and continues that practice across her community. The West Rouge drive-by birthday parade

now organizes celebrations for children every weekend, with up to 50 cars participating, rain or shine. On top of that, D'Arcy and her team also organized car parades over the summer for graduating students and supporting those in long-term-care homes. They truly embody the Ontario spirit that we have seen across Ontario in this challenging time.

Thank you, D'Arcy, and everyone that participated in these car parades. Our community is truly a better place because of all of you.

ALBERT BESTEMAN AND FRANK FILICE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I am very pleased to report to the House that today we have some special guests, and I draw the members' attention to the Speaker's gallery.

We are being kept safe and secure today, in part, by our security officer, Albert Besteman. Many of you, I'm sure, will know Albert very well. After working here for more than 32 years, today is Albert's last day before he starts his retirement. In 1988, when Albert began his career here, he worked for the Ontario Government Protective Service, which provided security to the Legislative Assembly at the time. In 1997, the Legislative Security Service was created, and Albert transferred so he could continue working at the Legislative Assembly. He has been a dedicated, courteous professional throughout his tenure.

We will miss you, Albert. On behalf of all the members of the assembly, we thank you for your service here and we wish you all the very best in your well-deserved retirement.

Also in the Speaker's gallery is a very familiar face to all of us, Frank Filice. Frank started his employment with the Legislative Assembly on April 6, 1975, and served as the barber for 33 years full-time, but he wasn't quite ready for retirement, as he had planned, and the rumour has it that it was because his Toronto Maple Leafs were not doing very well at the time and he needed a distraction and had to come back. So he returned on a contract to work part-time, two days a week, until March of this year—45 years in total at the assembly.

Earlier this year, when many of our functions had to be suspended due to COVID-19 health restrictions, Frank decided to retire again. He has been quoted in an issue of the assembly staff newsletter, the Green Gargoyle, as saying, "What is said in the barber's chair stays in the barber's chair." And I am sure he's heard it all—some truths, some embellishments, but this being a Parliament never, ever a lie. He has served in the assembly during the tenure of nine Premiers and way too many members of provincial Parliament to count.

Frank, thank you for your service to the assembly, and enjoy your retirement for this second time.

Applause.

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

COVID-19 FATALITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Point of order.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment of silence to honour the lives lost to COVID-19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment's silence to honour the people who have lost their lives as a result of COVID-19. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my first question this morning is to the Premier.

This morning, the head of Ontario's hospital association reports that, "As of this morning there are now 150 patients in ICU with COVID-19 related conditions. All Ontario regions reporting increases in admissions not only GTA and central."

Speaker, 150 patients in ICU had been the threshold that would necessitate the cancellations of surgeries and other life-saving procedures in our hospitals.

The Premier has announced that he plans to have a plan tomorrow for the surging second wave of COVID-19. But why has the government yet again waited until this crisis point before taking action?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we have been taking action since this pandemic began. Last year we increased the capacity of hospitals. We added to them a 5.5% increase, the largest increase they've had in over a decade. We also added \$341 million earlier this year, to add 500 acute-care beds and 100 critical care beds. We've added another 139 more critical care beds and 1,349 beds, and most recently spent another \$116 million to create another 700-plus beds. We've added over 3,130 beds since the beginning of this pandemic.

We're prepared to do more and expand more spaces if we need to, because we know that it's very important to continue to accept the COVID-19 patients. But we also want to keep going with the surgeries and procedures that were postponed during wave 1.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier wants to blame someone for the devastation that has been caused by COVID-19. He does that every day. He should start by

looking in the mirror and taking some responsibility himself. It was the Ford government that refused to ramp up testing capacity and tracing through the summer. It was the Ford government that not only reduced public health measures as cases started to spike, but claimed their reckless plan was actually backed by experts, who really opposed it.

Is the Premier prepared to take any responsibility for the government's confused, erratic, delayed and underfunded response?

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

Hon. Doug Ford: I've been in front of the people of Ontario every single day since this pandemic—numerous occasions. I take full responsibility for anything that goes on with COVID-19.

I just love the question from the Leader of the Opposition.

As of today, we have tested 5,737,000 people. That's more than all the provinces combined. We never took the foot off the pedal. As a matter of fact, we've increased it to 50,000 tests a day. That's our capacity right now. We're going to continue testing. We have about 40% of the population, but again, we're well over 50% of the testing.

1040

I give all the credit to the folks out there, be it public health or Matt Anderson at Ontario Health. They're doing an incredible job. We're going to continue ramping up. Our government is investing \$1.376 billion to enhance and expand efforts to test, trace and isolate new cases of COVID-19. But thank you for the compliment, Leader of the Opposition.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families have risen to the occasion in this pandemic. They're living with daily health risks, lockdowns and economic uncertainty, and they're ready to do whatever it takes to crush this virus. But they need a government that works with them, steps up with supports and tells them the truth about expert advice, not a Premier who ignores expert advice, shouts at and blames Ontario in daily campaign events and only acts when things reach a crisis point.

Will the Premier commit today to lifting the gag order on experts from the health sector, expert health advisers, and let the public of Ontario know exactly what was recommended by them, and where the Premier is refusing to follow expert advice?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I have never once, ever, from the beginning of this pandemic, disagreed with Dr. Williams or our health team. As a matter of fact, to the contrary, every measure that he's put forward we've implemented.

On the testing, we've received about 98,000 ID NOW tests from Ottawa and we're expecting another shipment very soon. We also have the Panbio tests; we have 70,000 tests that we're implementing and we're rolling out as we speak right now into the most vulnerable areas: long-term care, the health sector and our First Nations communities.

We're going to continue rolling out these tests and continue being a leader in the country when it comes to testing and tracing.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier.

The Premier has indicated that new COVID-19 measures will be announced tomorrow, weeks after New Democrats, front-line doctors and health experts first called for them. If new measures are going to be effective, small businesses will need concrete, direct financial support now to pay the rent and to protect their staff. A tax break next year won't make a difference if you close next week.

Will the Premier be announcing new business supports tomorrow to ensure that businesses can stay afloat while government plays catch-up with the second wave?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister responsible for Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: This government, since the start of this pandemic, has been committed to supporting small businesses. That's why we introduced new support programs, \$300 million, for businesses in the areas of Peel, York and Toronto that have been impacted by these new measures. They support those with property tax payments, energy payments, but on top of that, in the piece of legislation, the budget that we've put forward, we've introduced record supports to support them in the future to help them recover, to get back on their feet. Whether it's \$1.3 billion in reductions to hydro rates, this government will always remain committed to supporting small businesses, whether it's before the pandemic, during the pandemic or in their recovery.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's more clear than ever that essential workers are particularly vulnerable in the second wave. The people who go to work every day in communities like Scarborough and Brampton keep Ontario running so that others can stay home. They deserve our thanks and, more importantly, they deserve protection on the job.

Paid sick leave would make it possible to actually miss work to get tested and quarantine, if necessary. Will the Premier be announcing paid sick leave tomorrow to ensure that working people can afford to protect themselves and all of us if they fear they have become infected with COVID-19?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To respond? The member for Burlington, the parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much for the question. Just to recap, on July 16, Premier Ford joined with the federal government in the historic \$19-billion Safe Restart Agreement. The deal includes \$1.1 billion, which includes 10 paid sick days.

Unlike our government, which continued to work through COVID-19 for the people of Ontario, the federal

government prorogued the House. I clearly understand your frustration as we have been waiting for months. It's still in the Senate. We will keep you posted when we finally get an answer.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So far, not so very good: zero for small business, zero for essential workers.

I'm going to try again: Any measures that are announced tomorrow must address the unfolding crisis that's happening yet again in long-term care. Another 17 people lost their lives just yesterday, people that we mourned just a minute ago with our unanimous consent motion. While the Minister of Long-Term Care desperately denies that there's a crisis in these homes, staff on the front line report clearly that, once again, exhausted co-workers are forced to do the work of at least two people and sometimes more.

To quote one PSW from a COVID-ravaged facility in Scarborough, "They go on camera every day and it's lies, lies, lies." That's what she said. Will the Premier be announcing tomorrow an immediate—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the—

Hon. Steve Clark: Come on, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I don't need any assistance with this. Thank you very much.

I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

As you can see, PSWs are extremely frustrated. They're worried sick about themselves, the people they take care of and their co-workers. So will the Premier be announcing tomorrow an immediate PSW recruitment plan—something that should have happened in the summer—with increased wages and increased training to actually start addressing the staffing crisis that they have ignored for months and months and months?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Indeed, we have been working on the staffing strategy ever since the Ministry of Long-Term Care was created as a stand-alone ministry to demonstrate our government's commitment to staffing, whether it was Justice Gillese's recommendations, whether it was our expert panel that reported, whether it is getting the support that is required for the recruitment of PSWs, the return of service.

The funding for return of service for our PSWs is \$10.3 million; the training funds for PSWs, \$14 million; \$461 million to increase PSW wages by \$3 an hour, and that's not including the pandemic pay that preceded that; \$405 million to help with operating and staffing and PPE issues in long-term care. That was part of a \$540-million package added to the \$461 million, added to the \$243 million. We have been taking steps this whole time, not only addressing the long-standing issues left behind by the previous government, but taking urgent actions—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Marit Stiles: Good morning. This question is for the Premier.

On November 3, Ontario schools were reporting about 2,300 cumulative cases of COVID-19. Just over two weeks later, and those numbers are up to 3,626 and growing by about 100 new cases a day.

On Tuesday, the minister signalled that closures might be coming here as well, but yesterday he announced they would remain open, but without any additional support for our students. With the recent flip-flop—up, down, sideways—on regional restrictions, parents and education workers are watching very closely. They want to know that all decisions about schools are being driven by public health advice, not political considerations.

My question to the Premier is this: What changed between Tuesday and Wednesday, and was this decision made by Dr. Williams or Dr. Ford?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, the decision point and the context of looking around the holidays to make sure our kids remain safe, that decision was made on the advice exclusively of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the public health tables. That is a matter of fact.

In the context of what we're doing in this province and the context of our schools, we have put in place a plan, fully supported by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, fully funded by our province and evidence-informed. The evidence that underpins our plan demonstrates it's keeping kids safe: the fact that 99% of kids are COVID-free, the fact that 99.5% of staff are COVID-free, the fact that 85% of schools have never had a COVID case. It underscores that we're doing something right in this province, led by our teachers, by the sacrifice of our parents and by our public health leaders, and we are proud of each and every one of them.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: While the minister tries to justify his government's underfunding with these cold stats, I want him to remember that these numbers are people. Each worker or student case impacts a whole family, a whole school, a whole community. No case of illness or death is acceptable.

Speaker, New York City just closed its schools, citing a positivity rate of 3% in the community as the threshold for risk. Toronto's positivity rate is double that. We need our schools here to stay open, but we need them to stay safely open. Classes are still being combined into larger ones. Itinerant teachers are still moving between as many as eight schools. New custodians are still unaccounted for.

1050

In the interest of complete transparency, will the Premier make public the advice he has received from Dr. Williams and the ministry's new in-house adviser?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Dr. Williams and the command table are accessible to the public multiple times a week, and I look forward to that question being posed to him, because he will affirm, as he advised myself and members of cabinet, that our plan in this province stands alone as one that is keeping kids safe. That is the position of Dr. Williams, Dr. de Villa, Dr. Dubey, Dr. Silverman, Dr. Chagla, Dr. Yaffe, and the list goes on, because there is a consensus in this province.

The plan we have unveiled, informed by the best medical science in Canada, is keeping students safe. Those data points instill confidence in parents, that 99.95% of students are COVID-free. They may be inconvenient facts for you, member, but they provide confidence to people on the front lines, sending their kids every day to school. We are confident in our teachers. We are confident in our nurses, in our doctors and in everyone working together to reduce the risk of community transmission in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again, I will remind all members to make their comments through the chair.

The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: My question is to the Premier. Last year, before the onset of COVID-19, our government began an ambitious project to significantly improve the care Ontarians receive and finally put an end to the hallway health care crisis in our province. We moved quickly to set up the first group of Ontario health teams. It was a new concept of integrated care, designed in consultation with the health care sector. I was proud to join the Minister of Health in announcing the Ottawa health team.

When the pandemic hit, this new model became all the more important. In fact, we are already seeing the results from these early initiatives. These health teams are working together to combat outbreaks in their community and coordinate support across long-term-care homes, hospitals, family doctors' offices and home care partners.

Can the Premier please share with my constituents further information about the Ontario health teams and the support our government is providing during this crucial time?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Ottawa West—Nepean for the great question and the great work he's doing up there.

I'm proud to announce we're investing to support 13 more Ontario health teams across the province. That brings the total to 42 health teams right across our province, everywhere from Toronto to Rainy River, that people can rely on—24/7 care, around the clock. When all these teams are fully up and running, that's 86% of Ontarians will be covered—better and connected care. We've added a \$2.4-million investment that will support these teams in the response to COVID-19, help maintain hospital capacity through the programs and link hospital, primary care, home and community care, long-term-care homes and other congregate settings and services.

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

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you for that response, Premier. I know that my constituents are incredibly excited about the future plans for Ontario health teams. Through these organizations, patients will experience easier transitions from one provider to another, including, for example, between hospitals, home care providers or long-term-care homes, with one patient story, one patient record and one care plan.

Premier, I know that a robust testing infrastructure is key to our province's strength in addressing the second wave of COVID-19. Our government and yourself in particular continue to be champions for our front-line health care workers in hospitals and long-term-care facilities. This has included strong advocacy on rapid testing systems to identify and stop COVID from spreading.

Could the Premier please elaborate further about the status of rapid-testing products from the federal government for all Ontarians?

Hon. Doug Ford: I thank the member for the question. Yes, we're number one in the country when it comes to testing, bar none, over anyone. I'm so proud of that. Again, I want to congratulate the people out there doing the testing.

As I said earlier, we received 98,000 ID NOW tests that are out the door and going to long-term-care homes, health care workers, northern remote areas and First Nations communities.

We have also received approximately 70,000 Panbio tests which are going out the door. Again, I want to thank the federal government, but we need more of these tests. We're delivering to areas, as I mentioned, all over the province, putting a priority with health teams. That's the number one priority. We're also planning on sending these rapid tests to areas that don't get the testing turnaround as quickly as we'd like to see.

This is a game changer, and we're going to continue changing the game here.

COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: My question is to the Premier. Each day brings more and more serious questions about this government's decision to give the Premier's long-time ally and unapologetic bigot Charles McVety the right to grant university degrees at his Canada Christian College.

During the 2018 PC Party leadership race, the Premier used Mr. McVety's college boardrooms to get people to vote for him. Now, this isn't just a sign of the cozy relationship between the Premier and Mr. McVety; it's a violation of elections law and charitable tax law.

Can the Premier explain why the supposedly non-partisan charity was using space to help him become the PC leader?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and again address an issue that is of significant importance. And do you know what that issue is, Mr. Speaker? It's what our job as legislators is. It's to be procedurally fair. It's to create processes that we can all respect. That is the job we have as legislators. It's a job we take very, very seriously.

The members opposite continually heckle and hiss and play politics with an issue of grave importance.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, my gosh. Did you just say that?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Ross Romano: I can listen to the member from Ottawa South and his continual, constant lack of understanding of what the Charter of Rights and Freedoms stands for. It stands for something extremely important, very important, and I would love to continue to explain it. I will continue to explain it to the members opposite, because what we believe in is procedural fairness. It is what is guaranteed in our laws in this province. It is what makes us a democratic and free society, and we'll continue to fight for our democracy.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Back to the Premier. Our job in this House is to not legislate hate. That is our job in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I have written to—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Mr. Speaker, I have written to Elections Ontario to investigate why the Premier's financial returns have no payments to Mr. McVety's college, and I've asked Revenue Canada to review why Charles McVety's college, a registered charity, didn't report this political activity.

The Premier can't ignore Mr. Charles McVety's hateful rhetoric, and he can't sweep this scandal under the rug. While these investigations take place, will the Premier do the right thing, pull schedule 2 from Bill 213, which gives Charles McVety an even bigger platform to spew his bigotry and hate, and assist Elections Ontario with any investigation that they may decide to launch?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Colleges and Universities to respond.

Hon. Ross Romano: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I won't speak to the status of investigations because it's inappropriate to interfere with processes. That's what we've continually referred to time and time again.

Let's see if I can—in the most respectful way possible to this House and to everybody who has stood before us in this House: Any individual, any institution is allowed to apply for a licence or a designation of this nature. Anyone can. They apply directly to an independent body. That independent body is called PEQAB. We've taken that independent process—and we've also indicated that once

that process is complete, they would therefore have the benefit of legislation to be proclaimed into force if an independent process is completed.

That is what we've created, Mr. Speaker: an independent process that is accountable and a transparent process in this House, open to everybody to debate.

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COLLEGE STANDARDS AND ACCREDITATION

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: My question is for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, this past Tuesday, my colleague from Ottawa South asked the Premier to stand in this House to disavow the vile Islamophobic opinions and remarks of Charles McVety. The Premier did not do that. Instead, the Premier gave an answer that was the equivalent of, "Some of my best friends are Muslims."

Whether the Premier behaves decently to an individual Muslim man or woman, whether he is polite to individual lesbian, gay, trans or queer individuals is irrelevant. If the Premier continues to support the bigotry of Charles McVety, then his kind words about one Muslim, one lesbian, one queer person ring hollow. The Premier's actions speak much louder than those words. His actions signal bigotry, hatred and rejection of every Muslim child, every Muslim family and every LGBTQ+ person in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the member.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No. The member must take her seat, and she must withdraw that unparliamentary attack.

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: Withdraw.

Will the government withdraw schedule 2 from Bill 213 and send a message of inclusion?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Colleges and Universities to reply.

Hon. Ross Romano: Just last week, I responded to the member opposite, and we discussed the importance of independent processes. We discussed the importance of not interfering with processes—much like the member presided over a government who did on a regular and consistent basis. There were numerous scandals. I can get into those in the supplemental.

What I really want to focus on here is the fact that we have continually indicated that there is absolutely no place in the province of Ontario for Islamophobia, homophobia, hatred, racism, discrimination of any kind.

But it's imperative that, as leaders, we stand by the rule of law, the rules that require fairness, the rules that require procedural safeguards in every process. You cannot interfere with any individual putting forward an application. It goes to an independent body, it's reviewed, and it's in a transparent process here in this House.

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

Ms. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said in this House a number of times, I am not talking about the PEQAB process. I am talking about the legislation that has been brought in by this government that, in fact, protects a bigot. Charles McVety is a homophobe, a transphobe and an Islamophobe. That is what I'm talking about. I know that the minister is going to continue to hide behind the PEQAB process, but that is beside the point, and he knows it.

I had a chance to talk with some members of the executive of the College Student Alliance yesterday, and they're worried about a whole lot of things. They're worried about cuts to OSAP. They're worried about mental health in their colleges. But they also spontaneously raised the issue of Charles McVety. They are worried about the message that this government is sending to the LGBTQ+ students on their campuses. These are young people who are in an extremely stressful educational environment right now.

Will the government remove schedule 2 from Bill 213 and send a message of inclusion to those students and every child in this province?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Colleges and Universities to respond.

Hon. Ross Romano: Mr. Speaker, I have so much respect for the member opposite. All of the things that she's accomplished in her profession—it's outstanding. I was there when her portrait was unveiled, as the first female Premier in Ontario. I remember that she was an educator herself before stepping into the political arena.

I'm going to ask that the member opposite please listen—as she did many times as an instructor and a teacher herself—to what we're trying to say here. Please don't play games with the politics. Please listen to what we continually say.

The PEQAB process is independent. The PEQAB process is part of the legislation. The legislation is simply there to provide an open forum for us to be able to demonstrate that if the independent process is done, then it would be proclaimed into force. It is independent. It is accountable. It is transparent.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Jim McDonell: The winter season poses challenges to Ontario drivers in every corner of the province. Safe winter driving has been discussed in this Legislature many times. I understand the members of the official opposition have raised the issue in the past, particularly on behalf of northern Ontarians, who face the most challenging and harshest winter conditions. Road safety is indeed a priority for every member of this House, and there's always more work to do to ensure that Ontario roads remain among the safest in the world.

Speaker, can this minister share the latest news on how we're supporting Ontario drivers during this winter season?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for the question.

I'm pleased to confirm that the enhanced Ontario 511 app is available in both the iOS App Store and the Google Play store for all Ontarians to download on their mobile devices. This updated, enhanced Ontario 511 app, which is available in both French and English, will allow drivers to check their road conditions, Environment Canada weather warnings—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's no cell service up north.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins: Come to order. You can't shout across the floor like that.

I apologize to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you, Speaker—track the location of snowplows and find rest stops along our provincial highways. We understand the responsibility to support Ontario drivers during the winter season. With the launch of the 511 app winter updates, our government is making it easier for drivers to plan ahead before they get behind the wheel.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Thank you to the minister for her response. This is both exciting and relieving news to hear, as I know it will help alleviate many winter driving stresses. We need to make sure that drivers have the right information at the right time. These updates to the 511 app are the means to do just that, so could the minister share more about the resource that drivers now have at their fingertips?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: We brought in the Ontario 511 app at the beginning of the pandemic to help truckers, and today we're announcing that we're launching it for all drivers across Ontario because it has been such a success and help to Ontario truck drivers. The Ontario 511 app includes an easy-to-use map view and a drive mode that provides hands-free audio alerts for safe driving. It also provides images from over 600 cameras and includes up-to-date highway information on construction, collisions and road closures.

Speaker, I want to remind Ontarians that the 511 website is also a resource for drivers to learn more about road and weather conditions in real time.

We all have a part to play in keeping Ontario roads safe, and I'm confident that this news will significantly help Ontarians navigate safely during the wintertime. I want to encourage all drivers to take advantage of these resources and to plan ahead, and don't forget to put your winter tires on.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Mr. Ian Arthur: Speaker, through you, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Changes in Bill 229 rewrite the rules for conservation agencies that protect Ontario's watersheds and allow developers to skip checks and balances, undermining conservation authorities and recklessly endangering communities. The scope and powers of conservation authorities will be limited to the

point that no meaningful integrated watershed management will be possible.

Schedule 6 is clouded with uncertainty, as is much of the detail, particularly in relation to setting out the scope of programs and services. Standards and requirements and other important matters will be left up to future regulatory development.

The opposition to this lobby-driven schedule is coming from every corner of Ontario. Among many others, the mayors of Halton joined together in a letter that asked the government to stand the schedule down. Can the minister explain how this government's approach to locally driven cost-effective conservation efforts is not a failure in protecting our parks, our wetlands and our communities?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks very much for that question. I'm glad it was asked, because I can dispel some of the myths that the member opposite was spreading in this Legislature. There are no checks or balances that will be overlooked during the changes of the legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the minister to withdraw the unparliamentary comment—

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Okay. I'll withdraw. Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): —and conclude his answer.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Listen, the legislation does not change any sorts of checks and balances that are in the system. In fact, it's strengthening the role of the conservation authorities, to ensure that they're able to focus in on their core mandate services while including accountability and transparency to the municipalities.

We put in a provision of an appeal. I don't know if the members opposite don't believe in an appeal process in this province, but we are going to go to the LPAT to ensure that decisions may be appealed, like every other government agency in this province has.

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Again, Mr. Speaker, this will ensure that transparency and accountability. I'm not sure what the member opposite has against having accountability and transparency between municipalities and conservation authorities.

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

Mr. Ian Arthur: It's actually municipalities themselves that are most opposed to this. As I stated in the first question, they have been voicing their displeasure with this schedule for weeks now. But I'm really not surprised by the answer from the minister, because, frankly, this schedule speaks to a pattern of dislike for local governance—a pattern that dismisses environmental protections and the well-being of future generations.

But don't take my word for it. Yesterday the Auditor General released a scathing report detailing the government's environmental failures. Note that the AG provides value-for-money reports, and it still was damning, pointing to systematic non-compliance by ministries. The government's poor view of the environment and Ontario's bill of rights is on every single page. Ministries haven't

collected the data needed to track progress. The government will miss its own weakened GHG targets.

My question is quite simple, Speaker: How is this minister going to explain to the next generation his role in the development of legislation that undermined their safety and damaged the world that they're going to inherit?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: There was a lot in that question, but I'm going to address another issue the member mentioned, about local autonomy and respect. This government is probably the strongest government to return local autonomy to municipalities throughout this province. The former Liberal Party, supported by the NDP, took away the rights of municipalities in siting green energy projects. We returned that, Mr. Speaker. We're giving municipalities the right to deny landfills built in their locations if they do see it, Mr. Speaker. We've given the rights to municipalities to turn down permits to take water going forward.

Again, the NDP were against each and every single movement we've done to give autonomy to municipalities, so don't lecture me on the local economies of municipalities. This government is working with municipalities and giving them the autonomy they do deserve in order to run their—

Interjections.

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

The next question? The member for Ottawa South.

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Yes, don't lump us all together, please.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, pediatricians raised concerns this September about the increased difficulty for children under five getting their flu shots this year. It's particularly difficult because doctors' offices are closing and public health units are stretched and not able to do what they've done in previous years, so it's a particular challenge for two-to-five-year-olds.

There is a simple solution to this, though: The Ontario College of Pharmacists has proposed a regulation change to allow pharmacists to vaccinate two-to-five-year-olds, and Ontario's pharmacists are ready and willing to do this. So, Speaker, through you: Can the minister commit today to making this regulation change and allowing pharmacists to vaccinate two-to-five-year-old children?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. I know this has been an issue of concern to you.

But first, I would like to advise that this has been the most successful flu campaign in Ontario's history. Long before we knew that COVID was on its way to us, we ordered over 5.5 million doses; 5.2 million have already been distributed. Usually by this time, by about mid-November, about 500,000 flu shots have been administered by pharmacies; this year, they have administered 1.4

million doses. So we are very pleased about that, and I want to thank all Ontarians who have stepped forward. We are receiving another 142,000 doses of the vaccine from Sanofi.

However, I do recognize the concern with respect to children. Up until this point, children age two to five have only been able to receive flu shots through their primary care offices. I will have more to say in my supplemental on your specific issue.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Well, I look forward to the supplemental. I'm in suspense right now whether it's yes or no. But I do want to say that this is important, because we need to do this right now for the two-to-five-year-olds and all those families. That's why I'm asking you to do this.

But as my colleague from Orléans said the other day, we're going to go into another set of vaccinations in the next year and Ontarians need to have confidence that we'll be able to move quickly and nimbly to do the things we need to do—like change regulations, adapt—to be able to make sure we deliver that vaccine to everybody as quickly and as safely as possible.

So I'll just ask my question again: Minister, can you commit today to making sure that this regulation change happens so that two- to five-year-olds will be able to have their vaccinations at Ontario's pharmacies?

Hon. Christine Elliott: What I can say is that I know in the past, any vaccines were given by primary care rather than in pharmacies because there was some concern about very young children being vaccinated by the pharmacists, that they were concerned about that themselves. I understand that the situation has changed now, that the college of pharmacists and pharmacists in general would be very pleased to, with perhaps some additional training, be able to administer the flu vaccine and, hopefully, the COVID vaccine, when one comes forward, to children between the ages of two and five.

I can tell you that we are in serious discussions right now with the college and with pharmacists, with a view to bringing forward that regulation. I can't say today that it's happening today, but I can tell you that we're in serious discussions on that matter.

STUDENT SAFETY

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: The Ontario College of Teachers is a critical institution, as it governs the profession of teaching here in Ontario. As a member myself, I believe we can all agree that it is important that Ontario families have confidence in the OCT and in its members. All parents want to know that their child will feel respected and that teachers will help students to reach their utmost potential. The OCT, in its role of licensing, governing and regulating the practice of teaching, takes this and many other responsibilities on.

Can the Minister of Education please share with us what the government is doing to strengthen governance within the OCT and address issues of equity?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for her advocacy, both as an educator and mother and as a member in this House. It is quite clear the Ontario College of Teachers requires some reform. The independent report commissioned under the former government in 2018 called for significant reform to their governance to deal with issues of advocacy and the say of parents. We have taken action to empower parents by reconstituting the body to have an equal number of parents or the public and educators, nine and nine, to better balance the public interest that needs to be at the heart of the regulator of the profession, Speaker.

In addition, in the context of equity and in the context of combatting very legitimate and, in some regions, escalating levels of racism and discrimination that is arising within our schools, we have for the first time made it clear by regulation that any professional misconduct dealing with a racist nature—remarks or actions—will finally now have a clear, transparent and effective accountability mechanism to hold those individuals to account, to inspire a better culture within our schools and to combat racism in Ontario.

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

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the minister for that answer. These changes will certainly benefit the OCT and further increase public confidence in the teaching profession as a whole. I know that our government has also been focused on making changes to the College of Early Childhood Educators that strengthen protections for all of our students, which is very welcome news and shows a true commitment to seeing Ontario students thrive.

But truly, nothing is more important than the safety and well-being of our kids. Can the minister outline how our changes will protect Ontario students, as well as how they will provide support for students who have, heartbreakingly, been victims of sexual abuse?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: It's quite obvious, I think, for all members of the House, that the priority for us all is the safety of our children. Under our reforms, no longer can an educator be reinstated following mandatory revocation for sexual abuse or for child pornography. They will not work in this province under this government, no longer, if they have that history.

We will revoke all certificates retroactively to all members who are guilty of professional misconduct dealing with acts of sexual abuse or acts of child pornography. All disciplinary decisions will now, under this government, be public for parents to see and for all to know. We are mandating a sexual abuse prevention program for both colleges to again reinforce the importance of child protection, and we are extending support, therapy and counselling to the victims, to the kids themselves.

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We are wholly committed to the safety of kids. These reforms are endorsed by the chair of the college herself, saying, "The legislation mirrors and reinforces numerous recommendations" they have made.

I think it provides confidence that we'll do whatever it takes—

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

OPIOID ABUSE

Ms. Bhutila Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. A new report from the chief coroner's office has revealed a horrifying state of the overdose crisis in Ontario. We are on track to see almost 2,300 deaths from overdoses by the end of this year, a record high and an increase of over 50% from last year. An NDP freedom-of-information request found no correspondence about opioids between the Minister of Health and top officials at all this year.

It's clear the overdose crisis is not a priority for this government. What is your response to the more than 2,000 families who have lost a loved one to overdose this year?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the member for the question. This is a very serious issue and one that we are taking very seriously in Ontario. As you will know, just before we were struck with COVID-19 in the province we issued our Roadmap to Wellness, our comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy for the province of Ontario. We are investing \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years in strategies to help both with mental health and with addiction problems. We are also investing \$176 million this year. The funds are flowing for that.

But we recognize that there has been an increase in addictions and overdoses from opioids and other issues. That's why we opened the consumption and treatment services sites in the first place. Those are working very hard. We are hoping that there will be other communities that will apply. There are still some openings where municipalities can apply if they are having significant problems, and we certainly know there are problems across the province. They are there to help people to be able to consume whatever substance they're consuming to make sure that they don't overdose and that they will be safe.

I will have more to say in my supplemental.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury for the supplementary.

Mr. Jamie West: My question is to the Premier. Last Tuesday I met with Denise Sandul in Sudbury to discuss the September 8 overdose of her son, Myles. Myles Keaney was 22 years old. He was an athlete. He absolutely loved Joe Mac football. Myles was also addicted to opioids. He tried to get help with his addiction several times, and none was available.

Last Tuesday I walked with Denise and two of her daughters to visit Myles's memorial cross. In September, Myles's cross was alone. When we visited last week, there were 20 crosses. Today there are 33. By this weekend there will be 51.

The opioid death rate in northern Ontario is almost twice that of southern Ontario. Sudburians are suffering, family members are in mourning and local resources are overwhelmed. My question is, will the Premier commit to

immediately increasing funding to help Sudburians like Denise Sandul and her family?

Hon. Christine Elliott: First, let me express my condolences to Myles's family and all of the other families who have lost anyone through an overdose, through addictions of any kind. That is something none of us want to see happen in the province of Ontario. That is why we brought forward our Roadmap to Wellness, to make sure that across Ontario—that includes northern Ontario, southern, eastern and western Ontario—we can have that core basket of addictions and mental health treatments. That's why the mental health centre of excellence was set up. In the same way that Cancer Care Ontario was set up to make sure that all parts of Ontario have excellent quality cancer services, the centre for mental health and addictions is being set up to make sure that all parts of Ontario have excellent mental health and addictions supports.

We know that there are many areas that don't have either the consumption and treatment services sites or the withdrawal-management supports that they need. That is what our plan is addressing and that is what we are going to bring forward in the province of Ontario.

TOURISM

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question today is for the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. She must be busy just with the title alone.

Tourist operators in my riding were pleased to learn in this year's budget of the government's commitment to making 2021 the year of the Ontario staycation. But as is common with most government budgets, there weren't a lot of details.

As the minister knows, tourism is at the heart of our local economy in Simcoe–Grey. A major participant in this industry is the ski resort business. Although people are being asked not to travel now because of the pandemic, many are buying season's passes right now, like ski passes, and are asking if those receipts will be eligible for the 20% rebate.

I ask the minister what advice she might have for those booking and prepaying for a staycation now, with respect to keeping their receipts. Basically, when do you expect the program to start?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to my friend the member from Simcoe–Grey. I had the opportunity to spend some time with him this summer visiting Blue Mountain and the beautiful village of Clarksburg, which is affectionately named Artsburg by the locals.

He's right; we do have a \$150-million Ontario travel tax incentive that we'll be rolling out in, likely, early April or perhaps in the spring. We wanted to make sure that we signalled to the industry that was hardest hit during this pandemic that we will be there for them. So we will be investing. We are working right now with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario as well as our regional tourism organizations to see how we can best adapt this program. It is the most generous in Canada, and we've actually called on the federal government to implement

something similar so that we can get people going around the province again.

I want to be very clear, though, that we are encouraging Ontarians only to travel when it's safe to do so. At the moment, we are not encouraging people to go on staycations around the province. In fact, we're trying to ensure people stay safe. But when it is safe to do so and we feel confident, we want to restore confidence—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Minister, for that comprehensive response. And thank you for visiting my riding at least a couple of times since the pandemic that I'm aware of, and including me in those visits. Maybe you can come up again and bring the health minister and the education minister, which is my theme this week—travelling ministers. Travelling ministers would be great, and they're welcome anytime to the riding of Simcoe–Grey.

You mentioned staycations and people not being encouraged to travel now. Again, I need some clarification: If they're buying or paying for a staycation for next year, presumably when they can travel, will those receipts be eligible? Do you have any thoughts on that?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the question, and I—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: —the health minister and the education minister would like to go up and visit your riding.

To be perfectly clear, we have a white paper process that is going to be unveiled in the next couple of weeks, where we're going to be asking operators from tourism and cultural attractions and sports organizations to feed into what will be a strategic five-year plan. The centrepiece, obviously, of that plan will be the redevelopment of Ontario Place, as well as this tourism and travel tax credit. Those details are being worked out at the moment between my ministry officials as well as the Ministry of Finance officials, as all of our tax credits within this ministry are. We'll continue to work with operators such as ski hills.

I recognize, as well, that there are a lot of questions and concerns with respect to ski hills and what those capacity limits are. The ministry, along with the Ministry of Health, is working those details out, and we should have some clarification for all of your constituents in the next couple of days.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is to the Premier.

Speaker, this government has had months to increase testing capacity so that family caregivers can visit their loved ones secluded in long-term care. But with the second wave upon us, Londoners are facing even more delays, not fewer. One of my constituents, Sheldon, told me that in order to visit his mother in long-term care, he drives to the city of St. Thomas to get tested because it is impossible for him to get tested in London.

Does the Premier really believe that caregivers like Sheldon should have to drive over an hour to get tested in the hopes of visiting their mother?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite.

Our government recognizes the essential assistance that caregivers can provide their loved ones in long-term care and that importance of well-being. There's no doubt about that. That's why we've been working very hard to make sure that essential caregivers can be designated by residents so that they can go into the home and assist, even during an outbreak.

However, I know that the testing has been an issue in some areas, and that is something that we're consistently working on to improve—and to create an environment where potentially the caregivers can get testing through the home. We're working on this to make this easier, recognizing the importance of caregivers.

Thank you for your question.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It's fine for the minister to say that they recognize it, but we see that there is a lack of support for family caregivers.

My question is back to the minister.

Speaker, the delays Londoners face while simply trying to visit their parents are unacceptable. As if driving to St. Thomas to get tested wasn't enough, Sheldon and his wife often experience significant delays getting their results. With the backlog in our communities, there's simply no guarantee that they will get their test results in time so that they can see their 101-year-old mother living in long-term care. Sheldon told me that "each time it has been taking longer and longer to get our results."

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Why, after eight months into this pandemic, are family caregivers still waiting weeks to visit their parents when this government has had months to prepare for second wave delays?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: First, we have significantly increased our testing capacity. At the beginning of the pandemic, we were able to test approximately 4,000 people per day. At this point, we are able to test over 50,000, so we have made significant strides. However, we know that when family members want to visit their loved ones in long-term care, they need faster answers, and sometimes they're taking longer than the 48 hours that we're aiming for.

But, I believe, as the Premier said, that the Abbott tests that we're receiving now, the Panbio and the ID NOW, are going to be game changers in that they are going to be able to provide those results very quickly on-site.

We have already received and sent 70,000 of the Panbio tests to hospitals and long-term-care homes, and I anticipate that you will find that the turnaround time for

tests will be increased quite considerably as we receive more of these tests and are able to send them to long-term-care homes.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Health.

The Toronto Star unearthed an internal report from the Scarborough Health Network that showed alarming trends. Roughly 14% of tests at Scarborough assessment centres come back positive, which is triple the provincial average. There are outbreaks in 13 Scarborough long-term-care homes, Scarborough's three hospitals are treating nearly a quarter of all hospitalizations in Toronto and Peel, and many Scarborough schools are in outbreak.

Hot-spot communities have not had a break since the pandemic began. They live in high-rises and multi-generational homes. Many residents are essential workers, in health care or elsewhere, on the front lines, and they face higher risks of contracting COVID-19, with few options to self-isolate.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will you step in and provide the resources that are necessary for these residents in dense housing to stop the spread of COVID-19 by working with the federal government to set up—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: The short answer is yes, we will. I would just like to read a statement that we received from the Scarborough Health Network very recently: "Our community is an explicitly acknowledged hot spot, and has been for some time. This is a known issue and we have been receiving support through Scarborough Health Network, public health and Ontario Health. Resources to support testing, long-term care and increased hospital capacity are aligned with a high community prevalence," spokesperson Leigh Duncan said.

So we are providing those supports with respect to testing, with respect to making sure that we can provide whatever supports the Scarborough Health Network needs.

I will respond with respect to the issue of quarantine in my supplementary.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I appreciate the hope that I'm hearing coming from the Minister of Health, because we do need more testing and we need more resources dedicated to these hot spots.

Minister, the situation in Scarborough is unacceptable. The areas with the highest positivity rates have populations that are disproportionately low-income. People are often from the Black community, Indigenous communities, and other people of colour. They rely on transit to get around.

In the recent Daily Bread Food Bank report showing poverty by postal code—and it uses the low-income measure after taxes—the Woburn community specifically

stands out in deep need. It is not surprising that it is consistently high for COVID-19 positivity.

Some of the hardest-hit pockets of Scarborough have some of the lowest testing rates because they are isolated from the permanent assessment centres. The Scarborough Health Network is doing an excellent job with its pop-up assessment centres. I visited one last week and I saw the hard-working staff on the front lines. They're doing all they can, but the solution just isn't enough. There is more that is needed.

Speaker, I'm asking—

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Certainly I can advise that we are providing special supports to parts of Toronto that are hot spots, and there's no question that Scarborough is in that zone. We know there are a number of issues that need to be addressed, including the ability for people to have greater access to testing. That's why, in addition to the assessment centres, there are limited walk-ins for people who are not able, for a variety of reasons, to book online or to call to make an appointment. We also have pop-up centres and mobile testing units.

Also, many of the hospitals are working with units that supply other health facilities locally to create that bond of trust in that relationship with people so that they will go in for testing and they will also have that relationship when we're ready with—

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

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Schedule 6 of the government's budget Bill 229 makes significant changes to the Conservation Authorities Act. Conservation Ontario says, "Changes have been made to the planning role for conservation authorities which could actually put more people at threat, rather than protect them from natural hazards." Others have echoed that sentiment. MNR is responsible for protecting Ontarians from natural hazards.

Speaker, why is this government drastically changing the role of conservation authorities and putting Ontarians at risk, in a budget bill and during a pandemic?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks very much for that question from the member opposite. My response is, this legislation we're putting through schedule 6 in the bill is actually going to allow conservation authorities to focus in on their core mandate and at the same time address the non-mandated programs through agreements through the municipalities. This is going to ensure there's transparency and accountability, which is lacking throughout our conservation authorities at this point, so that municipal councillors and municipalities can understand where their money is going and how it's being spent. In the same respect, the conservation authorities will open up the door

to have those conversations with municipalities on the importance of the work they do.

But by no means does this legislation change the core mandate of looking after hazardous effects happening within our communities, whether it's floods or looking after erosion problems. The conservation authorities will still focus on that, including water protection, and I look forward to the member opposite's further questions so I can continue my—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The supplementary question. The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Again to the minister: If you came to Niagara and spoke with the residents, you would know how hard they have worked to get our conservation authority back on track. Instead of controversies and lawsuits, the region appointed dedicated citizens to focus on protecting Niagara's environment. These citizens include environmentalists, professors, lifelong citizen volunteers and a veteran, all of whom are dedicated to our local environment. Now, in the middle of a pandemic budget, you quietly hid a line that removes all the Niagara citizen representatives and takes away their voice at the NPCA.

Minister, we have no intention of going back to the way things were or letting development run rampant over our green spaces and our natural heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yes, sir.

Will you side with the people of Niagara and keep these citizens' voices on the NPCA by striking down this flawed legislation?

Hon. Jeff Yurek: Thanks very much for that question. I have been to the Niagara Falls area. It's beautiful. Niagara-on-the-Lake is probably one of the most beautiful places. My wife and I love to visit, and I'm sure we'll be heading there to support the staycations that our government is bringing forward in this upcoming budget, and hopefully the member opposite will support that.

But Mr. Speaker, listen: What we're doing is ensuring that there is accountability and transparency. We believe that councillors who are duly elected are held accountable by the electorate. They will be able to do their job on the boards of conservation authorities to ensure that the accountability is put in place.

Right now, conservation authorities are answerable to nobody. They have no appeals processes for their orders, and we are going to put forth measures in this bill. Their financial statements are—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much for the response. That concludes our question period for this morning.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm informed that the government House leader has a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I rise in accordance with standing order 59 to provide the order of business for next week.

On Monday, we will be dealing with an opposition day motion and we will then continue on with Bill 213.

On Tuesday morning, we will be dealing with a budget motion, continuing on with the budget motion in the afternoon. That will continue on Wednesday morning, as well as Thursday.

On Thursday, we will be continuing on our path to ensure that we have more private members' bills passed in this House. We will be bringing forward the Magna Carta Day Act, and the great bill standing in the name of the member of Ottawa West–Nepean, the Time Amendment Act. We look forward to that.

Also on Thursday morning, prior to question period, as you know, Mr. Speaker, there is a legislative requirement, which was brought forward, I believe, in a previous Parliament by the MPP for Parkdale–High Park, Ms. DiNovo, that we recognize Trans Day of Remembrance, and we will be doing that Thursday before question period.

Private members' business will be ballot item number 36, Monday morning, standing in the name of Mr. Wilson.

The ballot on Tuesday will be ballot item number 37, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson. We still do not have notice of what that is, but I recognize there are a number of lakes and streams that he wants to rename, so maybe one of those will become a priority.

Ballot item number 38 to be debated on Wednesday is standing in the name of Ms. Karpoche and Mr. Tabuns; and ballot item number 39 on Thursday, standing in the name of Mr. Vanthof. Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yes, you can rise on the same point of order. I recognize the member for Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I appreciate that the government has given us the business for the next week, but my private member's ballot is on the order paper. It's fairly simple.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This isn't a debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just letting them know.

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

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

SELECT COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I beg leave to present the second interim report of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Members of the House, please accept the second interim report of the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the membership of the committee for their work: Chair Daryl

Kramp, Bob Bailey, Gilles Bisson, John Fraser, Christine Hogarth, Robin Martin, Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park, Sara Singh and Effie Triantafilopoulos.

The committee extends its appreciation to Ontario's Solicitor General for appearing before the committee. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided during the hearings and report-writing deliberations by the Clerk of the Committee and the staff in legislative research.

As you read the report, please note that the members of this committee are not permitted to table a dissenting report, as per the order of the House that struck the committee.

Report presented.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Peter Sibenik): Mr. Tabuns from the Standing Committee on Estimates reports the following resolutions:

Resolved that supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021:
Ministry of Education—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Dispense? Dispensed.

Pursuant to standing order 66(d), an order for concurrence for each of the resolutions reported from the committee will be placed on the Orders and Notices paper.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IMPROVING ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION DE L'ACCÈS AUX SOINS DE SANTÉ

Ms. Andrew moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 233, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to the implementation of a provincial guideline on sickle cell disease / Projet de loi 233, Loi modifiant diverses lois concernant la mise en oeuvre de la ligne directrice provinciale sur l'anémie falciforme.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll invite the member for Toronto–St. Paul's to briefly explain her bill.

Ms. Jill Andrew: The bill amends various acts to require the making of specified instruments in order to implement the recommendations set out in the Clinical Handbook for Sickle Cell Disease Vaso-occlusive Crisis,

published by the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Further amendments are made to the Connecting Care Act, 2019 to require the Minister of Health to conduct reviews to determine whether health care funding is sufficient for patients with sickle cell disease and for communities impacted by the disease.

Finally, the Anti-Racism Act, 2017 is amended to require the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Long-Term Care, Ontario Health and any person receiving funding from the government of Ontario to provide health care services to take all reasonable steps to ensure that information relating to the race of patients in Ontario is collected.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm very, very proud of this bill. I would like to say thank you to the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario and to all sickle cell patients living in Ontario. This bill will help save lives.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL HOUSING DAY

JOURNÉE NATIONALE DE L'HABITATION

Hon. Steve Clark: I rise in the House today to mark National Housing Day. It's an important day to acknowledge the significant work done by our housing and our homelessness partners across the province and the country—they do so to support our most vulnerable and to help make sure that everyone has a safe place to call home.

As we all know, this year has emphasized how important it is for every Ontarian to have a home, and the importance of having the right mix of housing that meets the needs of the people of Ontario. It has shed a light on the pressures felt in our community housing system and has underscored the urgent need for affordable housing. But, of course, I think all members will agree, these aren't issues that are new for our Legislature. Years of inaction on the housing file has put pressure on our community housing, affordable housing and market housing. That's why housing was a priority for our government when we first formed government and will continue to be a top priority for the years to come.

C'est pourquoi le logement était prioritaire pour notre gouvernement lorsque nous avons pris le pouvoir, et il le restera pour les prochaines années.

I'm proud that our government is tackling the housing pressures Ontario faces head-on by investing directly into more affordable housing, reducing the upfront cost pressure on our partners working to build affordable housing and accelerating the construction of affordable housing units right across Ontario.

Our government is also extremely proud—I am so proud, as minister—that we were the first province or territory in Canada to sign on to the portable housing

benefit. In our province, we call it the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit. This was all done under the National Housing Strategy. It is making \$1.4 billion available for a portable housing benefit that goes directly to people who need it most, to help them pay their rent. This benefit can be used for rent in a community housing project or a private-market development anywhere in Ontario. This means we are giving rental assistance directly to Ontarians to use for housing anywhere they want.

It's a historic program for the people of Ontario. Again, our government is extremely proud that we were the first in Canada. This year, we expect 5,200 Ontarians to receive direct payments, and we expect the number of people who receive this benefit is going to grow each and every year of the housing action plan. But this benefit is just one of the ways that we're working with our federal and our municipal partners to help keep people housed, to help expand the community housing system and to help municipalities with their local housing priorities.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the most vulnerable people in our communities, including those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. That's why our government has made a substantial investment into housing, homelessness supports and homelessness prevention programs. As part of our government's response to the pandemic, we are investing \$510 million into municipalities and Indigenous program partners through the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund. This significant new funding is being used to help deliver critical supports for those who need it most. This includes expanding shelters, increasing rent banks, building modular housing, buying more spaces for shelter and purchasing PPE. Our investments will help bring long-term solutions, while meeting the ongoing and immediate needs for supports related to COVID-19.

Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about community housing renewal. As I've said many times, Ontario's housing crisis has been ongoing for years, and our community housing system is under a lot of stress. That's why we launched our Community Housing Renewal Strategy—because it was time that a government took action to support community housing in our municipalities. Our government is investing nearly \$1 billion this year to help sustain, repair and grow community housing to help end homelessness in Ontario. This investment will transform a fragmented and inefficient system into one that's more streamlined, more sustainable and ready to help those who need it most.

For many housing providers, their original operating agreements and mortgages are coming to an end. We recognize that Ontario's community housing system is very, very diverse, and we're proposing to tailor our approach for different categories of housing providers to ensure that they get the help they need. This past July, our government passed Bill 184, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, which empowers our community housing providers to protect our existing housing stock and create new supply. They are our partners in helping renew Ontario's community housing

system, and they play a critical role in providing affordable housing. I want to thank all of our partners in the community housing system for helping us develop our path forward and for everything that they do to help Ontarians.

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Je tiens à remercier tous nos partenaires du système de logement communautaire de nous avoir aidé à élaborer notre plan d'action et pour tout ce qu'ils font afin d'aider la population ontarienne.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided everyone with the opportunity to rethink how we provide housing to vulnerable populations. This summer, I was able to announce funding for critical affordable housing projects right across this province. At the same time, I had the opportunity to meet with many, many local service managers and local housing providers. I saw, Speaker, first-hand that our government's actions and our government's investments are making a real difference in people's lives. There were many, many inspiring examples. For example, communities and housing providers are able to provide physical distancing and isolation spaces in congregate care settings and are creating solutions like separate bathrooms and washrooms for residents. Many, many communities are also acquiring motels and hotels to provide emergency and transitional housing. I was encouraged to hear that more communities are exploring modular supportive housing units like the projects in Toronto.

In regard to those projects here in this city, I was happy to help get shovels in the ground faster with a minister zoning order so work could begin quickly to provide these much-needed homes. As part of More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan, our government committed to selling unused properties to build more homes and give people more choices at a price that they can afford.

We also, Speaker, committed to working with our partners to find innovative ways to solve Ontario's housing crisis. The new veterans' village, which will be built in Kingston, is one example of how Ontario is turning unused provincial properties into affordable housing for those who are in need. In that project, we are partnering with the city of Kingston and the Homes for Heroes Foundation to create a veterans' village with up to 25 tiny homes for our military veterans experiencing homelessness.

Ontarians owe a debt of gratitude to our veterans. Our government believes that everyone, especially those whose lives have been in the service of others, deserves a place to call home. This village will be built on a portion of the Kingston Provincial Campus, which is a surplus provincial property, and the homes will be constructed from pre-fabricated modular housing, with each home providing transitional housing for one veteran so that they can get the support that they deserve.

After decades of inaction on the housing file, our government promised to bring new innovative ideas to revitalize the housing sector. Building pre-fabricated tiny homes on surplus land for military veterans facing homelessness is a perfect example of that innovation.

In conclusion, right across this province, our service managers, our housing providers, our Indigenous program partners are doing fantastic work. They are forging new partnerships, finding innovative ways to help vulnerable people, addressing urgent immediate needs and working to secure long-term, stable housing. We know that homes are more than bricks and mortar—they form the foundation needed to raise happy, healthy families and keep people safe.

As National Housing Day approaches, our government recommits to working closely with all of our partners to ensure that people can access the affordable housing and supports they need today and in the years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here on National Housing Day and highlight the commitment that New Democrats have towards housing. New Democrats believe that housing is a human right and that everyone across the province of Ontario deserves a stable, decent place that they can call home.

Whether you live in Neskantaga, Windsor, the Beaches or the burbs, adequate housing is essential to one's sense of dignity, safety, inclusion and ability to contribute to the fabric of our neighbourhoods and societies. We believe that all people should be able to get a safe, affordable place to call their own when they are ready, that folks should be able to rent without the constant threat of eviction and bank-breaking rent hikes, that buying a home should not be out of reach for hard-working families and that seniors should be able to stay in the community they love.

New Democrats believe that no one, ever, should find themselves without shelter and without housing options that fit their needs and abilities, and that the government plays a pivotal role in making sure that this human right is realized.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that as we face a housing crisis here in the province of Ontario, which has been exacerbated by COVID-19, this government has failed to step up to the plate. What has become even more clear is that due to socio-economic inequalities that disproportionately impact women, women identifying as survivors of gender-based violence, Black, Indigenous, racialized people, people with disabilities, folks living with mental health and addiction issues and those from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, they are having a harder time finding housing.

The crisis of homelessness is playing out across cities in the province, from Peel region to Ottawa, in London, Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Sioux Lookout, Kenora, Peterborough, Kitchener-Waterloo and St. Catharines, just to name a few. Their shelters are over capacity, people are forced onto the streets, and as we celebrate National Housing Day, well over 235,000 people across the country of Canada cannot find a safe place to call home.

Current market housing prices are out of reach in the Peel region for over 80% of our population, with the average house price at a whopping \$802,000 and rental rates soaring well above \$2,300. Finding solutions is getting harder and harder. But rather than fix the problem, both Liberal and Conservative governments failed to

invest in housing for decades. According to the CMHC, only 2,300 purpose-built rentals have been developed in Peel, for example, in the last 20 years. Take that into consideration, Speaker: over the last 20 years. Some 50% of the need for supportive housing goes unmet, with some waiting more than 13-plus years to find a safe place to rest their heads.

Yet, when this government has an opportunity to invest in our communities, to address the housing crisis, what they have done is actually cut programs and cut services that would help address those underlying concerns. According to the public accounts, last year's spending on the housing program was actually down \$188 million from the previous year, despite this government receiving an additional \$100 million in federal funding under the National Housing Strategy program.

Speaker, cuts are not going to help us solve a housing crisis, but we can change this by actually investing in housing and not handing over the keys to developers across the province. Data indicates that for every dollar spent on housing, we can actually reduce social assistance costs by 95 cents and reduce health care costs by 50 cents. We could actually increase our gross domestic product by \$2.40 and we could potentially increase provincial and federal tax revenues by 60 cents.

It makes economic sense to invest in housing, and yet this government has failed to make the adequate investments needed to address these long-standing issues. New Democrats will continue to fight to ensure that wherever you live, whatever your financial situation, whatever your age, identity or ability, you and everyone else in this province have a safe place to call home.

Mr. Stephen Blais: It is an honour to rise in the Legislature today for National Housing Day and to recognize the important work organizations across our province undertake to reduce homelessness.

I'd like to highlight two important projects in the nation's capital. Veterans' House is a newly established housing community in Ottawa for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Veterans' House will be the fifth affordable housing project completed by the Multifaith Housing Initiative in Ottawa and will begin providing safe and affordable housing to 40 veterans this January.

It's not only an affordable housing project, but it's also a supportive housing project. Here, veterans will receive counselling and mental health services that are geared towards their specific needs, and that will help them remain healthy and active members of our society.

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I'd also like to highlight the important work that Habitat for Humanity is doing to make the dream of affordable home ownership a reality for families across Ontario. This summer, Habitat for Humanity Greater Ottawa completed its largest build to date, providing housing for over 16 families in my riding of Orléans. The impact of safe and affordable homes is transformative for these families and for their futures. I'm incredibly proud and thankful for the important role that Habitat for Humanity has played and will continue to play in Orléans for years to come.

While I'm honoured to speak about these important initiatives and highlight their accomplishments, we must understand that for too many the struggle is not over. This year, more than ever, our eyes have been opened wide to the difficult situations all around us. Too many of our neighbours struggle every day with some of the basic necessities we all take for granted—I've never had to worry about where my head would lay at night, and I'm thankful for that; I shudder to think about what that's like—and the COVID-19 pandemic has simply made matters worse.

Mr. Speaker, the burden and impact of disease and illness has never been shouldered equally in our society, but people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic are paying an especially high price. With businesses closing and social services stretched to the limit, the pandemic has driven many into precarious housing situations. Too many of our neighbours are without an affordable living option. Disturbingly, some have become homeless. They're couch-surfing or they're sleeping in their car or they're in a shelter, or worse, they're out on the streets.

Today, in the wake of this once-in-a-lifetime pandemic, the need for affordable and inclusive housing has never been so clear. I'm urging the government to make the most vulnerable their priority. Work to ensure all Ontarians can enjoy the dignity of having a roof over their head that is safe and affordable. As the disease spreads and as the cold weather is about to be upon us, there's no time to waste.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise and respond to the minister on National Housing Day, which is particularly important to recognize this year. COVID-19 has shown us the importance of having a safe and affordable place to call home. It's not possible to shelter in place if you have no place to shelter. Right now, there are over 750,000 households in core housing need in Ontario, and over 90,000 Ontarians experienced homelessness in the last year. Nearly half of all renters in Ontario are a paycheck away from losing their home. Ontario's wait-list for affordable housing has grown to more than 185,000 families.

Speaker, we were in a housing crisis before COVID-19, and the pandemic has only made that crisis worse and highlighted the importance of addressing it. Greens believe that housing is a human right, and we need to start acting like it.

In my limited amount of time, I want to highlight a few things that I think we need to act on. One is, we need to end the speculation and financialization in the housing market. Housing is about a place to call home, not a place to engage in market speculation. We need to increase the supply of housing for people all across the continuum, without paving over our farmland and the places we love. And we need to invest in more supportive housing and to ensure that the province comes through with the financial supports to ensure that everyone who accesses supportive housing has the wraparound services they need to stay in that housing.

Speaker, the time to act on housing is now.

PETITIONS

COMMUNITY PLANNING

Mr. Aris Babikian: I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the 250 signatories of this petition from Scarborough–Agincourt for raising their concerns with me. The petition reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“—Positive Tutorial School (children and youth programs ages five to 15) 3300 Midland Avenue, unit 211;

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

“—Tamarack Day Care Centre, 3315 Midland Avenue;

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

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

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

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled “Support Ontario Families with Autism.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas every child with autism deserves access to sufficient treatment and support so that they can live to their fullest potential;

“Whereas the Ontario Autism Program was badly broken under the Liberals, and the changes introduced by the Conservatives have made it worse;

“Whereas the new funding caps are based on age and income, and not the clinical needs of the child;

“Whereas Ontario needs a true investment in evidence-based autism services that meets the needs of autistic children and their families;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to invest in equitable, needs-based autism services for all children who need them.”

I fully support this petition on behalf of the many families from Parkdale–High Park.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by Londoners about an issue that is very important to my community. It is called “Support Conservation Authorities.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities have developed a deep understanding of local ecosystems and have implemented a range of non-mandatory programs to best protect them; and

“Whereas these non-mandatory programs include water quality monitoring and improvement, tree planting and woodlot management, curriculum-based environmental education, trail development and outdoor recreation, support for local environmental initiatives and more; and

“Whereas it is unnecessary and prohibitive to require conservation authorities to secure MOUs with every municipality in their watershed in order to continue non-mandatory programs; and

“Whereas we are deeply concerned that stopping non-mandatory programs will adversely affect the health of our environment;

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“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the continued delivery of the full range of programs and services that have been developed by conservation authorities, including programs and services that are not mandated by the province.”

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

SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I’d like to thank Maureen Francella, whose family is directly affected by this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in the absence of adequate services, parents of autistic adults experience significant stress in their efforts to provide the necessary care;

“Whereas there is a lack of respite crisis beds available for autism;

“Whereas there are approximately 15,000 adults with developmental disabilities waiting to be placed in a residential facility;

“Whereas the all-party Select Committee on Developmental Services, including ministers now serving in the” current “government, called for the elimination of all wait-lists in 2014;

“Whereas in the absence of adequate residential space, autistic adults in crisis situations are often placed in unsuitable facilities such as hospitals treating people with mental health issues;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to provide the necessary funding to ensure all people with autism receive the support they need to avoid such crisis situations.”

I couldn't agree with this more. This has been going on much too long. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to the page—not page—to bring to the Clerk.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is entitled “Take Action on the Climate Crisis,” and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the UN reports that we only have” a few “years to reduce carbon emissions before catastrophic climate change impacts become irreversible;

“Whereas the impact of the climate crisis could undo 50 years of gains made in global public health;

“Whereas 85% of marine litter affecting beaches and waterways worldwide is made up of plastic waste material, plastics are also littering Ontario's beaches and waterways, polluting our ecosystems and fisheries, affecting our health, tourism and industry;

“Whereas fires, floods and tornadoes are already ripping through our communities with increased regularity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“—declare a climate emergency in Ontario;

“—implement a complete ban on consumer single-use plastics by 2024;

“—implement a green new deal that will cut emissions, create jobs and boost Ontario's economy.”

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

HEALTH CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from the good folks of Hamilton Mountain that reads:

“Save Our Health Care....

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ford government is currently proposing massive restructuring to the entire health system without any public consultation;

“Whereas the proposal eliminates local planning and control of health care;

“Whereas the proposal will open the door for unprecedented levels of for-profit providers in our health care system;

“Whereas the last Conservative government privatized home care services, creating a system that fails too many families;

“Whereas the current hallway medicine crisis is a direct result of inadequate home care, long-term care and community care services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the government to abandon Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act, and focus on improving our province's not-for-profit delivery of universal health care system.”

I still agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to the usher to bring to the Clerk.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled “Protect Water as a Public Good.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas groundwater is a public good, not a commodity; and

“Whereas the United Nations recognizes access to clean drinking water as a human right; and

“Whereas local ecosystems must be preserved for the well-being of future generations; and

“Whereas the duty to consult Indigenous communities regarding water-taking within traditional territories is often neglected, resulting in a disproportionate burden on systemically marginalized communities during a period of reconciliation; and

“Whereas a poll commissioned by the Wellington Water Watchers found that two thirds of respondents support phasing out bottled water in Ontario over the course of a decade; and

“Whereas a trend towards prioritizing the expansion of for-profit water bottling corporations over the needs of municipalities will negatively impact Ontario's growing communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to prioritize public ownership and control of water over corporate interests.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name and send it to the table.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: “Give Prisoners Access to Free Phones Now!

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ...

“Whereas Bell acts like a champion of mental health, they jeopardize the well-being of prisoners and their families by putting up barriers to communication;

“Whereas Bell has a monopoly over the federal and provincial prison phone systems in Canada and Ontario;

“Whereas phone calls cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars per month for prisoners and their families, and collect calls can only be made to land lines;

“Whereas disconnection and isolation can result in poverty, mental health challenges, and suicide—and creates barriers for community reintegration upon release;

“Whereas phone companies like Bell and the province of Ontario profit off of the most marginalized among us; and

“Whereas Bell’s contract with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is up for renewal in 2020;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the House of Commons, and Bell Canada to ensure free calling for prisoners; direct calls to cell phones and lines with switchboards; and no 20-minute cut-off on calls.”

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and get it to the table.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It’s titled “Give Prisoners Access to Free Phones Now.

“Whereas Bell acts like a champion of mental health, they jeopardize the well-being of prisoners and their families by putting up barriers to communication;

“Whereas Bell has a monopoly over the ... provincial prison phone systems in ... Ontario;

“Whereas phone calls cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars per month for prisoners and their families, and collect calls can only be made to land lines;

“Whereas disconnection and isolation can result in poverty, mental health challenges, and suicide—and creates barriers for community reintegration upon release;

“Whereas phone companies like Bell and the province of Ontario profit off of the most marginalized among us; and

“Whereas Bell’s contract with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services is up for renewal in 2020;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act to ensure free calling for prisoners; direct calls to cell phones and lines with switchboards; and no 20-minute cut-off calls.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it. I hope that this is possible.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from the great folks of Hamilton Mountain.

“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.”

This could not be more appropriate. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to the usher to bring to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that, pursuant to standing order 50 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes;

That when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

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That, at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs; and

That the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet on Monday, November 30, 2020, from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. to receive a 15-minute opening statement on the bill by the Minister of Finance, followed by 45 minutes of question and answer divided into three rounds of six minutes for the government members, three rounds of six minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

That the committee be authorized to meet at the following times, for the purpose of public hearings:

—on Monday, November 30, 2020, from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m.; and

—on Tuesday, December 1, 2020, from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. and from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m.; and

—on Wednesday, December 2, 2020, from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. and from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m.; and

That the Clerk of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to the bill:

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 25, 2020; and

—That the Clerk of the Committee provide a list of all interested presenters to each member of the subcommittee and their designate following the deadline for requests to appear; and

—That each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters, by 5 p.m. on Thursday, November 26, 2020; and

—That witnesses shall be scheduled in groups of three for each one-hour time slot, with each presenter allotted seven minutes for an opening statement followed by 39 minutes of questioning for all three witnesses, divided into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition members and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent member of the committee; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 7 p.m. on Wednesday, December 2, 2020; and

—That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Thursday, December 3, 2020; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Friday, December 4, 2020, from 9 a.m. until 12 noon, from 1 p.m. until 6 p.m., and from 6:30 p.m. until 12 midnight for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That on Friday, December 4, 2020, at 6:30 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto; and at this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, if requested by a member of the committee, pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, December 7, 2020, and if the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed passed by the committee and shall be deemed reported to and received by the House; and

That upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called the same day; and

That except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 10(c), no deferral of the second reading vote on the bill shall be permitted.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The deputy government House leader has moved notice of motion number 96.

I return to the member to begin debate.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: The importance of passing Bill 229, the Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act, also known as the budget measures act, is so important if you just speak to our local businesses or look around our province.

Since the beginning of this pandemic, I've toured and spoken to over 70 businesses in my local constituency, and I know first-hand from them how important it is to get things done quickly. As elected officials, we have a duty, we have a moral obligation in this Legislature to help all of those Ontarians that are in need. This budget and this measure that we're discussing today does that. We have to do things like put health care, people's businesses, their families, their seniors and their children first.

This government is taking its duty seriously and doing just that in this budget. When it comes to health care we're investing historic amounts of funding. For example, base health funding sector expense is projected to increase from \$63.7 billion in 2019-20 to \$68.5 billion in 2022-23. These figures do not include the one-time health expenses related to COVID-19 that this government has already announced.

In the current outlook for 2020-21, Ontario's government has allocated more than \$3 billion in one-time COVID-19 health care sector expenses and nearly \$5.3 billion in contingency. Unlike what the opposition has been saying, the government has drawn down on almost all of its contingency funding.

And that's not it. Ontario's actual spending on health care for 2017-18—in the last year before the 2018 election, when our government took office—was \$59.3 billion. Just to repeat those numbers, Speaker: \$59.3 billion was invested in 2017-18, and now, in 2022-23 we're investing \$68.5 billion. Those numbers clearly show that the government is focused on the health and well-being of Ontarians.

It goes further. In the budget measures, we're investing \$594 million in new hospital sector capacity building, which will increase capacity and reduce wait times, something that is very important not just during COVID-19 but well before it. An example being, this Friday I'll be opening the pandemic response unit at our local Royal Victoria hospital, building up the capacity so needed during COVID-19, and increasing the staff that are very much needed to deal with those wait times.

It's not just the government's responsibility to ensure that we're funding our health care sector to historic numbers and putting those needs first, it's also important that we look ahead. It's our moral obligation to look ahead, post COVID-19, because if we don't make investments now, if we don't take action today, we're still going to be paying for it tomorrow. That is why it is so vital to be swift in these measures and pass them expeditiously, so that Ontarians can see the investments that this government is taking to make changes now for tomorrow. For example,

Speaker, in the skilled trades and training sector, last week I made an announcement at Brotech Precision, where I announced our action plan investing \$180.5 million to connect workers to training and jobs. This investment is looking ahead to the future, investing in the skills we're going to need tomorrow.

One of the measures that really appealed to me, and one that I discussed with Jerome Horowitz, the president of Brotech, was the way in which the government is going to encourage employers to participate in developing skilled tradespeople who are going to be needed for the future. This investment, which Jerome very much appreciated that our government is making, is the \$21 million we're putting into the new Achievement Incentive grant, which will help employers like Brotech train apprentices.

In addition, we're putting in \$20 million for the Group Sponsorship Grant, which will help small and medium-sized employers work to train apprentices. Jerome has been advocating for this in Simcoe county as Made-in-Simcoe-county solutions for the skilled trades shortage for years, and finally, as he put it, "We provided input many months ago on what we would like to see in the revamping of the skilled trades program. We are very proud that our provincial government is listening to us and responding to the needs of businesses like us, as well as to the needs of young people in the province."

This shows that even with the ongoing pandemic we need to focus on the future, not just the present. It's the future, investing in skilled trades and encouraging more women in skilled trades, like the women who work at Brotech: Crystel Sampson, a machinist; Cathlena Beaudet, a machinist; Mellissa Cave, an inspector; and Krystal Fisher, an inspector—these women in the skilled trades are at the forefront of the future.

And that's not it. When I was speaking to Jerome about the budget, and why it's so important to swiftly pass it, we talked about a reduction in electricity prices—electricity prices which caused a lot of businesses to move to other sectors and other provinces, not to mention the US. Jerome's jaw dropped when I told him that a 14% reduction in electricity costs is in the budget that we are discussing. I found out later, when Jerome showed me his electricity bill, exactly why his jaw dropped.

He told me that the actions that we're proposing to stop the job-killing electricity prices for the manufacturing sector are going to allow his business, Brotech, to invest tens of thousands of dollars in apprenticeships, in technology and system improvements in his business. These actions benefit many sectors in my riding, including Canplas Industries in Barrie and Poraver and Tempo Plastics in Innisfil.

1350

But that's not it, Speaker. It's not just the job-killing electricity rates that it's so important to swiftly pass it; it's things like breaks on property taxes which are going to help the over 70 businesses that I have talked to first-hand, once this pandemic hit in March. It's also parents, seniors, students, our tourism sector and our communities.

Tourism, for example, Speaker, has been hit very hard, and we heard that foremost in the finance committee this summer, where we had a record-breaking number of witness testimonies and sessions. I'm delighted to hear that 2021 is going to be the year of the Ontario staycation. This investment is going to help operators in my riding like Simcoe Tackle, Davidson's Country Dining and Joye's Ice Cream. I used to always visit Joye's Ice Cream when I was a student delivering newspapers; I used to take my newspaper money to get her ice cream, and it's nice to know that Joye Canning and her daughter Shelley are still there today operating their ice cream store.

It's these fabrics of our community that are so important to recognize, and this budget encompasses that: how important our communities are, the fabric of our communities, and to build upon that. That is exactly why we're launching the \$100-million Community Building Fund, to invest in things like cultural institutions and galleries like in Stroud, in Innisfil, the Be Contemporary Gallery, where Jeannette has just recently opened up a new exhibition and is trying to thrive through that. Of course, they've had difficulty through COVID-19, but this budget is going to help them quite a bit, and she's really thrilled that the programs are going to give her a hand up with her gallery.

In addition to her gallery, it's places like South Simcoe Theatre in Cookstown. They had their first season back in 1966. They're one of the core attractors for Cookstown, and the measures in this bill are going to help them. They don't have time to wait. They need action now, and this government is doing what its moral duty is, not just now but in the future. We're protecting people. We're protecting our businesses. We're investing record amounts in health care. We're also protecting our environment by strengthening our conservation authorities, to ensure that there is no more flooding in this province.

My husband and I went for a trip, before COVID happened, to Cambridge, where we saw riverbank hardening happening in the aftermath of the 1974 flood. Now you can see that the Grand River is fortified. This is proven infrastructure that actually helps prevent flooding, and you can see where the riverbank is not fortified where flooding still exists today. It shows you that we're standing up for all priorities in this House, not just standing up for the environment and strengthening protections for communities to protect them from flooding, but helping parents by giving them \$200 to \$250 for their children to help them with online learning, and helping seniors by including a renovation tax credit for them so that they can make their home more livable.

Speaker, this is an all-encompassing bill. Speak to Ontarians: They need this now. They need it now. Let's work together. Let's pass this bill. Ontarians cannot wait any longer.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today to participate in this debate on the time allocation motion for Bill 229. Speaker, I want to point out—I want the people who are watching this debate today to understand—that

Bill 229 is a very comprehensive, broad bill. It is an omnibus bill, as would be typical of a budget bill, but it has 44 schedules, and those schedules cover a very broad range of public policy issues. They deal with lotteries, property assessments, commercial tenancies, conservation authorities, credit unions, film classification systems, the Highway Traffic Act, the Insurance Act, liquor licences, mortgage brokers, the Ontario College of Teachers, the Ontario Energy Board, provincial parks, municipal blue boxes—you can see from that list of issues how very sweeping this bill is, and therefore there should be a higher level of scrutiny of legislation that is so broad.

Unfortunately, the government chose to cut off debate on Bill 229 at the earliest possible opportunity. In fact, I saw that a PC member was on his feet, mid-sentence, he was cut off at six and a half hours, and the government House leader indicated that he had felt there had been a good debate and that it was time to move on.

Speaker, I don't call allowing 12 MPPs from all parties who are present here in this Legislature, out of the 124 of us who want to participate in debate—because we have a responsibility to do that on behalf of the people that we represent. But a debate where only 12 MPPs can participate? I don't think that that provides a good analysis of the impact of legislation on the people that we represent.

We have an obligation to ensure that there are regional perspectives brought to bear, because looking at that list of issues that are addressed in Bill 229, the impact will be very different in northern Ontario versus southwestern Ontario, in eastern Ontario versus the GTA. So we have to have a variety of voices. We have to enable MPPs from all parts of the province to contribute to the debate so that they can bring those regional perspectives on behalf of the people that they represent. But this government decided they didn't want to do that. They didn't want to allow that opportunity for a rich debate that actually brought perspectives to the table that reflect the concerns and the priorities of people from across the province.

So here we are, Speaker. Here we are with a time allocation motion that cuts off debate and sends this bill to committee. I'm just going to comment very briefly on the actual technicalities of the motion, so to speak. There are three days of public hearings. I will say to the government, that's a lot better than the half day that we often see when bills are time-allocated. But three days of public hearings; 44 schedules, as I mentioned—I suspect that there is going to be a lot more interest in speaking to this bill than has been allotted by the government for public input.

But the troubling thing is, and we see this all the time, the deadline for written submissions is Wednesday, December 2, at 7 p.m. Amendments to the bill are due the next day at noon. Speaker, if we want to actually respect the input that we receive from people who come as deputation to speak to us as MPPs, to offer suggestions about how to improve legislation or concerns about legislation, then we have to allow time to process the input that is received and actually turn that input around and create meaningful amendments that incorporate the suggestions that were made. But there is virtually no time to enable that to happen.

It's such a loss for us as legislators to make sure that the legislation that is being passed by this chamber is good legislation, that it protects the public interest, that it speaks to the priorities of the people of this province. One of the reasons why I am concerned about the time allocation motion is the nature of the issues that are addressed in this bill.

I'm going to now turn to some of the schedules of the bill, those 44 schedules, that I suspect people will have very strong feelings about and that we will receive a lot of input on. I'm going to start with what is perhaps the most troubling aspect of Bill 229, and that is schedule 6, the Conservation Authorities Act.

What this schedule does is it amends the Conservation Authorities Act to weaken the power of conservation authorities to protect Ontarians from flooding and other hazards that result from development within conservation areas. It allows for the further politicization of developmental approvals by giving the minister and his or her staff the authority to approve development proposals without going through proper scrutiny.

1400

It does a number of other things that have raised huge concerns among conservationists, environmentalists, people who care about climate change, people who want to see this government taking climate change seriously and doing something to protect our province, our climate and our communities. I have to say, Speaker—you've heard the expression "fiddling while Rome burns." This is worse than fiddling while Rome burns. This is throwing wood on the fire. This is creating much more vulnerability to climate change than we had before.

I want to read some comments that were offered on this bill by Ian Wilcox, who is from the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. That is the conservation authority that covers the 17 municipalities in my area of the province. London is one of those municipalities. But it recognizes that there is an Upper Thames River watershed, and it recognizes the importance of taking a watershed approach to programs and policies so that the entire watershed is protected, so that there isn't this piecemeal kind of policy model, where each municipality is making different decisions. What it does is it creates threats to the protection of the watershed.

Ian Wilcox, the executive director of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, says, "There's a reason we're concerned. [The changes] seem to bypass or negate our fundamental role, which is watershed management...." He goes on to say, "We were not informed conservation authorities would be part of this bill, so it was a bit of a shock. In our opinion, it really has nothing to do with the stated purpose of that omnibus bill," which is titled, Speaker, I will point out, the Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act. I think that Ian Wilcox raises a good question: What does undermining conservation authorities, enabling the politicization of development projects have to do with protecting, supporting and recovering from COVID-19?

Ian Wilcox goes on to say, "I would argue" the government needs "to go back and read their history because

conservation authorities were created to deal with soil erosion, deforestation, water quality issues, providing public spaces, natural areas.”

The government would have you believe that that is not the core business of conservation authorities, but that has been the core business of conservation authorities for more than 70 years. This government wants to move away from that model and allow developers to go around conservation authorities by going directly to the minister for approval of permits and unilaterally overturn decisions that may have been made by the conservation authorities.

Ian Wilcox points out, “Any decision that puts people and property at risk is short-sighted and far more costly in the long run.”

Ian Wilcox is not the only person that is concerned about schedule 6. There has already been a lot of input that has been provided on this schedule by trusted organizations like Environmental Defence, the Canadian Environmental Law Association. They have all sounded the alarm about how damaging this schedule is going to be to our environment. And Speaker, quite honestly, I trust what Environmental Defence has to say. I trust what the Canadian Environmental Law Association has to say. I trust what the general manager of the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has to say because of this government’s track record. We just saw a scathing report from the Auditor General about the damage that this government’s policy decisions have been doing to the environment. So I’m not prepared to listen to this government talk about the need to restrict conservation authorities to their core mandate and to suggest that that won’t have any harmful impacts on the environment. I don’t believe it. Honestly, I don’t believe it. And in light of the auditor’s report, I think that there’s even more reason to question whether this government’s claims are legitimate. So, Speaker, that is one of the big concerns.

Another concern that I suspect people will want to talk about at committee—that all of us as MPPs, had we had the opportunity to participate in second reading debate, would likely have raised—is around long-term care. Long-term care was not one of those issues that I mentioned that’s addressed in this bill, but it is one of the highest policy priorities for the people of this province. I think people have recognized, more than ever, our moral and ethical obligation to ensure that seniors are able to age with dignity and to be cared for in a way that doesn’t lead them to die. That’s exactly what we saw throughout this COVID-19 pandemic, Speaker.

You only have to read the report of the Canadian Armed Forces to be horrified—horrified—at the condition that seniors were living in in for-profit long-term-care facilities in this province. You only have to look at the statistics, the 2,000 families who have lost loved ones because their loved ones were residents in long-term-care homes where the proper protection measures were not put in place. In the face of all that, in the face of this devastating exposure by the Canadian Armed Forces of the reality of the conditions in Ontario’s long-term-care homes, one might have expected Bill 229—and one might have expected the

budget that accompanies the bill—to include a serious commitment to addressing the needs of the long-term-care sector. But Speaker, neither this bill nor the budget that this bill is implementing included that kind of commitment.

There is nothing to move to an actual model of four hours of hands-on care per resident per day. This government announced that they were going to achieve that goal, but—you know, budgets are value statements. Budgets reveal what a government really cares about. The fact that there was no funding committed to enable a move toward the four hours of hands-on care is deeply troubling, and it shows that the government will make that kind of public commitment. They’ll make that announcement, and people will say, “Oh, isn’t that great? The government’s going to do something about it.” But if they don’t commit resources to it, Speaker, it’s not going to happen.

We know from people in the sector who looked at this budget, who looked at Bill 229—they’ve all said there is no way that we are going to be able to implement four hours of hands-on care by 2025, which is far too late, as an aside. But even the government’s stated goal—there’s no way that they’re going to be able to meet target unless they start committing the funding now, unless they start developing a comprehensive human resources strategy to get those PSWs into the sector and to enable the four hours of hands-on care per resident per day that we all know the government’s own long-term-care commission recognized is needed in our long-term-care sector.

1410

I just wanted to quickly touch on another schedule in this bill, and that is around the commercial eviction ban. Speaker, I recall—and you probably recall—that not so long ago we spent hours in this chamber debating a bill to extend the ban on commercial evictions by one month to October 31. Here we are in November. That ban ended several weeks ago. We know that businesses across the province are receiving eviction notices. They started coming the day after October 31, and it is cold comfort to see in this bill that there will be an extension of that ban on commercial evictions. Now, the government has said it will be retroactive, but who knows how many businesses will actually have to shut down before this ban comes into place?

We know we heard throughout the summer that what businesses really need is assistance with commercial rents. That is what is going to enable them to stay in business. This ban on commercial evictions won’t help businesses that can’t pay their rent because they don’t have access to the direct financial support that they have a right to expect from government. The problem with the moratorium that’s proposed in Bill 229 is that it uses the same criteria that the CECRA program used, which, as we heard loud and clear, disqualified many, many small and medium-sized businesses in this province. They weren’t able to go through their landlord and be eligible for CECRA, and now they won’t qualify under this commercial eviction ban.

I’ve heard many times from government members across the way talking about the fact that this bill includes

a reduction on the business education tax rate, and that that is going to be the saviour for small businesses in Ontario, but, Speaker, if a business can't make it through the pandemic and still survive on the other side, a reduction in the business education tax rate is not going to help them. That is not going to help them. We do not see the direct financial support that businesses need and that we have been advocating for, really, throughout this pandemic.

The final issue I wanted to address is around child care. We heard the Minister of Finance acknowledge the fact that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and the need for specific measures to assist women to re-enter the labour market and get back to work. We all know that the measure that is most helpful to enable women to do that is child care, and yet the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care points out that child care is facing at least \$48 million in annual provincial funding cuts, starting in 2020.

This budget does not deal with the crisis that we are having in our child care sector. It doesn't provide the stabilization funding that is necessary to assist child care centres that have had to reduce their numbers and invest hugely in PPE, and don't have a financial viability model that will enable them to remain sustainable. So we are very likely to see the closure of child care centres across this province without the funding stabilization that they would have needed. Instead, Speaker—it's not in this bill—what's happening at the same time is this government is undertaking a regulatory review of child care and is proposing to put more children, younger children, in larger classrooms or child care rooms with unqualified staff. That is definitely not the solution that women in this province are looking for. That is not what is going to enable women to re-enter the workforce.

So there are, as I mentioned, 44 schedules. I've touched on three of them, I think—very, very few. But you can get a sense of why a longer debate on this bill would have been beneficial and you can also get a sense of why we need to provide as much opportunity as possible for people in this province to participate in the budget process and provide feedback that is actually going to strengthen and improve Bill 229.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's always a pleasure for me to rise in this House on behalf of my constituents in Scarborough–Guildwood to speak to the proceedings in this Legislature. As I'm listening to this government motion, I'm wondering, what is the rush? I'm wondering, does the government believe that it has all of the answers? Do you not want to hear the other side? Do you not want to hear the advice that is coming from our constituents in our communities who might have a different perspective? But by the haste in which this very important bill is being rushed through the Legislature, it tells me that the government is loath to hear the other side, that it does not want to have any meaningful and real debate.

Madam Speaker, we are two thirds of the way through this fiscal year, yet funds are still not allocated to programs, much less spent. This government is still holding

\$13.2 billion in contingencies and reserves. Instead of allocating to needed programs that are so desperately needed, the government has repeated their line about not spending all of the funds before the year is up. But what are they waiting for? Those funds are needed now. With more than 1,000 new cases in our province every day, breaking records over the last two weeks, with the hospitalization and ICU rates rising, being very, very—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I'm sorry to interrupt the member. I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I apologize to the member.

Madam Speaker, we've just been informed of the on-duty death of an OPP officer and would seek unanimous consent to lower the flags to half-staff.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Do we have agreement? Agreed.

I return to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood to continue.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker—a very important interruption of the proceedings here. Those first responders who put themselves in harm's way deserve our protection, and our respects, and our thoughts go to the families and to the individuals who are impacted by the loss of that OPP officer. It's tragic news today.

With more than 1,000 cases each day, with our hospitals being overwhelmed—just this week, we heard from the Minister of Health that hospitals are at 100% and more capacity; with ICU rates rising—they're almost at capacity right now; and with mounting deaths in our long-term-care homes, now is the time that the government needs to invest. The budget shows that \$5.2 billion—actually, \$5.3 billion if you round it up—in health contingencies is just sitting there, and that \$2.6 billion remains in that balance. It shows \$3 billion in regular contingency funds and \$2.5 billion in reserves. Yet this budget has no plan to intervene and to spend these dollars where they are needed the most.

1420

Has the government simply lined the budget so that they can perhaps come out ahead when they give an update? I don't know. I just know that the programs and the priorities that I am hearing about from constituents and others across the province need urgent action, and they need it now.

What's shocking is that there is no funding attached to the promise of implementing four hours of care for long-term-care residents and no plan in sight to get there. Effectively, this government has broken its promise to families and residents and staff of long-term care, because they must languish until next year before they see any new spending in this area. There are no income supports for what could be a very difficult winter for workers and those who are most impacted by the pandemic.

Madam Speaker, my concern is how this is going to affect us in the long term, because delay matters. It matters in terms of how quickly we handle the issues in the pandemic, how quickly we recover and move forward. Statistics Canada's labour force survey over the past

month has consistently shown that women, Black, Indigenous and Ontarians of colour are the hardest hit by the COVID-19 recession. And while they were the hardest hit, recovery for these groups has been slower, when it comes to the levels of unemployment getting back to pre-pandemic levels.

I have been ringing the alarm bells since the spring, that the Premier needs to bring forward a plan for the full recovery of these groups into the economic recovery. Without this action, there has been little movement for Ontarians on the margins. They are the ones that are languishing. After months of shutdown and restriction, those who have lost their livelihoods need a plan that will get them back into the workforce and back to business, a plan that includes investments in our education system.

I recognize that in the bill, there was some investment into micro-credentials, and I think that is a good thing. It just simply does not go far enough. The chaos created by a failed back-to-school implementation has taken its toll.

I know that we just recognized the on-duty loss of our OPP officer, and that is a tragedy. But I also felt that tragedy yesterday when I heard about a child and youth worker in the Toronto Catholic District School Board who died due to COVID-19, because I know the relationship that those child and youth workers have with their students, with the school community. They are beloved by their school community. They work tirelessly to help and to support students, particularly those that are vulnerable. So any loss due to this pandemic is one too many, and we should be doing everything that we can to accelerate our response and to coordinate what is needed.

The priorities in this budget tell us the seriousness with which the government takes this pandemic. Giving parents and families \$200 per child and \$250 for children with disabilities up to the age of 21: Perhaps that will provide some relief, but is that what is really required? Is that what is really enough when parents and educators were asking for reduced class sizes, bringing class sizes down, capping them at 15 to allow safe physical distancing in schools, to allow less interruption in schools?

I do listen to the minister. He says, "Well, the majority of schools have no COVID-19." But what about those in hot spot communities like in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood and across Scarborough, where we have so many schools that are in outbreak, that are being disrupted, with classes that are being sent home to learn virtually, where devices might not be available, or connectivity? That disruption is affecting the learning of students.

I will just conclude by saying that the budget is a betrayal to those parents and families in Ontario who expect better from this government.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to address this time allocation motion, as my colleague from London West did so ably a few minutes ago. This debate concerns Bill 229, a bill with substantial consequences for this province. My colleague addressed pretty heavily schedule 6, the Conservation Authorities Act. I actually

want to go back to that, because although there are many schedules of great consequence, this is one that I've heard a lot about from my constituents.

People need to understand, and I think most do, that conservation authorities came into being in the late 1940s and were really modified and put into their current form in the early 1950s, to a great extent—put in place, re-shaped—to deal with the potential impact of flooding. Hurricane Hazel had a horrendous impact on this province. People learned from that experience and realized there needed to be action to get people and their homes out of flood plains so that we wouldn't have disasters happening to families and communities in the future—and not only getting people out, but making sure that there was a regulatory authority in place to prevent those flood plains from being repopulated in the future. So conservation authorities have had that as a central task for a number of decades, and on top of that, they provide, in many, many communities, the recreational lands, the conserved lands that not only make our daily lives a lot more pleasant but actually protect a variety of species. So they provide a very important service to this province and one that's not to be lightly ignored or trifled with. Unfortunately, this bill not only ignores them, it undermines them quite substantially.

The reality is that with the passage of this budget bill, as currently written, more families will find themselves in homes built on flood plains where a disastrous hurricane will put their lives and their future at risk. This bill, if passed as written, will disrupt the flow of water in a variety of areas, causing flooding in places that may previously have been protected because wetlands were preserved.

You, Speaker, and others are well aware of the initiative on the part of this government to put forward a ministerial zoning order for the lower Duffins Creek wetlands, and the huge concern in Ajax, not just amongst politicians but amongst the people who live in the area, knowing that not only will we be losing an area that needs to be conserved, but we also are going to be in a position where we will see more flooding. This change around flooding alone should be enough for people to say this schedule should be scrubbed from the act.

But I also want to note that this bill narrows conservation authorities' objects and programs and it reduces the powers of the conservation authorities to investigate illegal activities, so that we are not only changing their mandate but their ability to actually perform the work that we see as socially valuable. If this bill goes forward, there's no doubt in my mind that future governments—and it won't matter what the stripe is—will have to overturn it because people will be flooded out of their homes, and the demand from the public for action will be profound.

1430

I want to note before I go on that a number of mayors in the 905 have already seen the potential impact. The mayors of Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville have written an open letter about the destructive elements, the destructive nature of this schedule. I'm going to read extracts from this letter.

Mayor Gord Krantz, town of Milton: "These changes"—the ones that are in this bill—"would hurt

residents if housing is allowed to be built on flood plains—and who’s going to pay?” Not the developers who were given licence to build on a flood plain; no, not them. What the mayor goes on to say is, “It will be our local taxpayers picking up the bill for events that could have been prevented....”

The government needs to know and recognize that they are allowing the construction of family homes in harm’s way and that local municipalities in the 905—and, frankly, all over Ontario—are going to have to deal with the consequences. That should give them pause. That should give good reason to scrap this schedule.

Mayor Rick Bonnette, town of Halton Hills: “These proposed changes favour developers at the expense of public health and safety....”

Now, I don’t know the mayor of Halton Hills, but I imagine that it’s a relatively conservative municipality, just from the area that it’s located, and so these are not your downtown Toronto environmental activists. They are fairly straightforward business people saying that we’ve got a big problem here and the government needs to back off on it.

Another quote, and this is from Mayor Marianne Meed Ward, city of Burlington: “These proposed changes reverse previous assurances from the government not to interfere with the critical role of conservation authorities to protect human life and property from flooding and extreme weather. These protections were put in place after Hurricane Hazel, but with the reality of climate change are as necessary as ever....”

I think that’s a pretty straightforward statement. The mayor is very clear, and I would hope that those MPPs in this House who represent these areas, or parts of these areas, would heed the words of their mayors, who know, as the earlier mayor said, “It will be our local taxpayers picking up the bill.” Heed the words of these mayors, who do not want to be stuck with dealing with the consequences of an irresponsible act. They don’t want to be the ones who have to go out and comfort families who have lost their homes and perhaps loved ones because they were swept away in a flood. But what’s happening with this schedule today is things are being set up so that that is the situation we will be facing.

I want to read, again, a quote from Mayor Rob Burton, town of Oakville. “The government would be undoing their own heritage of former Progressive Conservative Premiers George Drew, who created conservation authorities, and Leslie Frost, who strengthened them....”

Now, those former Conservative Premiers were not doing anything fancy. They saw what happened when floods went through towns, they saw what happened when houses were swept away, and they wanted action so that they wouldn’t have to deal with that again. That was the legacy they left to us. The fact that they left us this legacy and it is being dismantled, it is being ripped apart in this act, is something that should give people pause. As my colleague from London West had said, when you’re dealing with things this consequential, really, Speaker, you shouldn’t be jamming the bill through the House.

Frankly, this section shouldn’t even be in this bill. If you’re going to change conservation authorities and put life and property at risk, you should give people the opportunity to come to the Legislature and speak about that, and only that. It’s extraordinary to me that it is stuffed into a budget bill. It has nothing to do with the budget. It may have to do with making a number of developers happy, but nothing to do with protecting human life and property.

I want to note that because this schedule is stuffed into this budget bill, it’s a way of getting around the requirements of the Environmental Bill of Rights. The Canadian Environmental Law Association, a pretty credible, very thoughtful organization, wrote this note about schedule 6: “Bill 229 is the most recent in a disturbing trend of using omnibus budget measures bills to make substantial changes to environmental laws, thereby sidestepping the public’s right to comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights.”

Just yesterday, the environment commissioner and the Auditor General for Ontario reported on the ongoing undermining of the Environmental Bill of Rights and the lack of respect for the laws of the province of Ontario. This schedule 6 inside this budget bill is yet another example of that lack of respect, not only for the law but for the environment that we depend on and the lives that will be put at risk when these changes come into being.

Speaker, this schedule is something that has alarmed many. Conservation Ontario, which represents Ontario’s 36 conservation authorities, says the changes trigger red flags. The general manager of Conservation Ontario says, “There are a number of changes that could actually create more red tape and delay permit application approvals, and I’m not sure that’s what the province intended to do.... One of our main goals throughout this review has been to maintain the conservation authorities’ watershed-based approach to protecting people from natural hazards and ensuring the conservation of Ontario’s natural resources. Some of the changes will impact the CAs’ ability to do so.”

What’s happening here is that not only are we undermining public protection and putting human life at risk, but, contrary to the ethos of this government, we’re creating more bureaucracy and more red tape, making it more difficult for the enforcement of the law, making it less easy for public servants to do the job that they’re supposed to do.

If this schedule was the only problem in this bill—and my colleague from London West cited many others—that alone would give reason to say, “No, we shouldn’t be time-allocating this. This bill needs further debate.” But that is obviously not where the government wants to go on this—obviously not where it wants to go at all.

Speaker, I want to note as well that there are changes to the Ontario Energy Board Act, and that is a substantial problem. Again, you were present yesterday when the environmental commissioner presented her report and talked about the failure of the government to coordinate activities to actually deliver on its climate plan. One of the

things that was cited by the environmental commissioner and the Auditor General was that the Ontario Energy Board decisions have not been aligned with Ontario's environment plan and 2030 target. In fact, in this bill, in schedule 34, the Ontario Energy Board sections are being changed so that the idea of promoting renewable energy is being taken out, and what is not being put in is direction to actually use energy efficiency, to put in place requirements to drive a GHG-emission-reduction agenda, and that is a huge problem. The government has a plan for climate change—and I'm being very loose with the term "plan"—that is not supported by the rest of the government's activities, and that is totally apparent in this act.

I would urge the government to think again, withdraw this time allocation motion, allow full debate and, frankly, amend the bill so that these environmentally damaging elements—and there are others that are of concern that my colleagues have touched on—are taken out of it.

1440

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I generally get up and speak against time allocation motions on principle, but this bill especially should not be rammed through the Legislature. The debate over the last couple days around schedule 6, around conservation authorities, shows me that the government members themselves are confused about the nature of this bill.

In second reading debate, I talked about how damaging the risk is associated with undermining the role of conservation authorities, and one of the members opposite asked me what a proponent would do if they had a reasonable development and they were denied. I said they could appeal it to the ministry. The Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks earlier today said there is no appeal process of conservation authority decisions. Mr. Speaker, I just want to be very clear to everyone in the House and people watching that there is an appeal process. If you don't like a decision of the conservation authority, you can appeal it to their own board, and then if you're not happy with that, you can appeal it to the Mining and Lands Tribunal in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Now, it is true that of the 1,280 decisions CAs made, only 28 were appealed, which would make you think they actually do a pretty good job, but there is an appeal process, so we should be clear about that. Maybe we need some more time for the government to study their own bill, so they understand it better.

If they would do this properly, it would be posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights and the public would have 30 days to comment, but because it's a budget bill, they're not required to put it onto the EBR.

We shouldn't be surprised. Yesterday the Auditor General said that the government's own actions are at odds with the law, because in almost 50% of the cases, they did not post something on the EBR until two weeks after the decision was made. So if there was ever a bill that needed

some more time for us to understand and debate, it's this one.

Now we have municipalities—the member from Toronto–Danforth mentioned a number of municipalities that are speaking out against schedule 6 of this bill. I would add the region of Peel to that list. Speaker, the public needs more time to study this bill, and especially schedule 6.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm always pleased to have the opportunity to stand in this Legislature to speak on behalf of the people of Hamilton Mountain, and this time I feel like we're speaking out for ridings across the province. We have already heard, but it does not hurt to reiterate again, that this budget bill of 44 schedules has had six and a half hours of debate. Now, that is the minimum that a bill can come before us, and the government used that threshold to ensure that they cut off debate directly at that time and tabled their time allocation motion.

That's very concerning, because out of six and a half hours—let's break that down. We have two members who speak for an hour each; one would be the Minister of Finance, and the second would be our finance critic, who would each do an hour. That left 10 members to finish off the last four and a half hours, 10 members out of 122 members left—let's take the Premier out of that, too, so 119 members left—to be able to speak to this huge budget bill in the middle of the COVID pandemic, and to have the opportunity to bring concerns forward.

I know people I've heard from are so disheartened when they're looking to the budget. We all know most people across the province really don't pay any attention to what's going on here in the Legislature, but I think that during this time of a pandemic, people are of heightened awareness. They are looking to their government to feel secure, to feel safe, to feel healthy, to feel that there is truly a plan going forward to help them in their daily lives, to help them with their health care, to help them with their parents in long-term care, to help them with their children in education, their smaller children in child care and to help themselves in the workforce. There are so many issues that are facing everyday Ontarians right now, and they're looking to their government for leadership.

So when they took that chance and jumped out of their box, like many folks are doing these days, to scramble to find that information, they're looking to say, "Hey, what is the budget actually saying? What is the government doing to help me through and to help my neighbours through this pandemic?" They're looking at this, and they're saying, "Where am I? Where am I reflected in this budget?" And they're not finding it. We're not finding the dollars that we needed for long-term care, particularly for the four hours of hands-on care. It's just not there.

There's no money to ensure that we have extra PSWs, which is a complete crisis in this province. This government should have been working on getting PSWs through the educational system and into the job force so that we could have already been enjoying those extra complements already here in the province, and yet we are not. We

are still seeing day after day and hearing from our constituents daily of the lack of PSWs in the province, and there's nothing in this budget to reflect that.

We are hearing from parents on a daily basis about class sizes, and we're really hearing about the scramble of the lack of a plan when it came to—you know, there's rumours that are happening that the Premier is going to shut down schools, that the Minister of Education is going to extend Christmas break. People are worried about the contact that they possibly could have over Christmastime and thinking, "Yep, okay. It makes sense. There'll be a buffer." But then, yesterday, the minister came out and said, "No, that's not happening. There's no extended time at Christmas"—so no plans. But, regardless, they're looking for themselves to just see that education plan in this budget.

They're looking to ensure that there are better supports for their kids. How many times in this House have I talked—just myself, never mind all the other members from the opposition or when there were government members in opposition, that we've been talking about special-needs families and the crisis that they've been in. And, you know, autism families—they're political, they're on top of things, and they're looking for themselves in the budget. They're hoping that there's some kind of plan for them. They didn't find anything—nothing there—so that was greatly concerning to so many.

We know that small businesses are struggling. I hear from small businesses daily in my riding about struggles that they are facing, particularly when it comes to rent. I know within this budget, there is an extension on the eviction ban, which is a good thing, but we also know that it doesn't go far enough and that it doesn't include so many folks. But the broader problem that didn't get addressed was that people don't have access to CECRA. This is a federal-provincial plan. Together, they've worked on this plan to come out to help businesses pay for their rent, but they left it to the landlords.

I know small businesses were hoping that there would be a change here in the budget and that there would be something that they could look forward to, something that would help them keep their doors open, and when they flip through these pages, they see a lot of little pictures and little diagrams, but they're not seeing how they're keeping their doors open. Rent is probably the number one issue that we have definitely heard, regardless of whether you're on the government side or in the opposition—I mean, it's not just opposition ridings whose constituents call us and say, "We're in trouble. Please help us." There's no way that the members on the government side are not hearing the same stories, because I know they are.

One of my small businesses—I took a walk down Concession Street during const week. At Penny Pincher, she's like, "Monique, did you find anything yet? Is there anything more that can help me? I don't know what else to do. I'm using my very small personal income that I'm supposed to live with to keep my store open, and I can't keep doing it. I don't know what else I'm going to do." It's a costume store, so Halloween is their best time of year.

She's like, "Look at my pages." She's like, "Look at last year, and look at this year." And it was bare. It was bare. People just were not renting costumes like they typically do. And we understand that.

1450

But what are we doing to support that small business? There's not a lot out there for her to be able to do that. Her partner dresses in costumes. He's been Captain America and Batman and Spider-Man. He walks up and down Concession Street, which is our BIA, just to try to drive some business and to make people feel good throughout the pandemic, but they're struggling. They're struggling, and there's nothing in this budget that is going to help her keep her doors open. That is heartbreaking.

I didn't get the opportunity to stand and speak to the budget. I was fully prepared to speak 20 minutes to it yesterday, but the government shut down debate by time allocation. So here I am, putting my hand up in caucus, saying that I'll talk to time allocation because I didn't get a chance. I'm fortunate enough to be on House duty today to be able to have this opportunity, or else I would have completely missed out. I'm sure there are many others who didn't get that opportunity either, and who will not have the opportunity, even though they're here today, to speak to this time allocation motion.

People are disappointed, and I find it so troubling. We have been through so many bills here in the Legislature, which the government has let drag on. We get to committee and, again, they truncate it and they don't allow a lot of people to speak. Then we see the time allocation motion that came before us that we're dealing with today, and we're seeing a lot of those same issues.

When people come to committee, they're going to be allowed to have seven minutes to make a presentation. We've heard a lot of talk about schedule 6 and the lack of environmental protections that are in this bill, actually removing environmental protections in this bill, that people are greatly concerned about. How are they supposed to do that in seven minutes? Because their MPP hasn't been able to raise that issue. But it is an important issue.

I did bring some emails from my office from a couple of my constituents. One—I'll read it to you—says:

"Hello Ms. Taylor,

"I have just read an article concerning Bill 229, which was to have its second reading yesterday, November 17, 2020.

"I am very concerned if this section 6 impacts our wetlands, forests etc. We need our forests and natural areas to keep our planet alive.

"I am also incensed that this bill has been pushed on, in a way that the public has no input.

"I recall Mr. Ford trying to do this when he first came into power, and he was shut down. Now he is doing it again, amidst a pandemic, when people's attention may not be on these sly bills.

"Mr. Ford may be justifying his actions as a 'make new jobs' project, but destroying our conservation is not the way to do it.

"I appreciate your taking the time to read my concerns and take action on this section of the bill. It really does need to be removed from Bill 229.

"I have written this letter in the first person, but my husband, Wayne, echoes my concerns.

"With thanks," Barb.

That's from one of my constituents who is paying attention to what's happening here in the Legislature and seeing what was happening in Bill 229 and in the budget bill, and has great concerns about the protections that are being removed and the new powers that are being given to the minister that will override our Environmental Bill of Rights and will put people's homes and our environment in danger.

I've also received almost 100 emails so far. I'm sure they will continue to spill in. I'm actually c.c.'d on this. It's from one of my constituents, but it's a form letter that we all get to our office, so I know all the members from the other side of the House received this also. It reads:

"Dear Minister Phillips,

"c.c.: Minister Clark, Minister Yakabuski and Minister Yurek

"I strongly oppose"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I'm sorry to interrupt the member. Just a reminder to all members: You must refer to the folks in the House by their riding or their title, not their names. Even if it's in a letter, you cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly.

If you will make that modification, please continue.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thanks, Speaker. I'll just continue on, if that's okay.

"I strongly oppose the proposed changes to the Conservation Authorities Act set out in schedule 6 of Bill 229 that curtail the role of conservation authorities in watershed planning and management. I am also deeply concerned that these proposed changes were brought forward in a budget bill, thereby overriding my right to comment under the Environmental Bill of Rights. I request that you remove schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229.

"Ontario's conservation authorities are a unique and widely respected innovation. They provide a much-valued bridge across municipal boundaries to understand and address environmental concerns, such as flooding. Because they operate at the watershed level, they are ideally positioned to encourage science-based collaborative strategies and decision-making. Their vital role in land use planning and permitting must be retained to ensure that development does not put communities at risk from flooding and other climate change impacts through loss of wetlands, woodlands and farmland.

"The changes proposed in schedule 6 will reduce or constrain the mandate of conservation authorities, and are therefore contradictory to the interests of the people of Ontario who are facing enormous risks and costs as a result of climate change and ongoing biodiversity loss. The roles and responsibilities of conservation authorities are critical in protecting the lands, waters and wildlife which benefit businesses and communities across Ontario,

and upon which our health and well-being ultimately depend.

"I urge you to remove schedule 6 in its entirety from Bill 229."

This is a prime example of what is being missed out on. People on this side of the House have heard from their own constituents. Everybody has received this. This is a huge concern for our entire province that is being echoed by every environmentalist across this province, and yet this government is pushing it through an omnibus bill, which budget bills typically are, but without scrutiny.

Under the Environmental Bill of Rights, they have an obligation to ensure that they do consultation when it comes to environmental changes, and yet they found a loophole to be able to put it through a budget bill to avoid that process. Then, a presenter who comes to Queen's Park—virtually, now, but still—who takes the time to bring a presentation, you're going to give them seven minutes to have a say.

Does anybody not see an issue with this? Do members on the other side of the House really not care about our planet, our climate, our children's future? We have talked about your children's future here in this House. We have talked about bullying. We have talked about education. Members come in with members' statements and talk about all the wonderful things about their children.

What about the planet? What about them being able to breathe and have land that doesn't flood out? These are real things. These are from scientists. These are from conservationists. These are from people who have put their entire lives into our lands. Then people come here, they get elected, and they think they know everything and just blow out what the scientists have to say.

It's unbelievable to me. It is absolutely unbelievable to me that these members sit here and they do nothing to ensure that the government and these ministers don't undermine our Environmental Bill of Rights. That's why we have it. We have it for a reason, and this process is completely undermining it.

I want to read this from the Niagara Peninsula conservation, which Hamilton is connected to. "We are writing to express our extreme concern about Bill 229. The proposed changes have a direct negative impact on decades of on-the-ground watershed planning, monitoring, and ecosystem management measures put in place to keep our residents safe from natural hazards and protect Ontario's precious natural resources for future generations. The need for investment in green space for the health and well-being of our communities was clearly exposed during the COVID pandemic. Local CAs were challenged to deploy resources on the front lines....

"We note that a majority of proposed amendments are contrary to the spirit of Auditor General's recommendations, against the basic standards of good governance, and disrespect watershed science and evidence-based planning"—it can go on.

1500

It's the wrong direction. The members know it. They've heard from the same scientists and experts that we have.

They need to stand up to their government. They need to remove schedule 6, and they need to allow people the opportunity to be able to debate these very important measures throughout this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I just wish to inform the House that in accordance with standing order 7(e), there will be no late sitting tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize your point of order and appreciate it. Thank you.

Further debate? Further debate?

Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 96, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 229, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact, amend and repeal various statutes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

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

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, unless I receive a deferral slip, the bells will ring for—I have received a deferral slip.

Pursuant to standing order 30(h), the government whip requests that the vote on government notice of motion number 96 be deferred until deferred votes on Monday November 23, 2020.

Vote deferred.

BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
POUR MIEUX SERVIR LA POPULATION
ET FACILITER LES AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to reduce burdens on people and businesses by enacting, amending and repealing various Acts and revoking a regulation / Projet de loi 213, Loi visant à alléger le fardeau administratif qui pèse sur la population et les entreprises en édictant, modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois et en abrogeant un règlement.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I’m pleased to speak to this important piece of legislation today, introduced by my good friend the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

This bill and its proposed changes is another crucial step forward in our government’s plan to modernize regulations, reduce unnecessary burdens and digitize processes, to help more people and businesses recover from the economic effects of COVID-19 and prepare them for the opportunities of the future. If passed, the act would

strengthen economic recovery, help businesses and government adapt, and create the conditions for investment and prosperity over the long term.

We will cut costly red tape to help businesses and people increase cash flow, invest in safety measures and rebuild. We will reduce unnecessary and duplicative requirements for private and public sector businesses and organizations, to save time and streamline how government works. We will have modern regulations that are easy to understand and comply with. This will allow people and businesses to invest time and money in what’s important: recovering, rebuilding and re-emerging from the crisis stronger than before.

This bill is the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act. Like the bill of the same name introduced last year, we are introducing proposals to benefit both people interacting with government as individuals and businesses interacting with government as companies, as employers.

The past several months have underlined how now, more than ever, government, people and businesses need to be able to modernize and adapt, taking advantage of technology and streamlining antiquated processes and practices. This bill is a step in that direction.

This is also another piece in our overall response to COVID-19. Right away, our government took action to make \$10 billion in financial relief available to people and businesses: \$1.9 billion in employer relief by allowing WSIB payments to be deferred for up to six months; \$1.8 million in property tax deferrals for individuals and businesses; and \$6 billion in relief through an interest- and penalty-free period for payment on most provincial taxes.

These relief measures were introduced through Ontario’s Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19. This was the first economic and fiscal update of any province during the pandemic.

We have taken concrete steps to protect the people of Ontario, as well as our economy, throughout the pandemic. While we are hearing of positive news about the development of vaccines, we know that the pandemic will still be with us for some time yet. We must continue to support people and businesses throughout the pandemic, while also keeping long-term recovery and economic growth in mind. It is a balancing act.

Speaker, I’m proud of the people of Ontario, especially the people of my community of Mississauga–Streetsville, in how far we’ve come, and I’m proud of my colleagues in government for the actions we have taken. While we are working hard to reduce red tape and regulatory burden, we realize that changes must be done methodically and strategically. We are not against regulation; we are against unnecessary regulation.

There are guiding principles that we follow when proposing amendments or changes:

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

We must prioritize issues that are most important, even if they are difficult. We are carefully assessing which

regulations cost people and businesses the most time and money, while looking for innovative, modern ways to ensure these rules are as effective and efficient as possible. After all, it is the 21st century.

We must do what we can to harmonize rules with Ottawa and other provinces wherever we can. Rules and regulations should not vary widely between Ontario and other provinces or the federal government. We're targeting duplicative red tape and aligning where we can to make things easier for people and job creators.

We must listen to the people of Ontario. We want to hear from people about what we can do to remove red tape and create the right conditions for businesses and communities to prosper.

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

First, I'd like to talk about people. We've taken action to support people before this piece of legislation. One of the biggest examples was in response to the panic-buying that occurred at the beginning of the pandemic. We all experienced the shortages of toilet paper, canned goods and even staples like flour. Our supply chain partners assured us we were not at risk of shortages, but stock could not be replenished quickly enough. In response, we allowed trucks to start making deliveries 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We have seen the difference this has made, and people's confidence that they can buy the things their families rely on has been restored.

But let's talk about this legislation. We have heard from many who were concerned about the processes for companies to build new wells or extract water, so immediately we undertook a review. Our review of Ontario's water-taking program found that takings for bottled water are managed effectively under the current framework, but it was clear that local communities wanted more say in decisions to allow bottling in their area. Keeping in line with our actions throughout the pandemic, we are proposing a change to require that municipalities support bottlers' applications for new or increased water-takings before submitting to the province.

1510

Here is an example of a regulatory practice we propose to update in order to reflect options that didn't exist when the regulations were written. This would modernize practices for child and spousal support payments by introducing new payment options. Currently, employers are required to deduct the amount an employee owes from their pay and forward it to the Family Responsibility Office, or FRO. This method reflected the payment options available in 1996 when the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act came into effect.

But we now have reliable and automatic payment options, such as preauthorized debit and online banking,

that weren't readily available 24 years ago. This proposal, under schedule 4 of the bill, would give the FRO's director the discretion to offer support payers new options like this to pay what they owe. This wouldn't mean that everyone would switch to one of the new payment options. Instead, FRO would allow support payers to use different payment methods in appropriate cases, and it would monitor these cases closely for compliance. In these cases, employers would also be relieved of the administrative burden of deducting support payments from an employee's pay.

I'm going to talk a little about medications at border towns. I'd like to highlight an action that would benefit Ontarians who live in towns bordering Manitoba and Quebec and are treated by a doctor or nurse practitioner from one of those provinces. The proposal would turn a successful pilot launched in 2015 into a permanent regulatory practice. Under this pilot, health care professionals in Manitoba or Quebec with patients across the border in Ontario are designated as authorized prescribers under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. This allows them to submit drug approval requests under the program on behalf of their patients. Making this approach permanent would expand access for people in border towns to the medications they so desperately need. It's an example of a common-sense change that would have a positive impact on Ontarians.

Another action would address significant gaps in a vital transportation service: intercommunity buses. Buses are a lifeline for people in many communities, especially in rural and northern Ontario. Rural and northern Ontarians rely on the bus to get to hospitals, to go to work or access post-secondary education. But there are significant gaps in this service, and COVID-19 has widened those gaps as bus carriers have responded to decreased demand by reducing or even discontinuing services on many routes.

We're proposing to address these gaps by deregulating the intercommunity bus sector to allow new entrants into the market. This would create an open and competitive market that would support economic recovery. It would permit new carriers to offer improved service for residents in rural and northern communities. For example, they would be allowed to introduce innovations such as using smaller buses on routes where that would match lower demand from passengers. Deregulating the intercommunity bus sector would also benefit existing carriers by providing them with more regulatory flexibility as they continue to restart service. It would give them the scope to retool their service offerings in response to demand and their own financial capabilities.

We're also proposing changes to protect students attending private career colleges. The proposed action concerns government oversight of a fund that provides protection for students if a private career college suddenly closes or loses its registration status. The Training Completion Assurance Fund, or TCAF, ensures if this happens, eligible students can complete their training at another institution or get a partial refund of their fees.

Currently, an advisory board provides recommendations on matters related to this fund to the superintendent

of private career colleges, but our Agency Review Task Force recommended replacing this board with an advisory committee. This is a more flexible model, and it's widely used because it simplifies the process for selecting committee members. Adopting this model would ensure we continue to receive advice in this important area, but in a more nimble and flexible manner.

Now I'd like to talk about the other half of our bill: businesses. In July, we took several major steps to reduce regulatory burdens as part of the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act. Through this legislation, we've combined all burden reduction requirements into a single law, the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act.

This new law includes two key advances in our work in this area. The first is to enshrine the government's seven burden reduction principles into law. These principles are:

- (1) Use industry standards or international best practices;
- (2) Apply a small-business lens;
- (3) Go digital;
- (4) Strengthen risk-based inspections;
- (5) Create a "tell us once" culture;
- (6) Focus on the user; and
- (7) Focus regulations on the desired outcomes.

Provincial ministries are now required to consider these principles as they develop proposals for regulatory changes.

The second key advance is to broaden the scope of our work substantially. It now encompasses legislation, regulations, policies and forms. We all know how much we love filling out forms. We've also extended it to regulatory requirements that affect the for-profit sector, not-for-profit organizations or the broader public sector.

Speaker, as I had mentioned before, we have done lots of work to provide supports and flexibility during COVID-19, but our work is not yet complete. This new legislation would strengthen economic recovery, help businesses and government better adapt and create the conditions for investment and prosperity over the long term. The act would do this in three ways: It would cut costly red tape to boost our recovery by helping businesses increase cash flow, invest in safety measures and rebuild. It would reduce unnecessary and duplicative requirements for businesses to save time and streamline how government works, supporting business and government transformation. It would modernize regulations and digitize to increase innovation and prepare people and businesses for the opportunities of the future, promoting investment and growth.

The proposals in our legislation would make a tangible difference for businesses in many spheres of our community, including changes to regulations that affect the aquaculture and mining exploration sectors, real estate transactions, redevelopment of brownfield sites and decision-making at business corporations.

Let's start off with corporate decision-making. One of our proposals would allow privately held business corporations to make decisions requiring shareholder approval through an ordinary resolution faster and more cost-

effectively. This amendment would apply to written shareholder resolutions to approve certain types of corporate actions, such as adopting new bylaws, appointing an auditor or electing directors.

Currently, companies must spend time and money obtaining signatures from every voting shareholder, and some of these resolutions fail because companies can't collect the signatures within the timeline required under the Business Corporations Act, not because shareholders are opposed. We're proposing to align with the practice in BC, Yukon and Delaware by lowering the approval threshold from unanimous to a majority of shareholders. This wouldn't apply to special resolutions, which are typical for significant corporate decisions such as amalgamations.

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We're proposing to align our practice with jurisdictions that are often cited as being attractive places for corporations. This would allow these businesses to make certain types of decisions more quickly so they could capitalize on the opportunities and avoid missing out on opportunities due to burdensome approval processes. Overall, this would help strengthen a pro-investment business environment in Ontario that would help create good jobs.

One of the things I strongly believe in is learning from experience, and that's why I'm particularly pleased about this next action. We will be applying what our public servants have learned from administering legislation on forfeited corporate properties to improve the system overall.

When the Forfeited Corporate Property Act came into effect in 2016, it consolidated the management of these properties with the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. This year, the ministry completed a review of 332 files on forfeited properties over the first three years under this act and identified ways to improve the regulatory process. Our proposed amendments to the act would reduce burdens on people, businesses and government. They would remove duplication and clarify requirements to make it easier for consumers and businesses to seek relief from forfeiture or to buy a forfeited property.

Similarly, we are making housekeeping amendments to provisions in the Planning Act about what's known as subdivision control. These provisions ensure proper government oversight when land is divided into subdivisions. The government evaluates a proposal to create a parcel of land to ensure it adheres to land-use planning principles and addresses any long-term impacts from creating the parcel. These highly technical amendments would help make the subdivision control provisions in the Planning Act clearer and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens.

Unfortunately, I don't have enough time to outline all of our proposals and amendments within the bill, but they are all common-sense changes to enhance our province's regulatory effectiveness and efficiency, and improve the environment for people and businesses.

I look forward to supporting this bill, I ask all people in the chamber to support this bill and I thank the minister for bringing this forward.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 61

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If you seek it, I'm sure you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Calandra is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the order of the House dated December 6, 2018, referring Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and the bill be instead referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Calandra has moved that the order of the House dated December 6, 2018, referring Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and the bill be instead referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

BETTER FOR PEOPLE,
SMARTER FOR BUSINESS ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020
POUR MIEUX SERVIR LA POPULATION
ET FACILITER LES AFFAIRES

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a question for the member for Mississauga–Streetsville. I know a little bit about Mississauga because I used to teach at UTM, and a quick glance at her riding tells me there are a fair number of mosques in the riding, which tells me a fair number of her constituents are Muslim.

I would like to know, as we're talking about this bill, how those constituents feel about this bill containing a schedule that legislates more Islamophobia into Ontario with the granting of Charles McVety the ability to grant degrees and an Islamophobic curriculum.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member opposite for her question. This bill, the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, relates to many areas of how we can get our province moving again. The item that the member opposite is talking about—we want to make sure that everybody is equal under the law. No one is above the law, no one is beneath the law and no one is beyond the law. Therefore, we must make sure that everybody has an equal opportunity to apply through the government to anything

that's available to them, and that's what we have done in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions? I recognize—a whole bunch of you. I recognize the member for Scarborough Centre.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for speaking on this bill. Some of the people that I have spoken to in my community of Scarborough Centre don't have a clear understanding of what red tape is or why we need to address Ontario's overregulation in order to help our small businesses, who are clearly struggling right now. Can you tell me why addressing red tape and regulatory burdens is so important to the people of Ontario?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member. These are very unprecedented times, and businesses really need help to recover from the economic effects of COVID-19 whilst also preparing for the future. Red tape hurts job creators' ability to do what they do best: create jobs. We need to help them create jobs as we continue down the path of recovery.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, if passed, will strengthen Ontario's economic recovery, support businesses on the ground and will help government deliver clear and effective rules that promote public health and safeguard the environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity. Modern regulations that are easier to understand and comply with would allow people and businesses to invest time and money in what's important right now: recovering, rebuilding, and re-emerging from this crisis stronger than before.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for her perspective on the bill. I understand that you feel that this is going to help small businesses in your community, but when I speak to those small businesses across the Peel region, as we're both members in Peel, one of the biggest burdens that they're facing is the increasing cost of insurance. Your government has the power to regulate those rates. Can you help us understand why those types of measures are not included in this bill or any other bill that your government has brought forward?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member opposite for that question. In fact, this is an industry I have a lot of knowledge about, and unfortunately, the member opposite is incorrect. Although we're not talking about it in this bill, the budget bill does recognize areas of insurance by making it easier for more competitors in insurance industries and by talking about many areas where people can choose coverage that they want. That bill is still to come to the floor and to be finalized, and we will talk about it more in that bill.

Insurance is a very complicated product. It's very difficult. I encourage everyone out there, when your policy comes up for renewal, or even before that, to shop around; check with your brokers, check with other companies, look at the options that are available to you. There are

many companies here. But we do want to make sure that we encourage much more competition so that we can help the people of Ontario have more affordable insurance premiums.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for Mississauga–Streetsville for speaking to this legislation today. I'm wondering if the member can speak a little bit about schedule 12 of the bill, and that, of course, is the changes to the Niagara Parks Commission, which allow the parks to ensure that an auditor is appointed, who does not have to go through the Lieutenant Governor in Council process. I know that this is because they have had times in the past where, just due to the schedules of everything moving through cabinet, it's been difficult for them to ensure that they actually have in place someone to do the auditing.

We obviously want to make sure that the agencies that are governmental are being audited and that their finances are in order. Could you talk a little bit about this process, as well as some of the changes that have been made to ensure that there can be direct delivery of alcohol sales for many small businesses? I know it's benefited the wineries in Niagara West, as well as other restaurants.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member from Niagara West for the question. I think it's extremely crucial and very, very important that when we're modernizing our regulation that, one, we do it with the input of the local authorities and to make sure—especially in the areas of Niagara Parks, where we really wanted to make sure we had their input in what was best for their communities.

When we talk about the red tape and regulatory burden, Ontario has to work better for people, and it has to work better for all of our businesses. Businesses today need urgent and meaningful help, and as we look for those opportunities to modernize these regulations and also reduce red tape, our government is committed to those five guiding principles that I talked about earlier. Those, of course, are the health and safety and environmental protections that must be maintained and must be enhanced. As was said before, our common-sense approach to these regulations is critical to make sure that we can get things moving faster and in the right way.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, did you know there's a law in Ontario that says kids on a street corner can't sell lemonade unless they have a five-acre lemon tree orchard? I'm just pulling your leg; there is no such law. But in Ontario, you can't sell craft cider unless you own a five-acre orchard—complete red tape. I applaud the government for lifting that restriction during these COVID years or months or days.

But I say, Speaker, to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who started off by saying, "This is the 21st century, after all," do you agree that it is time to lift the five-acre-orchard restriction on craft brewers who want to

sell craft cider in cans out the door? Because it just makes no more sense in the 21st century to have a five-acre orchard when you're using Ontario apples to sell your cider.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think it's very critical that we listen to the people who are providing and manufacturing the ciders that we all love—I know we all do on this side of the House. It's critical that we can get it to market. If we as a government are in their way of being able to get that product to market, then we're not acting as a good government. So we have been listening to them wholeheartedly. We are listening to find ways that we can do things better. That is something that I know our government has been listening to, and we will hopefully be acting further on that in the future.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: I recently hosted a virtual round table with members of the Whitby Chamber of Commerce and the recovery committee from the region of Durham, and there was a cross-section of businesses. We spoke about ways in which to create jobs, ways to lead the recovery.

What I'd like the member from Mississauga–Streetsville to speak about is those features of this legislation that are helping small businesses, not only in the town of Whitby and across the region of Durham, create those good jobs and lead the way to recovery.

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Thank you to the member for the question. This pandemic has really, really shown us how government needs to take the lead, be stronger and take action to modernize and digitize how we've done things. Technology has come to the forefront during this pandemic, as we've all seen. Most of us are doing many of our meetings via Zoom or Teams or other ways.

Businesses today need help now. They need it urgently. So we, through this legislation, want to help deliver the clear, current and effective rules that maintain and enhance our public health, our safety, our environment. We have to modernize those regulations and reduce red tape. That's why our government is committed to getting this done.

The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, 2020, if it's passed, will strengthen Ontario's economic recovery, support these businesses on the ground and help government deliver clear and effective rules that promote public health and safeguard our environment without sacrificing innovation, growth and opportunity.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It gives me great pleasure to rise today to bring the voice of the good residents of London North Centre to this debate. I look at the title of this particular legislation, Better for People, Smarter for Business, and it seems as though it's missing a little bit. It should be "better for some people and smarter for some businesses."

But I think about some of the principles of this House and of Ontario and of this chamber. Everyone in Ontario has the right to be safe. Everyone in Ontario has the right

to be respected. Discrimination and bigotry should have no home here.

Speaker, needless to say, I'll be focusing my comments on schedule 2 of this legislation. When we take a look at it, maybe the title isn't so bad, because there's a transaction going on here. There's a transaction to reward Charles McVety. It very much is a business decision.

At this stage, we're all well aware of Charles McVety. This government has almost strengthened his platform of hate. Think about how many times his name has hit the newspaper because of this government. Think about how many people have been introduced to his poisonous, odious ideas because of this government.

I look across the floor and I see everybody with their eyes downcast because they can't look me in the eye.

We see that our neighbours in different political jurisdictions—how when their leadership promote, endorse and validate hate speech and hate groups, they suffer; democracy itself suffers. At best, when governments behave in this manner, people lose their liberty; at worst, people lose their lives.

Across this great province of ours, we are protected by the human rights code, the charter, regardless of our race, ethnicity, colour, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, age, mental or physical disability, and so many more. Growing up queer or trans is a monumental task for some. Being a kid is bad enough. Realizing you're gay can be isolating. It can be scary. I'm so glad that in Ontario we have the human rights code and that we live in a province that strives to keep people free from hate—it strives to be; I won't say we're perfect.

We shouldn't be here discussing McVety at all. McVety should not be mentioned in a piece of pre-emptive legislation that stands in the way of a process, that tries to influence the PEQAB process. We shouldn't even be presented with the remotest possibility that we are going to strengthen his platform of hate.

We need to think of future generations of Ontarians. When all they see in the world is hate, some young LGBTQ folks may choose suicide. The risk for these young people is so much greater if they don't find the support of their family, their community or their government.

I can't reconcile how Charles McVety was snuck into Bill 213, given the title—Better for People, Smarter for Business. The Minister of Colleges and Universities has hidden behind the process, claiming, "Well, we're going to put this legislation forward first, but we're going to wait for the results from PEQAB." That doesn't make any sense whatsoever. The legislation should never stand in front of an independent process. How can that process be considered legitimately independent when government bills jump ahead of it?

The minister has stood in this chamber and has indicated that the process was the same for Algoma and OCAD—very respected and, might I say, public institutions, but because they're public institutions, they're answerable to the public. Charles McVety's Canada Christian College is private; it's answerable to him alone. So this very what I would consider flimsy excuse the

minister has used, saying that the Tyndale and Redeemer applications were treated in the same way—no, they weren't. They were approved by PEQAB earlier this year, so we have a situation of apples and oranges.

McVety kissed our Premier and threw his fringe, radical, social conservative support behind the would-be leader of the Conservative Party. He provided his office location as a voting station during the Conservative leadership race. We've uncovered that this was not reported in election financing. This was not reported to the Canada Revenue Agency by a supposed non-profit charity, Canada Christian College.

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According to Democracy Watch co-founder Duff Conacher, "When an organization or its executives actively help a candidate in any way, including during a party leadership race, it creates a conflict of interest and a sense of obligation on the part of the politician to return the favour." Well, here we are, Speaker, Bill 213, and we see that everything is coming full circle. And when we take a look at what happened before the election, the Conservative campaign team selected McVety to be among the few attending the first leaders' debate in 2018. He sat with some of Ford's top advisers—a choice seat.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. I'm sorry to interrupt the member. A couple of things: One, I'm going to direct your attention to me. All of your remarks need to be to and through the Chair. But also, we must refer to all members who are elected in this House by their riding or their title. Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker.

In addition, with the throne speech, when this government was first in power, McVety sat here, yet again as an honoured guest. We've all seen the Premier wishing McVety a happy birthday, attending events with him. One would think that the Premier, in the interest of transparency and accountability, would not bury the accreditation of Canada Christian College within Bill 213, an omnibus bill supposedly meant to help businesses.

Speaker, I'm thinking of some of McVety's comments in the past. He talked about the Pride Parade in Toronto, which is a celebration of people being able to be their authentic selves, being able to be free from fear, free from harassment and discrimination. It's also a protest, because we know that we have people who have tried to take away those rights—not ironically talking about McVety here. He claimed that it made Toronto "a sex tourism destination ... with ... opportunity for sex with hot boys." It makes me question what was top of mind for McVety there, but I will leave that with you, Speaker.

The vile statements that McVety have issued quite publicly have come up again and again. He has had the opportunity to pull them back, to consider them; he has not. He doesn't have to, because in Bill 213, we have this government supporting all of those statements.

In 2016, McVety called Islam a "war machine" and, according to the National Council of Canadian Muslims, he described the religion as "having a mandate for a hostile takeover."

There have been plenty of opportunities. Sometimes people make mistakes; we all know that, Speaker. Sometimes people might say things that they regret. There's plenty of opportunity for regret on behalf of McVety, but apparently those are the comments that he would like to be known for. This isn't exactly what's known as loving your neighbour, is it, Speaker? But regardless of your faith, your religion, regardless of anything, there's something called the golden rule, and that is something that's shared across many faiths. It indicates that you do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's shared across the five major world religions, in fact. We don't see that here, do we, Speaker?

Additionally, this legislation, as we say, pre-empts the PEQAB decision. We also have to consider the quality of education that is available at Canada Christian College. We know that the CRPO has indicated that their programming—the Health Professions Appeal and Review Board doubts “degrees from Canada Christian College meet the standards and rigour normally expected of degree programs in Canada”. Yet this legislation and this government seek to expand the influence of Canada Christian College even though the degrees that they offer right now are being questioned by regulating bodies.

Martin Regg Cohn, in the Toronto Star, indicated that inside the PEQAB, which is supposedly arm's length—if you listen to the government, they will tell you that PEQAB is an independent process—they were blindsided by this government and this legislation, these maneuvers. They also indicate PEQAB feels that its authority has been challenged. It's been weakened. It's been embarrassed. It hurts the reputation of our institutions when we have a government that would try to get in the way of an independent process.

Now, Michael Coren, who actually holds a master of divinity, states, “With the greatest of respect, nobody would describe Canada Christian College as an esteemed seat of higher learning, or its president as a revered figure within the academic world. This all seems so unnecessary, lacking in transparency, divisive, and problematic.” I absolutely agree.

We should not be discussing schedule 2. This government has had tremendous backlash from this. We're still waiting for government members to stand up to be counted, to respect the people that you call friends when it's convenient, when there is a pride parade around. We see some Conservative members actually showing up there and showing their face, despite what they did with the health and phys ed curriculum.

Yet we hear nothing. We hear crickets from them about McVety. That's a tacit acceptance or approval of what he has said, because they choose to say nothing. Saying nothing emboldens the oppressor.

Now, we also take a look at some of the television programming that was created by Charles McVety. Canada Christian College shares an address with Global Evangelism Television Canada, and McVety is one of the television channel's three directors. The other directors include individuals who have made claims that we are

“fast approaching” the Second Coming, that Hitler was fulfilling God's will, and Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for gay rights. Those are quotes. Those are shocking things to suggest.

Now additionally, John Hagee, the individual who made some of these claims, has also appeared in promotional ads for Canada Christian College. He also said that September 27, 2015, was the Rapture. As we know, he was incorrect.

These people are one degree of separation from our Premier because of Charles McVety, enshrined in Bill 213. McVety also believes the earth is 6,000 years old. We take a look at some of McVety's promotional literature. On one of his posters, he calls himself “Professor Dr. Charles McVety.” A little bit redundant, wouldn't you say, Speaker? It's almost like he's got a lot to prove here. In that poster, it says, “What do the Four Blood Moons tell us?” and “Is global warming Earth worship?” He's almost talking out of both sides of his mouth, because here we have earth worship, and he's talking about moons and signs and portents and astrological matters.

But McVety has been upset with names. He says, “It is unconscionable” that students are “marginalized due to outdated naming practices.” He calls the accreditation of universities “outdated naming practices.” That's simply delusional.

A lot of people may try to hide behind this idea of freedom of expression or freedom of speech, that individuals are allowed to state their beliefs. But freedom of expression and freedom of speech end when you are taking away somebody else's rights.

Government members have hidden behind this process. They have had opportunity, time and again, to stand up to say something. We know that many of them are not happy. Behind closed doors, they have raised concerns with this legislation and this inclusion of schedule 2 within Bill 213. But yet, we have heard nothing publicly.

That's a concern. I would suggest that they were voted to be here by their constituents to stand up for all their constituents. That includes LGBTQ folks. That includes Muslim folks. That doesn't mean turning a blind eye to schedule 2 and dancing around and saying, “Well, let's pay attention to everything else in this legislation.” No, you have a responsibility to call out what is here—I'm sorry, Speaker; through you, of course.

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Furthermore, we also know that McVety is using Canada Christian College as his own private bank, borrowing tons of money. In addition, his son owes a great deal of money. How can we possibly, with good conscience, put legislation forward that steps ahead of the accreditation process, for a college that has degrees which are questioned by regulatory bodies but also a person in charge who is treating it like their personal slush fund?

I'd also like to bring forward the voices of UWOFA, the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association, who indicate that this move by the government is a further effort “to privatize post-secondary education” and undermines “the quality and accessibility of post-secondary education in Ontario.”

Dr. Beth MacDougall-Shackleton also shares, “The Ontario government should not grant accreditation and degree-granting privileges to institutions that do not meet the anti-discriminatory and anti-hate ... principles outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code. It is imperative that the government protect religious minorities, the queer community, and other marginalized groups. At the very least, the government should do no harm.” I wholeheartedly agree with this, Speaker.

The government, again, has stepped on PEQAB, has tried to insert themselves in front of and above PEQAB, trying to influence their decisions with schedule 2 of Bill 213.

I would suggest that this government has let down their constituents. Here we are the day before the Trans Day of Remembrance, something that is enshrined within law in Ontario. We heard comments this morning about the Trans Day of Remembrance from the member from Burlington. What I'd like to see is this government standing in their place and doing the right thing. I'd like to see them stand on their hind legs and speak out about this legislation, speak out against Charles McVety's hateful views.

You have a responsibility to do the right thing. Being a good person is standing up against hate. We all know that bullies have certain problems, and we are not going to psychoanalyze them, but when people stand aside, when people stand alongside and they are bystanders and they say nothing, they validate everything that a bully does.

I think of Martin Niemöller, who wrote, during the Second World War, *First They Came: First they came for the trade unionists. Then they came for the artists. Eventually the poem concludes with the speaker from the poem saying, “Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.”*

I'm calling upon the government members one more time, through you, Speaker, to stand up, to speak out against hate, to do the right thing. Look inside yourselves and do what is right. It's up to you. Children are watching. Communities are watching. Your voters are watching. And they're waiting. Do the right thing.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for London North Centre for his comments this afternoon. I'm just wondering if the member opposite can say how many small businesses are in his riding and how many residents of his riding depend on jobs in these small businesses.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Niagara West for his question. We have a great deal of small businesses that we have seen dramatically impacted by this government's inaction and their lack of supports that have been provided. We've seen this provincial government relying upon federal programs, such as the CECRA. We have called for, on the opposition side, the Save Main Street plan, to provide direct rent subsidies and to freeze utility payments. However, we see this government talking a good game, but we just see words. We don't see actions. We don't see supports. We see people who are struggling. We see a number of people

who have had to close their doors as a result of the government not acting.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm reminded, as I listen to this exchange, of Hannah Arendt's book on the banality of evil. She was speaking about how the evil of Nazism came to be in the Holocaust, and all it took was people concentrating on their little piece of process. That's all it took, was people saying, “It's just process. I'm just doing my job. I'm just a cog in the wheel.” That, Speaker, is what the government members are doing right now. And I think that any business, any small business would be appalled—

Interjections.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: Speaker, point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. The House will come to order. I recognize the member from Niagara West on a point of order.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: There is a particular level of accusation that is underlying those assertions with regard to an ideology that is hateful, that many, many of our particular grandfathers and grandmothers fought against and died for. I hope that the member will retract that assertion.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop. Stop. I'm standing. All members of the Legislature will come to order. A reminder for all members that they do not have the opportunity to use this House to impute motive, and that we must keep things to not divide the House. I will return to the member with that in mind.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Islamophobia is hateful. Transphobia is hateful. Legislating hate is hateful. There is no small business owner who wants to see their business used as a blind for the legislation of hate. I wonder if the member from London North Centre could comment on that, please.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I think people are absolutely shocked that in a piece of legislation that is, as we pointed out, titled about business and about helping people recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, there would be something in there that enshrines and emboldens and supports hate. I think people across the aisle—I'm well aware that they're also opposed to this, yet they just won't, unfortunately, have a backbone and do it in public.

However, that being said, we on the opposition side believe in supporting businesses with direct supports. We believe in doing the right thing. We also believe in standing up against hate and intolerance and bigotry, and that's what we're doing here.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I just want to ask the member opposite, if he doesn't know how many businesses are in his riding, and he doesn't know how many people are employed by those businesses, and he doesn't know how many people depend on jobs to put food on the table, how can he, in good conscience, vote against a bill that will

help save those jobs and ensure that people have jobs that they can get money to buy food and put food on that table?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Niagara West for the question. Barbara Maly, the executive director of Downtown London, says a lot of businesses and a lot of restaurants are trying to adapt but are receiving no support from this government. They have been extending their patio hours, but there are no supports for heating. We also know that Katie Roney, owner of Katie's Kitchen, said this patio extension—one of those very small things this government has done—won't help her business unless governments help her business adapt. That means direct supports.

This is not about facts and figures. This is not about numbers. This is about providing supports from government and not trying to dodge the issue and not trying to dodge the question. We see that this government is not doing the right thing. We keep calling on them, businesses keep calling on them, yet they still pass pieces of legislation which are nowhere good enough.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I've only been here seven and a half years. Someday I'll be gone, I'll look back, and one of the highlights I'll have is the honour I had today to be in the House listening to my friend from London North Centre in his presentation on this bill this afternoon—outstanding, absolutely outstanding.

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Like many people on both sides of the aisle, I have gay friends, gay relatives, people who identify as transvestites. I have friends who practise the Islamic faith, as do you. When you hear what the leader of Canada Christian College has said about such people, I say to my friend from London North Centre, give them some advice: How can they save face and extricate themselves from this controversy so we can all move on and get on with our lives?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his very kind words about my presentation today. I'd like to also thank him for his unwavering support of the LGBTQ community, whether in public or in private. That's what it is about here, isn't it? It's about standing up. It's about being counted. It's about being an ally. You don't get to call yourself an ally if you remain silent. You don't get to call yourself an ally if you refuse to do what's right.

My recommendation, through you, Speaker, to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, is that people reach inside themselves and think about what's important and what is right. We've seen Conservatives who talk about their gay best friend, but if they don't speak up about this, this will tarnish their entire political career and it will tarnish them for life. My recommendation is that if they don't have the strength, the fortitude to stand up and say something about this, then maybe they should just abstain from the vote.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I'm very proud to call some of the businesses in my riding, like Baskits; Toronto Stamp; ICP Defense; Atlantic Packaging; Mad Mexican,

which has the best guacamole, salsa and nacho chips in the province—I dare you to try it—and tell them about the really great things that this bill is doing for them. The Better for People, Smarter for Business Act is expected to save business time and costs in regulatory and policy to all businesses.

Is the NDP against the government helping businesses reduce regulatory burdens and making it easier for them to create jobs for hard-working Ontarians?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Really, I could sum up my response in two words, which would be “direct supports,” which is what businesses have been asking for. We've met with them at committee. We've talked to them within our ridings. We know that people are struggling. We know that they're unable to make ends meet. We know that people are risking homelessness, because a lot of times personal finances are tied up with business finances.

We look at the hospitality industry, which has been absolutely decimated. It's been doom and gloom. There have been great initiatives within my riding, which I must say are fantastic. But really, what we've seen from this government—reducing regulatory burden is not going to be the life preserver that they need. What they need is an influx of capital. They need help paying their bills. They need this government to stand up, to support them, to do the right thing, and make sure that they have money so that they don't have to close their doors.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for a quick question and response.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to thank the member from London North Centre for his very raw depiction of schedule 2 in Bill 213. My concern is, as we have seen, the division that this bill is causing. It's causing it right here in this House. It's causing it through our communities. We're watching the United States implode because of hate and because of divisive action. And to put this poison pill inside of a bill that is supposed to be making it better for small business is just creating more divisiveness.

I would like to hear from the member: Why does he think that the government members do not want to talk about schedule 2 in Bill 213?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from London North Centre, with a reminder that we can't impute motive. Go ahead.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you to the member from Hamilton Mountain for her question. She's absolutely right: When we see legislation and when we see behaviour by governments in this way that gives a platform to hate, it's adding fuel to the fire.

Right now in the United States, we see, really, a transition of power that has become very difficult. But really, when anyone promotes hate, it emboldens others. It makes those feelings which some people are normally able to keep tamped down—it makes them legitimized. The government should not—

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Mitzi Hunter: Of course, it's always my honour to rise on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood.

Today, I'm adding my voice to many others in this Legislature who have spoken out and who have stood up in expression of our serious concerns about this legislation.

Just this week, I received a call from one of my constituents who is an imam and a faith leader. He shared with me the many concerns that faith leaders have expressed about one of the schedules in this bill that we haven't really talked a lot about, which is schedule 8. Because this is omnibus legislation, there's a lot that the government has packed in here and buried in this bill, and one of those is schedule 8, which amends the Marriage Act by granting the government wide power to remove the legal power of officials to officiate marriages. Section (c) of the schedule states that the minister can revoke that power if "the person should not, in the public interest, continue to be authorized to solemnize marriage." The concern that this individual raised is, by what standard? What is the code of conduct? Where is it that it is an objective measure, rather than just the whim of the government and whichever minister has that power and that authority? This long-standing ability to officiate marriages, which has happened for centuries in the manner in which it does, is now being grabbed by this government for its sole control. We don't know why it's here. There was no consultation with the officials who currently do this. So there is concern about that being buried in this bill.

Madam Speaker, I cannot speak to Bill 213 without stating the obvious, because it has consumed the time of this Legislature. Why is it, under the cover of COVID-19, under the guise of helping small business, which you clearly are not doing—because small businesses have asked this government to help on commercial rent relief, to help on eviction moratoriums, to help in terms of the struggle they have to repay the deferrals that were granted in wave 1, which are now coming due in wave 2. These are the big issues that small businesses have asked for, which are not addressed in this legislation. But what is addressed is granting degrees to a private institution whose leader is known to make statements that go against the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The concern that is raised is that this is because the Premier owes a favour to Mr. McVety. Why does he owe that favour? Because Mr. McVety helped him in his campaign to get elected. This is not the first time that concerns around that relationship have been raised; this payback is repeated.

Why is it that the Premier has not taken the opportunity that has been given to him to denounce this relationship that is so problematic, Islamophobic, transphobic? Homophobic statements posted on social media have been made by this individual, and the relationship has been defined—and even videos have been circulating about the relationship. Why grant this superpower to grant degrees rather than supporting other aspects of our public post-secondary education system that is crying out for help and support at this time?

Madam Speaker, I wanted to just use the time that I had to express those concerns and state my strong opposition

to this bill, especially with the inclusion of those schedules that are unnecessary at this time.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question is to the member.

One of the things our government is doing is obviously respecting our municipal partners and treating them as a mature level of government through many of the pieces of legislation we proposed in this bill. Likewise, with Bill 213, we're also giving municipalities direct input when it comes to allowing bottled water companies to withdraw new or increased amounts of groundwater in their communities. This is really giving, like I was saying, municipalities more direct input.

I want to ask her whether or not she's supportive of municipalities having more input when it comes to Bill 213.

1610

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Of course I'm supportive of municipalities. I just tabled a private member's bill that completely goes against what you've just done to municipalities by revoking their ability to have ranked ballots for their local elections. It was a right that municipalities had, to choose how they elect their mayors and council, and to respect the rights of the local voters to do just that.

This government, under another omnibus bill, with the stroke of a pen, has revoked that power that municipalities had to choose their mayor and their council through ranked ballots, and my private member's Bill 232 gives that local choice for local elections back to municipalities, because I believe that they do have the authority and the opportunity to choose how they elect their voting system.

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for her presentation today. My question, through you, Speaker, is, why does this government have so many pieces of legislation which are supposedly about economic recovery and business yet offer so little support to those businesses?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I absolutely agree with the member. It is disappointing that each time the government puts forward a piece of legislation that you are looking for—is the government listening? In this legislation, I was looking for substantive decisions around reducing red tape, because that's something they talk about quite a bit. It's not there.

Instead, what is there are clandestine schedules that reward their friends, and that's not what the people of Ontario expect at this time of economic recession when small businesses are boarding up. They are closing. They are hurting. I've spoken to small businesses in my community who said, "I don't know if I can survive the second wave," and there's no help from this government.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you for comments today. My question is about small businesses, because that's front

and centre in my riding. We've got a couple of crises. We've got the homelessness crisis in Spadina–Fort York, and we've also got small businesses closing at a breakneck pace, and I know it's across the province.

This government is offering a property tax and an education tax rebate and very little else, nothing to actually keep businesses afloat right now, and I'm worried about the economic impact of this long-term, because if we don't keep those businesses alive, then our economic recovery is going to take years and years rather than just bouncing back after this.

What would you recommend this government do to support small businesses?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I would definitely recommend the \$10 billion in deferrals that are going to be burdening many small businesses to come up with that cash flow at a time when they don't have it—I would extend that. I said to the finance minister many, many months ago in question period that perhaps he should look at multi-year repayments. That really gives small businesses an opportunity to manage their cash flow and to survive. That's all they want. They want the ability to survive the constraints that have been put upon them as we seek to deal with the health pandemic with COVID-19.

It would have been my hope that this government would focus on those critical issues rather than sliding in, in every single bill—look at Bill 229 that's supposed to be dealing with the budget, and now we're dealing with conservation authorities that they're trying to undermine. It's the wrong focus, and we can't trust them to just stick to the facts.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the member from Scarborough–Guildwood: This bill streamlines regulations and harmonizes other regulations, unlike the previous government who added, over 15 years, 350,000 regulations that were impediments to businesses succeeding. Can the member talk a little bit specifically about whether she supports simplifying and harmonizing regulations in order for small businesses here in Ontario, but particularly in her riding, to succeed?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Of course, I support simplifying and reducing burdens on small business. I'm a former small business owner myself. It's very important. You want small businesses to put all their time and all their energy into serving their customers, working with their employees and their suppliers and doing the great work that they do as small businesses. I don't really see how this is going to address the main concerns of small businesses, because the government is preoccupied in rewarding their friends and granting a private college the opportunity to grant and give degrees.

There are many, many individuals—I was speaking with students today from the College Student Alliance. They are flabbergasted. They cannot understand why this is a priority when there are so many needs in the post-secondary sector, and this is what the government chooses to do.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I had the honour of serving with the member from Scarborough–Guildwood over the summer in the expanded finance and economic affairs committee. We heard from hundreds and hundreds of small businesses; thousands of hours of testimony. I'd ask the member, is there anything that those small businesses asked for in Bill 213?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Not one—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response? The member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Madam Speaker, the member from Guelph is absolutely right: We heard hundreds of hours of testimony from small businesses from the north, from rural, from our large urban centres, from main streets in every single part of this province.

I will give you a really clear example of an idea that came forward. The independent broadcasters came forward and said that the government should set up a matching program for advertising. It would help small businesses to advertise at a time when they are struggling with liquidity and cash flow, it would help the independent broadcasters to continue to operate and hire people, and it would keep main streets alive. This idea was put forward to the committee. There is nothing that responds to that in this bill, or even in Bill 229. So the government is not listening to the urgent and important needs that small businesses have told them that they require.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member opposite: This past summer, we both sat on the standing committee on finance. We heard a lot of witness testimony, and much of what businesses had been asking for for quite some time is reflected in this bill. So I want to ask her: What are points in this bill that she can point to that she does actually agree with and that she could support, and that she has heard in her local riding as well?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I just want to say to the member opposite that my job here is to give you the other side. That's my job. Your job is to listen and develop good policies and good programs. It's shocking to me that this government believes that they have all the answers, that they don't need to listen to anyone else other than themselves and their friends.

I will give you a quote from at least 10 universities—this was reported in the Toronto Star—who said that it is alarming “that your government is intending to discreetly pass legislation that would allow the Canada Christian College to call itself a ‘university’ and award degrees.

“The Ontario government should not grant accreditation and degree-granting privileges to institutions that do not meet the anti-discriminatory and anti-hate speech principles outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.”

The diverse people in this province, of all backgrounds and all faiths, deserve better than what is being proposed in schedule 2 in this legislation, and you should remove it.

1620

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

Ms. Jessica Bell: I rise today to speak to the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, Bill 213. The goal of this act is to help business but feels like a bit of a grab bag of all sorts: There are some concerning things in it; there are some okay things in it. I want to focus on three schedules. I do want to focus on schedule 2—it's deeply concerning to me—and then I also want to focus on schedule 16 and schedule 24 because they relate to public transit and private transit.

First of all, schedule 2: I want to thank the member for London North Centre for your excellent presentation about how this directly affects the LGBTQ+ community. It is very concerning that this government is choosing to grant Canada Christian College the right to grant degrees of bachelors of arts and bachelors of science. This is a college that is run by an extremist conservative, Charles McVety. He is a man who helped Premier Ford win the leadership race, and he is also a man who believes in creationism, who believes that the Muslim faith is not to be respected. He has said very hurtful things about trans people, about LGBTQ+ people. In this province, in Ontario—in a progressive, diverse, tolerant province like Ontario—that is simply unacceptable.

What is so concerning to me is that we know that when a government sanctions and condones institutions that say hateful things about certain classes of people, that legitimizes hateful acts, acts of violence, physical assaults against those people, and I see that in my riding. We have mosques in my riding who are too scared to go public because they fear additional recrimination; they are targeted with death threats via email and graffiti that is hateful. They are very scared. Their congregation is very scared, and they want this government to do more to protect them and stop the rise of hate globally and the rise of hate in Ontario.

When we pass legislation and we approve legislation that sanctions and legitimizes people who promote hate, and gives them permission to educate our youth in a university, then we are not helping the problem of hate; we are making it worse. I urge you to take out schedule 2 in this act.

I want to spend the rest of my time talking about schedule 16 and schedule 24. Both of these pieces of legislation essentially deregulate intercity transit. These pieces of legislation essentially give cabinet greater authority over how to regulate intercity transit. At this point, because the regulation hasn't been introduced yet, we don't know what this government's plan is when it comes to regulating intercity transit. What we do know is you're looking at taking away all the regulations, or essentially a lot of the regulations that exist.

It is tough to say what this means. I've reached out to stakeholders across Ontario to get a better understanding of what these two schedules mean for the province. The people who I talked to include the Ontario Public Transit Association; representatives at the York transit agencies,

at the TTC, and Ontario Northland, which runs transit in northeastern Ontario and the north; and Greyhound and private operators, who are actually pretty concerned about this bill; as well as transit workers and unions. I called them up, and I asked them, "What does this mean? What kind of impact will this have on transit? How will this impact your business? How will it impact the quality of service that you can provide the people of Ontario?" I got some pretty concerning responses, which I would like to share with you today in the hopes that you will take this information, digest it and consider introducing amendments and changes to this bill so that we can make sure intercity transit in Ontario is improved and not worsened.

Let me summarize some of the changes that I heard or the concerns that I heard. One is that by regulating transit between cities, it will make it easier for the replacement of public services between municipalities, to be replaced with privatized car service. So instead of having a bus run between York and Toronto, this will make it a lot easier for Uber to run between York and Toronto.

When we replace public transit with privatized transit, we get a few problems. Number one, it means that transit agencies have less revenue. In the case of the TTC, studies already show that Uber has cost the TTC about \$100 million a year in lost fare revenue. That creates instability with transit agencies, and it moves away riders that every transit agency needs into privatized car service.

The problem with this, as well, is that it contributes to congestion, which is not what we want, not what this government wants.

It also means that we are replacing decent public service jobs—where a driver can earn upwards of \$60,000 a year, which is what you need just to get by in Toronto—with jobs that, at best, pay \$30,000 a year, and that's if the driver is working all the time. They're independent contractors. They get no health benefits. They get no protection. They get no sick leave. These are precarious part-time jobs that this government is potentially creating with schedules 16 and 24. What that means is, this growing gap between the haves and the have-nots, which has been exacerbated so much by this pandemic, is made even worse with this bill. I have some concerns about that.

The second thing that this bill does is, it eliminates exclusivity on bus routes. How it currently works now is, you have to apply to run a route. Let's say Greyhound: They have permission to run from London to Ottawa, and they essentially control that route. When you deregulate that, it can lead to increased competition on major routes. In some ways, that can potentially be a good thing, because you could get some fare reduction, because there's increased competition. The problem with that is, where are these companies going to cut? When I spoke to Greyhound—which is very unhappy about these two changes—and when I spoke to the transit workers, they were adamant that there will be cuts in wages, cuts in training and cuts in bus maintenance. That impacts the quality of the jobs we have in Ontario, and it impacts the safety of the transit that we are delivering. So that's a concern.

What's also a concern is that this might help bus routes on major inner city routes—like I said, London, Toronto, Kingston, Ottawa—but it's not going to do much of anything to help the amount of service and the quality of service that we desperately need to see between smaller cities. Bus operators, transit agencies, associations are all adamant about that. There's not a chance that deregulation of this sector is going to lead to the kind of service that we need in those areas. The reason why it's not going to improve service in these areas is because the rider has to pay a lot of money for the cost of running this service—there are not enough riders who are willing to pay enough money to make it break even. Greyhound has said this very clearly, and other agencies have said this as well.

What's even more concerning is that by privatizing or deregulating transit service between inner city routes, you might have a situation where the public service that is provided becomes even more vulnerable. The reason why I bring this up is because I spoke to Ontario Northland. Ontario Northland's job is to provide service in the north to very underserved cities. When I spoke to them about what this bill could mean for the quality of service that they provide, they provided me with a few insights that I'd like to share today. One is that if you deregulate these routes, a private operator is going to come in and they're going to take the route that is the most profitable and that has the most riders. So if you've got a situation where Ontario Northland is running a route from North Bay that goes to Orillia and then to Toronto, it needs those riders from Orillia to Toronto to make the whole route break even. A private operator is not going to do the whole route. They're just going to do the more profitable route, from Orillia to Toronto, take those riders and leave the publicly funded agency with the rest. That is a problem. Ontario Northland thought that was a problem, and they do a very important job, providing quality service to people who need it.

1630

I spoke to Ontario Northland around what kind of people use this kind of service, and they provided some very insightful responses. They said that their customer base includes seniors who can no longer drive or who don't want to drive in the snow, and they need that service to go from A to B. They don't want to be stuck somewhere in between, because a private operator only wants to do a chunk of it, and then they have to somehow get that last route in. They don't want to be in that situation.

It includes First Nations people. It includes people who have accessibility challenges. Northland was very concerned about what the impact would be if there is a deregulation of intercity transit on accessibility, because Northland is required to provide accessible transit, like many transit agencies are. But will private operators? I don't know. You don't have any regulation yet around what kind of requirements these private operators will have. That is a concern. What happens to people who need a bus service that is accessible?

They also talked about the very real reality that people use bus service when they need to go to a health appointment, maybe regular chemotherapy appointments. They

can't drive—maybe they can't afford it; maybe they don't have access to a car—and they rely on that transit as well. What they need is a service that's going to go from A to B, that's properly subsidized, and not have a situation where they have to go to A to here, because that's the profitable route, and then they have to find their way to that last little section.

I'm not talking hypotheticals here. I'm talking about what people who do this job of transporting people around our large province do each and every day, private and public. This is what they're telling me about what the consequences of schedule 16 and schedule 24 are. My request is that you look more into the impact of what these schedules mean on transit, because what we don't want is more cuts. What we need is more investment, and that means subsidy. It means investment into providing that kind of quality public transit all across Ontario, so that it doesn't matter where you live; you can still catch transit and get to where you want to go at an affordable price and do it safely and reliably. That's something we as a province can do. That's something you as a government can do.

That's a summary of my comments today: my concerns about schedule 2 and the unintended consequences of schedule 16 and schedule 24.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member opposite is, I was listening to her remarks, and there are obviously many bills that this government has introduced and many bills we'll continue to introduce that make life easier for people and get them from A to B and all kinds of things. But this specific bill focuses on things that we've heard in terms of red tape reduction, and so I want to hear from the member opposite if she had any ideas from her members as to what red tape reduction measures this government could introduce, and perhaps ideas for the future.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Barrie–Innisfil. It's important to look at this term of “red tape reduction,” because often when this government uses the term “red tape reduction,” what they really mean is, “What are some ways where we can reduce regulation and law in order to make it easier for big industry to pollute and have negative health impacts on people, animals and the environment?” So I question that idea of red tape reduction.

I also see this government use the term “red tape reduction” to reduce the level of protection that workers have. Workers deserve to have safety standards in their workplace so that they can go to work, come home and be safe. That is not red tape reduction. They're called rights.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from University–Rosedale for her comments today. I'm also deeply concerned about the privatization of our public transit systems across this province under this government. About a year ago, you showed me a document, a tender that the government had put out to privatize GO

Transit—the operation, the maintenance and the service of GO Transit. They also passed a regulation that would deregulate the ticket cost of GO Transit.

They've now introduced the Ontario Line, and they're going to be doing it as a P3, a public-private partnership, which the Auditor General says will cost 32% more than if they'd done it as a public enterprise. What would you say to this government, and what are the impacts of the privatization of transit, and what will be the impacts on Ontarians using transit?

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Fort York–Spadina. This government has made a decision to move forward with making sure that the GO expansion is done where it's a DBFOM contract, so a design-build-finance-operate-maintain contract, that's done by the private sector. What we have found is that when you privatize the delivery of infrastructure, it costs more. That's what the Auditor General found when they did an extensive study of infrastructure projects in Ontario. So I'm very concerned about the costs of the GO service expansion project and the Ontario Line project as a result.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Before I ask the question, I am quite excited with our public transit investment. Over 10 years, we are spending billions of dollars on public transit, and my communities, northern Scarborough and North York, are quite excited with our investment, because there will be more public transit available through the Sheppard East subway line.

But coming back to my question: This bill streamlines and harmonizes regulations with other provinces to make life better for people, smarter for businesses, while still maintaining health and safety standards. Are you against simplifying and harmonizing regulations?

Ms. Jessica Bell: No, I'm not against simplifying and harmonizing regulations.

I want to get to the earlier piece that you said around this government's commitment to providing and investing in public transit. When we look at this government's latest budget that just came out, what we find is that the amount of money this government is looking at spending in transit infrastructure—actual dollars spent; not what they plan to spend, but actual dollars spent. We find that there has been a reduction of \$700 million in the amount of money that's allocated to transit infrastructure spending.

What we also find when we look at Infrastructure Ontario reports is that the time when contracts will be signed and projects will be built keeps getting delayed. So when we're talking about transit to Scarborough, what we see is there are delays, and that is very concerning and it's very different from the words that I'm hearing from this government.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to start by thanking the member for University–Rosedale for her very intelligent and insightful comments about this legislation—about schedule 2, but especially about schedules 16 and 24. I

think that this is the very important work that we in opposition can do to actually reach out and talk to the organizations and the folks on the ground who know these issues well, who live them every day. I really appreciated that, especially when we have a government that tends to ride over a lot of the interests of everyday Ontarians in favour of those of big business, big corporate business. I share her concerns about the privatization of transit systems across this province.

I wondered if she would expand a little bit on a comment she made about how some of these changes and deregulation will result in riders paying more for transit.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member for Davenport. I would like to introduce something else that I didn't get time to in my presentation, around riders paying more. An additional reason why we think that there is a deregulation of inner city transit is because we believe, and some of the people I spoke to believe, that there is enthusiasm to have private operators run transit on current GO bus routes.

1640

The reason why this is a concern is because Metrolinx's CEO has made it very clear that he wants to get out of the business of heavily running bus service, and he's also made it very clear that he wants to reduce the subsidy that Metrolinx has to zero. When you don't subsidize GTHA GO bus service, you are going to see big fare increases and drops in ridership. That's a concern.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I want to thank the member for University–Rosedale for her comments this afternoon. I think we can definitely agree on what red tape is not. Red tape is not any actions that are, of course, protecting the health and safety of the people here in the province of Ontario, and we take that very, very seriously.

But I am wondering if she could, now that we've defined what red tape is not, return to the previous question from my colleague and give an example of what rule or regulation or, potentially, some form of red tape that would be repealed if the NDP were in office.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you to the member opposite. One of the things that I think is really important to look at is, what is the impact or what is the reason why we want to harmonize or streamline red tape or regulation? In this case, one of the main reasons is because we want to provide direct support to businesses. We want to make sure businesses can survive this pandemic and thrive.

When I talk to businesses in my riding, on Ossington, in Kensington, the Annex, on Bloor Street, on Dundas, what they are saying to me, what they need to survive—the words “red tape” are not coming out of these owners' mouths. What's coming out of these owners' mouths is, “Please extend the commercial eviction ban and be very clear about it, because we're being evicted right now,” or they're saying, “We can't afford to pay our biggest cost, which is the rent. Can this government please provide more direct support to my business because my revenue has gone down?”

That's the reason why we want to reduce this red tape, to help these businesses, but there are better ways of doing it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. We don't have enough time for another question and comment. Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on Bill 213, and in my limited amount of time, I'm going to focus on two of the 29 schedules, schedule 2 and schedule 18.

I just want to say, before I begin speaking on schedule 2, that every time I walk into this House, even though it's been two and a half years, I sort of pinch myself. It's a real honour to walk into this place, and I've been finding it a big challenge over the last few weeks.

Every time we have to discuss Canada Christian College, I just can't believe that we have a piece of legislation that proposes to grant university degrees to somebody who spouts out the homophobic, Islamophobic, transphobic hate that Charles McVety spouts out. I can't believe that we are considering this for somebody who denies climate change and actually says it's part of a cabal of one-world government somehow.

I got a call last week and met with the Ontario college and university faculty association who told me they were deeply disturbed that somebody who likely violates the anti-hate and anti-discrimination rules of the Ontario Human Rights Commission could be granted degree-making authority.

So the minister, over and over again, hides behind a process, and yes, we can have a process—but you know what? This should not be. Schedule 2 should not be in Bill 213, period. Separate the process from what this says to the people of Ontario. It pains me that we even have to debate this in this House because I know we are better than this. I know the people of Ontario are better than this, Speaker.

I want to briefly talk about schedule 18. I support giving municipalities more power when it comes to granting water-taking permits for new and expanded permits, but I ask the government to amend schedule 18 to include the same rights for First Nations. First Nations treaty holders should have the exact same rights when it comes to granting permission for water-taking that local municipalities have. That's part of the truth and reconciliation process, and I think it's an important amendment.

I would also ask the government to amend it to include adjacent municipalities. I can tell you, in Guelph, there are a lot of wells around Guelph that technically are not in Guelph, but they certainly affect our community's water.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I wanted to ask the member opposite—obviously, he has a lot of businesses in Guelph which often, I imagine, would come to panels and round tables to talk about ways to reduce burdens and ways this member could help them. So I wanted to ask him, in terms of the total population of Guelph, how many small businesses does he have in his riding and what has he heard from them, but more specifically, in addition to how

many small businesses you have, how many people in Guelph are employed by small businesses?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member opposite's question. As a long-time small business owner in Guelph, I can tell you that on a per capita basis, Guelph has more small businesses than almost any other community across Canada. The vast majority of our citizens are employed by small businesses, though I will have to say that the largest employer in Guelph is Linamar, a company that the Premier often talks about and which I wish they would help.

Actually, while we're at this, on Linamar, I would really hope the government can work with Linamar to help them around electricity pricing and not penalize them for some of the great things they've done for behind the meter ways in which they can save electricity. Some of the changes the government has made have actually hurt their bottom line and cost them millions of dollars, so I'm happy to continue this conversation about how we can support a business like that in in my riding.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Part of the title of this bill is called "smarter for business." It's interesting and almost ironic, because the businesses that I'm hearing from in my constituency have had a lot of complaints about the fact that they don't feel that they're helped or supported during the pandemic. For instance, in the midst of a ban on evictions, there are no enforcement capabilities. I've had business individuals sleeping overnight because landlords are coming in and changing locks. What are your businesses saying about the government, and are they helping them?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. One of the things that I thought we would see in Bill 213 was an extension of the commercial eviction ban. Now, I realize it has subsequently come out in another bill, but back in October, when small businesses in my riding were extremely concerned about being locked out, they were pleading for a commercial eviction ban at that moment. Unfortunately, it wasn't in this bill.

The other thing they're asking for is they're asking for clarity. They're tired of the Premier dithering around whether we're going to have lockdowns or not, and they're just like, "Give us clarity. If we need to lock down to save lives, we'll do it, but then provide us with the financial support we need to stay alive. We're here to save lives, but you also have to provide us a lifeline to keep our businesses open."

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: To return to the comment from my colleague earlier, could you talk a little bit more about what that actual per capita basis is? I know you mentioned that they have the highest, and I'm just wondering what that number is, first. Then, secondly, I know that the budget that we've introduced also intends to create a subclass for small businesses, and I'm wondering if you're going to be working to advocate for that in Guelph, for a

subclass for the small businesses in Guelph, to ensure that they're supported with electricity and, of course, property tax, which you mentioned, I believe.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: There are two things in the budget that do support small businesses, though that's Bill 229 and not Bill 213. But I'll mention them because one of them is something I've been advocating for for over a decade, and that is increasing the exemption level for the employer health tax. And I think the changes to the education tax make a lot of sense.

But here is the reality, and I can tell you this as a long-time small business owner: If my business doesn't survive this pandemic, it doesn't matter what my employer health tax is, it doesn't matter what my business education tax is, because I won't be in business.

1650

The small businesses in my riding are pleading and asking for direct financial support, so they can stay alive to get through this pandemic and help us have a strong, robust economic recovery.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here and contribute to the debate today on Bill 213, which is titled Better for People, Smarter for Business, but it does very little to actually help make things better for the people in the province of Ontario—or help businesses, for that matter. Unfortunately, what we see with this bill is just a lot of tinkering or changes around regulations that aren't actually going to help those small businesses that are currently facing huge, huge losses in their revenues, who are struggling with an economic recovery plan and receiving absolutely no support from this government.

We heard from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and Laura Jones—I would like to just share a little quote from her: “We really need to support local businesses now so that they will be here tomorrow.” I think that's really important, because if we don't, they won't be here tomorrow. And once those businesses close their doors, it's going to be very hard for them to figure out how they're going to re-open, because as we know, many of those small business owners are people in our communities who also rely on their small business as a source of their own livelihood.

But nothing in this bill really helps to make sure that those businesses will be provided some sort of support, whether through a direct rent subsidy, whether through regulations on the insurance industry or, for example, help with some of the payroll costs that they might be incurring right now. So I wonder why the government wouldn't have taken the opportunity to ensure that, through this bill, we actually provided real support to those businesses to help them protect or create jobs across the province, to help them get back on to their feet or help them recover from the financial strain that this pandemic has caused.

But what this bill does do, oddly enough, is somehow provide Conservative insiders the ability to grant degrees. Well, I think that's very interesting that we would use a bill that's supposed to be helping people, to actually

legislate forms of hate through this bill. I think that's very concerning for many people: many Muslims across this province, many people from the LGBTQ+ community, those who are trans. This bill actually promotes hatred against those groups. It is really concerning that we have a bill, schedule 2, that is included and sort of hidden amongst all of these other regulatory charges that are made to different acts across the province. But the government is sneaking in the schedule to allow the Canada Christian College to grant degrees that will perpetuate forms of hate and different forms of discrimination across the province.

I think when we look at this bill and we think of what those small businesses are actually facing—I sat in committee hearings throughout the summer with the finance and economic recovery committee, and I didn't necessarily hear from businesses a whole list of regulatory burdens that they were facing. What I did hear was that one in seven businesses was facing the risk of closure, that people were losing their jobs, that folks couldn't pay rent, and that they were being stifled by increasing insurance costs. In many cases, they weren't even actually getting coverage to deal with the business interruption that was happening. Those were concerns we were hearing from those small businesses, but nothing in this bill, nothing in many of the pieces of legislation this government has brought forward actually addresses those real concerns for those businesses.

As we've heard from members from the opposition already, property tax deferral—helpful if you have a business that can stay open, if you're actually generating revenue. But for many of those businesses, they've seen a significant decrease. Many of them are operating with net losses right now because they haven't been able to sustain themselves, or they're facing closure. Many of them have actually closed their doors.

I know that the members opposite have their list of questions that they continue to ask members of the opposition in terms of, “How many businesses do you have in your community?” Well, I would urge you to find out how many businesses have actually closed their doors in your communities, because I don't think you can answer about those numbers. I don't think you understand the number of businesses that are closing their doors and can't get relief either from the federal government or this provincial government.

This bill does nothing to help those businesses. It doesn't help them by putting a ban on evictions, for example. Other legislation does that. We could have done that through this bill, which came sooner than others did, but you chose not to do that. You chose not to put in a utility payment freeze for small and medium-sized businesses. Those were concerns we heard from those businesses that were facing closure. Maybe a stand-alone emergency commercial rent subsidy would have helped some of those businesses keep their doors open for just a little longer. This government chose not to implement anything like that.

They also chose not to figure out how to keep workers safe, which is a huge concern for people and businesses

across the province. We want to ensure that small businesses are able to protect their workers. As we've heard from the medical officer of health in Peel, Dr. Loh, time and time again, perhaps paid sick days would be a good legislative tool that we could use to help protect those workers, to help those small businesses so that their workers can take time off if they are not well and perhaps stop the spread of COVID-19 in many communities that are hot spots.

But when you have legislation that the government brings forward, this omnibus bill that touches on all sorts of things like transit, granting degrees to people—you choose not to implement something that would help people or small businesses.

Time and time again, I hear concerns about mounting pressures that businesses are facing, especially when it comes to insurance gouging. I wonder why this government did not include changes to regulations like 664, which help regulate the auto insurance industry. Those changes could have been introduced here. You could have regulated the rates and helped people, for example, in the taxi or limo industry with the mounting pressures that they are facing because of the cost of insurance—but no changes there. Instead, we choose to change regulations to allow folks to grant degrees—that will essentially be spewing hate.

We also see nothing from this government to focus specifically on marginalized groups. We heard from the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce on the concerns that they had about the businesses they represent and their members, and how people from the Black community or racialized community or Indigenous community disproportionately face barriers when trying to access capital in their businesses. Nothing in any of the bills that this government has brought forward seeks to help address the inequities in access for those businesses—or for women who are small business owners, who we know have been disproportionately impacted. Perhaps we could have done something specifically to help out those business owners and ensure that they could continue to stay afloat. But again, when you have the opportunity, I see this government passes that up to ensure that it instead is focusing on its friends and insiders, ensuring that those favours are legislated.

Speaker, when we look at this bill, it really concerns me that despite purporting to be smarter for business and better for people, it does very little to actually help those small businesses that are struggling across our province, people who are dealing with the economic impacts of COVID-19; nor does it help specific regions that are facing increased caseloads of COVID-19 develop a specific economic recovery plan that will help those communities out. When you force them into the red zones, they do have to close, and as we heard from members earlier, those businesses are happy to comply. But if we need them to close their doors, they need to be compensated for those losses, and nothing in this bill, and again, nothing in anything that this government has brought forward, will help those businesses, if they are forced to close and lose their revenues, to stay afloat and to keep their doors open.

1700

I want to encourage members of the government to really think about schedule 2 in this bill, its implications, and to think about why you would include this in a bill that is actually supposed to help people make their lives better when, in fact, schedule 2 will do the exact opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorne Coe: I lived in Brampton for a period of time, and I found the presentation from the member from Brampton Centre interesting in part and challenging in part.

I know Brampton has a thriving small business community. One of the areas that this bill talks about is streamlining and modernizing the licensing framework. It's for a growing industry: the aquaculture industry overall. In Brampton, there are a couple of firms who practise in that particular industry.

Speaker, through you, the proposed changes are designed to reduce burden—that is, regulatory burden, going forward. As I said earlier, efficiency—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sam Oosterhoff): Question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: —and improve certainty in the industry. Could the member respond to that particular aspect?

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the member from Whitby, I believe it is, who asked the question. Unfortunately, I didn't get to hear the entire question, but I assume it's about how elements of this bill will help local businesses. No doubt, I think that our businesses—obviously, we have a very thriving local economy that deals in everything from manufacturing to logistics and transportation. Certain regulatory changes may help the local economy, but at the end of the day, the bigger concern here is that a small change is not going to help the majority of businesses. This isn't going to help the 80% of businesses that are facing closure at the moment. I'd like to have the member just consider that, outside of the one schedule that you've mentioned, there are so many others that we need to be considering.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: Thank you to the member from Brampton Centre for her comments.

The government keeps asking questions about regulatory burden, and that's the channel they want to be on. I've had a dozen conversations with small business owners in my riding this week alone who are all on the brink of bankruptcy or closure. I have not heard one person say that their top priority is reducing regulatory burden. They're all saying they need government support now. They needed government support weeks ago just in order to survive.

Are you hearing anything about regulatory burden, and what are you hearing from small businesses? What do small businesses in Brampton Centre need to survive?

Ms. Sara Singh: Thank you to the member from Spadina-Fort York for that excellent question. I'm

actually not hearing from those small businesses that they want to see this red tape reduction take place. What they're really concerned about is how they are going to stay afloat right now. That's what we're hearing. I'm hearing from businesses that have actually had to close their doors, and they're wondering how they're going to pay their mortgage and ensure that their children are going to be taken care of as we move forward. That's what I'm hearing.

One regulation that I did hear about, though, was from the taxi and limo industry, who would like to see changes to that regulation to help regulate the rates that they are forced to pay, many of which are putting them out of business. That is really one of the regulatory changes that I heard of, but it's not any that are actually included in this bill. What people need is real relief, and your government isn't doing that.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you to my colleague from the opposite side for her presentation. This bill proposes to develop an online service for property-related information requests to ensure that information to inform evidence-based environmental decisions related to property transactions are available to businesses and citizens in a timely manner. Is the NDP against a more efficient and accountable way of reporting property information?

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The NDP is here to help support small businesses in any way that we can, and we're here to ensure that those voices of those small businesses are heard. So if there are regulatory changes that help expedite a process, those are wonderful changes. However, at the end of the day, what we're hearing during the pandemic right now is that those types of changes are not necessarily top priority. What those small businesses actually need is real, direct financial assistance, and unfortunately, nothing in this bill helps to provide those small businesses the supports that they need. I think that so much more can be done, and I'd like to encourage you to think outside of just the one recommendation that you've made to me today and think about what businesses in your community are also asking for.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member for her presentation. She touched on this, but again, I think it bears mentioning that there is a group of business owners in this province that have been forgotten and ignored by this government. There are 10,000 taxi drivers in Ontario. Many of them are not even able to find insurance. Most of them are being driven to facilities and they're facing rates that are incredibly cost-prohibitive—\$10,000 and up to be insured by insurers. Have you been hearing from taxi drivers? Do they feel that this government cares about them?

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek, who has been a very vocal advocate for folks that have been gouged by the insurance industry, whether that's auto insurance or commercial insurance, as well.

Actually, yes, I have been hearing from limo and taxi drivers who are very concerned. I heard from the Airport Taxi Association, who said that some of those folks were facing price increases that are triple the premiums that they were paying the year before. Can you imagine what that would do to an independent small business—like Yadwinder, for example, who is operating a taxi out of the airport. Those types of insurance increases actually caused him to park his limo and no longer be able to drive because he simply wasn't able to afford that.

As the member from Humber River–Black Creek points out very aptly, there's a very large segment of the population that's being completely overlooked. They are very concerned that this government continues to make empty promises at press conferences about regulating auto insurance rates but actually does—

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: My question to the member opposite is—she spoke about many ideas and many different bills, many things talking about small business relief. Many of those things are in the budget. We are talking about Bill 213, which is to reduce burdens on many small businesses. The commitment the government had made is to every fall and spring produce these bills to help reduce burdens on businesses.

So I just wanted to ask her, in terms of her community, how many businesses does she have per capita? We were talking about it with the member for Guelph. And how many people in your riding are employed by small businesses?

Ms. Sara Singh: I'd like to thank the member from Barrie–Innisfil for the question. I believe that over 80% of our local economy is actually made up of small businesses, and many of those are facing closure at the moment because your government has failed to step up to the plate and ensure that they can keep their doors open. What I continue to hear from them time and time again is that they are looking for real support from this government. They need a rent subsidy. They need help with their fixed costs. They need help with the insurance rates that they continue to be forced to pay. Some of the burdens that I continue to hear about from those small businesses are those costs that you and your government haven't actually taken into consideration.

I know that you probably hear the exact same thing in your riding. Whether we're in Brampton or whether we're in Barrie, those businesses are being increasingly burdened by those costs, and when your government has an opportunity to regulate those rates, again, you're choosing not to do that. So I would urge you to consider including that in a bill like this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We don't have time for another question or comment. Further debate?

1710

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm very happy to rise and debate this bill on behalf of my constituents of London–Fanshawe because we have all heard from our constituents

about health care issues around COVID, job insecurity and also, as we're talking about small businesses, how they're feeling—very apprehensive and don't know what to expect next.

I want to share a story from a small business that contacted my office. Her name is Heather and she runs a business called For the Love of Art, in London, where she hosts classes. After running a successful business for seven years, she's now wondering how she'll pay next month's rent. She's very concerned about that. When you look at Bill 213, it doesn't address that.

After meeting with her landlord, she decided she'd be best to give up some of the units that she occupied. She had a massive amount of space, so she had to downsize because she wasn't sure how she was going to afford the rent. She says this won't help right away, but it will help down the road—that she's downsized—and for now, she's made arrangements until the end of November. After that, she's really hoping that the government will come through with funding to deal with the loss of revenue.

They shut down for four months this year, but those bills didn't stop coming. They had no break on utility payments. They now have been able to open with limited capacity and are holding on, but if they get shut down again, then the story is going to be completely different. She says so far, her landlord and London Hydro are willing to co-operate. That's what's happening. Sometimes people and businesses are left at the mercy of these large corporations.

Thank goodness London Hydro is willing to see some of those compromises and negotiate with commercial tenants and, I have to say, some residents. I have to say a big thank you to them for their understanding around these very difficult times that people are experiencing.

But for now, Heather says, "You only have so many dollars that can go around." What happens when those dollars run out through no fault of her own? The commercial eviction ban extension in Bill 213 isn't there; right? This is the confusing part, I think, with businesses.

In Bill 204, the government had an eviction ban up to October 30, I believe it was. People were left thinking, "What's going to happen?" Then, of course, the federal fund for rent was left up to the landlords to opt in, so that left people very confused. Now, the government, in schedule 5 under the budget, says they have extended commercial eviction bans legislation. People are left to question where they go for help. That's why she called us originally. The help won't come for her soon enough; right? She's also said that a tax cut later won't help her pay the rent now, so she's looking for those things to come into place right away.

Heather's business is vital to our community. She says she knows all her customers by name and habit. That's what we really want. We want those local relationships with small businesses because I think we all agree they truly are the roots of our community. The big corporations and those big companies can pick up and move anywhere, but the small businesses are there to serve their neighbours and constituents and community.

What she does is, she teaches Londoners from three to 97, so three years old to 97 years old. That's a big spectrum of age. She says For the Love of Art is here to help everyone experience and enjoy art. She said, "We're not looking for a handout. We're looking for a hand up." A leg up from the government, she says, is the "difference between paying a wage and not." The "difference between keeping the lights on and not." She says that they're being very creative with how they manage the outstanding bills. She wants to pay, but nobody wants to be in the position that they're in. "We want to" stay in business because "that contributes and supports the London community. We're here for the long haul."

Small businesses really have their hearts in where they live and where they operate their business. I think we all can agree on that. We need to support them. She says that we want folks like her to be able to keep the lights on so that they can open their doors again when this is over. I think the government's intention is that, but we have to create stronger ways of doing that.

Again, one of the things that isn't in this bill and isn't in Bill 229 at all is workers' sick days. That's another expense for small businesses, like Heather's For the Love of Art. That's going to take another hit, for her to have to pay someone if they're sick, right? So that could have been a support that was put into Bill 213 or put into Bill 229 to help small businesses, but it was left out.

The other thing, when I read Bill 213—it's got a lot of things in it. It touches on so much, and when you look through it, one of the things that was surprising to me—again, the government talks about the red tape. There are some red tape pieces. I thought this was an unusual schedule: schedule 3, where they say that a spouse would also no longer have the right to elect to change their name, but will now have to apply, meaning that they no longer have an automatic right to take their spouse's name.

I'm not sure why that's such red tape for people. I know that when I got married 31 years ago, you changed your name—that was back then; not everybody did it. But I was happy to take the name Armstrong, and I just changed my name. There was no problem.

In this schedule, it also removes the automatic right of spouses to revert to their former names if the marriage dissolves. They will now be required to use the more cumbersome application process to change their name back. They will also now be required to notify their former spouse. This could cause significant stress for people whose marriages did not dissolve amicably. I just wonder how that red tape piece makes it easier for people. When they get married, it's not an automatic thing they can elect to do, and then if they want to change their name back to their maiden name or birth name, you've got to notify your ex-spouse. That doesn't make sense to me.

Another thing, of course—schedule 4 is a good thing, which allows a director to use discretion to determine the methods of payment under the support order. The FRO, the Family Responsibility Office—we get a lot of calls from that. And so some of these things—like I say, they're just coming out from everywhere. It's a mishmash of schedules. So—

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker, I would like the debate to continue.

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

I return to the member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I appreciate that the government is allowing the debate to continue. I know we have many speakers on this side of the House who are wanting to speak to Bill 213.

Bill 213 is not likely to change much on the ground. Much of the bill is minor or technical, as if the government is trying to fill a quota of measures that could count as cutting red tape. I kind of described one of those, right? Despite being described by the government as part of a recovery package, Bill 213 is completely in line with the government's pre-pandemic priorities. Despite purporting it to be smarter for business, the bill does not include the 75% subsidy, a utility freeze or other business support measures that the NDP have repeatedly called for in Save Main Street.

We have, of course, talked about our Save Main Street proposals and, quite frankly, they are very good. Like I said, the eviction ban—you've got it in the budget, and that's where people are looking for answers. They're navigating: "Where do I get this benefit? Where do I get this program?" It's not easy to find. But if you were able to look at our plan, which is Save Main Street, it actually touches those things that people brought forward for small businesses.

Right away, we talked about an eviction ban, so we're glad the government adopted that in their Bill 229. It talks about a utility payment freeze for small business and medium-sized business; we've looked at that, and a lot of the bigger corporations can benefit from your utility and energy schedule, but not necessarily small businesses. A small business fund to face historic barriers: Again, those things aren't in there. Having those sick days, again, is extremely helpful. It's also going to help to stop the spread of COVID-19.

1720

When people are sick, they can stay home and they won't lose a paycheque. When we say it's smarter for people and better for business, it is smarter for people to have sick days and better for business if it's covered when their employees are sick, because we don't want them to come to work and spread that to other employees or their customers who are then going to go home and take it home to their families. Then, heaven forbid, you have an essential caregiver who is going to visit their loved one in a long-term-care home and they won't be able to see them. It's a trickle effect when you're talking about sick days that aren't covered for pay, right?

People don't always have that choice not to go to work and lose that income. We certainly are privileged here. If we're sick, we still get paid, but not everybody is in that same position. Especially during a pandemic, we understand the imbalance between those who cannot stay home when they're sick and those who can.

I have a family member who worked a part-time job. They were going to work, and when they were sick, they didn't stay home. They could not afford to lose that income or they could not pay their rent, and that is legit. So they would go to work sick. They went to work sick to the point where they almost had their appendix burst. They had to go into emerg to get their appendix looked after. They kept going into work with an excessive amount of pain in their abdomen because they were afraid—and this is a true story; I know the person—of not being able to pay the rent. They had a family, and they were just petrified that if they couldn't pay the rent, that would happen.

They did get their appendix removed—a happy story—but they had to struggle a lot and their employer didn't give them extra hours. They were working part-time, and that's all the hours they could get. Employers have different reasons. They wanted a full-time job. The person kept trying to get on full-time when those positions came available, and they were few and far between. But when you hire somebody full-time, there are extra costs involved for benefits and all those kinds of things.

They were an excellent employee. It was a sales position. They met all the bonuses, they won all the prizes to the point where the other employees were jealous. There was that competition. The new kid came in and started shining really bright. So there was that problem too. It wasn't that they weren't a good worker, and they wanted full-time. When she got sick, she was on part-time and they didn't pay.

That is why it's extremely important when we talk about economic recovery, that it needs to be a health recovery within the business world, and that health recovery means sick days are really important.

I see that the government members are really listening to what I'm saying, so maybe I'm getting through to some of them. You could advocate around the table for your colleagues and make that happen, even if it's a temporary thing. We acknowledged economic recovery and smarter for business and better for people—that \$3 increase for PSWs to the end of March was a temporary measure to make sure people stayed and worked in the home. So I put that out there, that perhaps sick days could be a temporary thing till we get over COVID. At least it gives people that option and you help businesses continue to stay in business and make it smarter for businesses and smarter for people. That's a really good piece of legislation there.

I have to say that the government's effort—we understand that you're in a difficult situation, but there are things that can be done better to help small businesses, and one of them is the insurance cost that's been talked about.

I had a call from 427 Wing, a Legion in my riding, and they were very, very concerned. The first thing they talked about when the pandemic started was their insurance costs. We did send a letter to the minister with regard to that,

explaining they went up 25% the year before and they were expecting to go up another 25% in insurance costs. We all know our Legions in our ridings. They contribute so much, and they do so much good. They do good for veterans and they also do good all around for our communities. So having that issue come up really, really early in the pandemic, I was looking forward to having a good response for the Legions, to have that insurance cost mitigated for them.

Again, they're suffering, like all the hospitalities. We can't go in for the fish fries on Friday, for their meals on Sunday. They used to have a warm meal, very affordable. So reducing the costs and the expenses they have so that they could offset what income is coming in would be great. We owe it to the people who put their lives on the line, sacrificed their lives for us.

They're veterans. They still contribute to our society and our communities. I have a coffee club; I've talked about it before. Every Wednesday morning, they go to the Scotian Isle bakery. It's a guy from the east coast that runs it, and he opens up the bakery at, I think, 7 o'clock in the morning in the front part of the store, and the veterans get it from 7 to when he opens.

I've been lucky enough that I'm allowed into the men's club—coffee time—and I spend my time talking to them. They're still volunteering. Every year, these veterans have a walk for epilepsy or a run for epilepsy, and they get together, all ages—they're older—and they do the walk and they raise money for epilepsy. So they're always giving back to us. I think, again, these are very difficult times. So when Bill 213 comes out—and there is a lot of housekeeping and red tape stuff—I think we could have done better when it comes to red tape for Legions.

I think the point I'm making in this is that even though there are some things that we have talked about—and one of them, specifically, that we didn't agree with is schedule 2. I would ask the government to rethink that. I'm sure a lot of you don't believe in those things. We all, on this side of the House, believe in equity and that everyone should have the right to live freely, so that is a troublesome schedule in this bill as well.

Speaker, I say, for people like Heather, who has For the Love of Art, who has given herself to her community—she's 70 now and she wants to do this because she does love art. I've met her, and in so many ways—I'll talk about For the Love of Art—it truly helps us. We know there's art therapy. You don't have to be a Picasso to go into Heather's classes. And when you go in there you feel good because you've created something, and you've met people from three to 97.

Art, I think, is an extremely important thing in our daily growth. During the pandemic, I went onto YouTube and I started doing art. Quite frankly, when I showed my family, they said, "Mom, did you do that?" I said, "Yes, I did." They go, "No." I said, "Yes, I did it." And you know what? It gives you a lot of self-gratification. Heather's business? People feel good about it. People want art in their lives. She is successful. It's something she started up in London that was new, and so she's taken a risk.

I think what small businesses are saying to the government is, "Invest in us. Gamble on us." Take a gamble, take a risk, because I think in the end, we're all going to come out with small business—if we invest in them, it's going to come back to us. We're going to reap those benefits. Those dividends will continue.

I ask the government: Better for People, Smarter for Business? Yes, there are some things in here, like I say, that are red tape-oriented, but it could have been done better, and I've used some examples when it comes to the insurance piece. You do mention the Insurance Act, where there are some technical housekeeping pieces, but really looking at those premiums that could have helped those Legions would have gone a long way.

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

1730

Ms. Jane McKenna: I guess we can all say that these are unprecedented times, and businesses need help to recover from the economic effects of COVID-19 while preparing for the future. Red tape hurts the job creator's ability to do what they do best: create jobs. We need to help them create jobs as we continue down the path of recovery. This is why we introduced new legislation that will help drive our province's economic recovery by removing regulatory roadblocks that are getting in the way of businesses. Modern regulations that are easier to understand and comply with would allow people and businesses to invest time and money in what's important right now: recovering, rebuilding and re-emerging from the crisis stronger than before.

Is the NDP against the government helping businesses reduce regulatory burdens and making it easier for businesses to create jobs in Ontario?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think this bill, some of the things in here, like we talked about, might—the intent of the government is to do that. But there are things that we could do that would help further, and one of them is the hospitality industry that we talked about. If you go down Toronto's Yonge Street, you'll see people are literally on the road on patios with those portable heaters. One of the cafes on my way to work now has a white tent with heaters inside. They are doing so much to try to struggle through this economic challenge. But one of the things we—and cutting red tape is good, yes, if it's going to make it easier, but you also have to balance it with the interests of the public. So that's what I'll say to that. But one of the things we suggested was to limit the food delivery fees, because that is something that's being taken advantage of. Having that would be helpful to businesses when they're delivering food. That would be something that I would suggest the government take a look at.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for her comments. I really appreciated some of the stories that she told about specific issues in her community, particularly the issues you raised around

some of the Legions and the support they could be using right now.

My fear when I hear the members opposite talk about red tape is that what they're talking about is deregulation, and regulations often have evolved for good reason—like, for example, making sure that workers have protections in the workplace—so I think we need to note that, absolutely. But I wonder if the member would share with us—you mentioned I think it was Heather and her art studio. I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about how you think businesses like that would benefit from more direct relief and support, because a lot of what we're talking about here, it seems to me—by the time this comes to be, anyway, many of these small businesses will already be closed.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for Davenport for that question. That's one of the things, too, I think, that's worth highlighting: Heather is a woman, and we don't have a she-recovery plan in Bill 213. Now, everybody owns businesses, but there are a lot of women who are entrepreneurs and who have gotten into business. So for having Heather in business—do you know what? If we had more non-profit child care spaces so that her staff know that their children are in a safe place that has good oversight and is affordable, then they're going to be going to work knowing that they don't have to worry about their children. That would be something, in part, that I know would help businesses like Heather's.

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

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I want to say thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for sharing with us. In your remarks, you were mentioning a lot of things for small businesses, the needs for small businesses. Our government realizes and we understand that. If you remember and just refer to our recent budget, we have a lot of things covered for small businesses. We are giving up to \$1,000 for them to cover the cost for PPE, and if they have to go through the extra costs for the second phase of COVID and they have to stop what they were doing, we also support them with the real need that they need financially.

But let's focus back on Bill 213, which is what we're discussing here. The bill is proposed to modernize and streamline the licensing framework for Ontario's growing and thriving—

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I didn't get the whole question, but I think the government's intent is to support small business. I'm sure that's the direction that they want to go in. They talk about that all the time, economics and the economy, but we also need to understand that there are some things that will help small businesses, like Heather's For the Love of Art, survive. Bill 213 not having, as an example, those sick days—that is an added cost to Heather's expenses. She's already struggling. She has downsized the area of her business. She's doing the best she can, but she needs a little bit more help from this government, and Bill 213 isn't getting her there.

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

Mr. Chris Glover: I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for her comments. This province is facing an economic collapse with small businesses. The Globe and Mail reports that 30% of small businesses are at risk of closure. This bill is supposed to be supporting small businesses, but the only thing that they've done is they're offering \$1,000 for PPE, and they're offering a property and education tax cut—but that's not going to support businesses right now. When I talk to small businesses in my area, they're not saying that any of those measures are going to get them through the pandemic. They want to survive. They want to keep their businesses intact so that they can rebound, and rebound our economy. They're asking for the government to invest in helping small businesses survive. This act is not doing it. What would the NDP do to support small businesses through the pandemic?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you for that question. There are so many things that we have already suggested, but I'll go over them. One of the ones I mentioned earlier was building a she-recovery. There are a lot of women in the workforce and we need to make sure they can get back in the workforce. Capping class sizes and school bus capacity to keep kids safe and moms working, that is something that's very, very important.

The other one I talked about earlier was creating more non-profit and public child care spaces. There is a wait-list like you wouldn't believe in London for child care spaces—subsidized child care spaces, affordable child care spaces—that keeps a lot of people home—women, men, families—because it's too costly for them to put their kids in child care when they have a minimum wage job. So there's another area where I think we can do better and help small businesses.

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

Mr. Lorne Coe: At the core of this legislation, when I speak to my businesses in Whitby and other parts of the region, is it's expected to save business time and cost. A corollary of that is for them to create jobs, and jobs stimulate the local economy, help hard-working families. Can the member from London–Fanshawe stand in her place today and say that she supports hard-working families and small businesses in Ontario? Because that's at the core of this bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is why I love this place, because we can have a difference of opinion. The member for Whitby can certainly say that, and I can certainly say I support small businesses and hard-working families. But I can say, then, I don't think this bill is going to do it for them. I can tell you that a lot of the support that they were looking for wasn't there at the beginning of the pandemic. This is not going to be a game-changer, when you look at the bill in its entirety. So not supporting this bill does not mean I don't support small businesses and hard-working families, I absolutely do, but this isn't the direction that's going to make that happen.

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

Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise to participate in this second reading debate on Bill 213, which is titled—rather ironically, as many people have already observed—the Better for People, Smarter for Business Act, because there is actually very, very little in this bill that is either better for people or smarter for business.

1740

It's interesting, Speaker: I think you were in the Chair earlier when we held a debate on the time-allocation motion on Bill 229, and there are some similarities between Bill 229 and Bill 213. Both are omnibus bills with many, many schedules. Bill 229 had 44 schedules; Bill 213 has 29 schedules. Omnibus bills often become a real grab bag of many different initiatives that cross many different ministries.

This bill, Bill 213—I'm just going through some of the measures that it includes affecting business corporations, affecting changing the Change of Name Act, affecting aquaculture. There are changes to the Mining Act. There are changes to Niagara Parks. There is a whole schedule dealing with intercity bus service, which my colleague the member for Toronto—I don't remember her riding name, but anyway, my colleague spoke earlier about intercity bus services and what this bill does in that policy field.

There is also a schedule in this bill dealing with water-taking. There's a schedule dealing with pension benefits. There's a schedule dealing with liens against personal property.

There's a schedule dealing with TCAF. That is the fund that has been created to protect private career college students when their school suddenly closes. I think that some of us in this House, at least, were here when Everest College closed down abruptly and left students on the hook for the tuition that they had paid and the education that they were no longer were receiving. So the TCAF fund was important to reimburse those students.

This bill also includes measures dealing with land surveyors. You can see, Speaker, by the list of things I have mentioned that this is quite a sweeping bill that addresses many different policy concerns.

But in fact, Speaker, none of it matters. None of it matters, what's in this bill, because the one thing that's in here is schedule 2. It's like the elephant in the room. It's like you can't talk about anything else in this bill, because it includes schedule 2. Schedule 2, as people have pointed out, is the schedule that allows Canada Christian College to grant university degrees.

That has happened in the past, where private post-secondary institutions have been awarded degree-granting ability through legislation. The problem here is that a process was set up, a process called the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, that is supposed to be an arm's-length, independent process to determine whether a post-secondary institution is qualified and meets

the criteria to be able to grant a university degree in the province of Ontario.

We have a world-class post-secondary education system, and that didn't happen by accident. Maybe not so much this government or maybe not so much the previous Liberal government, but we have taken pride in the support that we have provided to post-secondary institutions and the quality of the faculty and the amazing research that is generated by these institutions that informs public policy. We have many post-secondary institutions right now that are involved in the race for a vaccine to help us get through this COVID-19 pandemic.

The quality of our post-secondary sector is something that we are very proud of, and it's important to have an independent, arm's-length process like PEQAB to ensure that when institutions are given the ability to grant degrees, they meet the criteria that has been established in this province.

The problem with Canada Christian College is that its founder, its president, its CEO is someone who actively promotes discrimination and hate, which is contrary to the Ontario Human Rights Code. That is a huge concern. That is a huge concern, when we are contemplating allowing an institution to grant university degrees and not requiring them to meet the anti-hate and anti-discrimination standards of the Ontario Human Rights Code. It's incomprehensible why this government would be allowing that to happen.

We also know that the founder of Canada Christian College, its current president, Charles McVety, is someone who has publicly expressed his belief in creationism—and this didn't happen a long time ago; this happened very recently. He has been an avowed creationist for some time and continues to question whether the earth is really older than 6,000 years, and he has expressed the opinion that it would be a good idea to return creationism to the curriculum of our public school system. This is the man who is the chief executive of an institution that wants to award science degrees.

Speaker, how can we even be thinking of allowing a post-secondary institution whose founder does not believe in science to award university science degrees, university BScs? Think about what that does in terms of the public face of our post-secondary sector—when university degrees from the province of Ontario can be awarded, bachelor of science degrees can be awarded, and the person who was in charge of the pedagogy, the curriculum at that post-secondary institution doesn't believe in science. It's incomprehensible.

One has to wonder if perhaps—we know that Canada Christian College embarked on the process of the PEQAB certification before this legislation came to the Legislature, before Bill 213 arrived on our desks. Perhaps Mr. McVety was getting the sense, was starting to feel that it was unlikely that he would be able to meet the PEQAB criteria for being able to grant university degrees. One has to wonder if maybe that is why the government decided to take an alternative route to allow Canada Christian

College to award arts and science degrees, and that was to put it into legislation.

This government decided to circumvent an independent, arm's-length process that is highly respected and is critical to maintain the credibility, the integrity of our post-secondary system. This government decided to circumvent that process and instead use legislation to allow Canada Christian College to award arts and science degrees.

We heard the Premier say that if Canada Christian College, at the end of the PEQAB process—if they don't meet the standards, then the government won't proclaim schedule 2 of the bill. That is nonsense. Why is schedule 2 of this bill in this legislation in the first place? It should not be in legislation at all. That's why we can't really talk about this bill—because everything in this bill is tainted by the fact that schedule 2 is in here. It's something that has no place in the debate that we're having in this chamber or in legislation that MPPs are reviewing.

1750

There are other legitimate concerns about Mr. McVety that also raise eyebrows about this process and why the government would want to include it in its legislation. We learned that Mr. McVety and his son have received loans of almost \$900,000 from Canada Christian College, from the institution that they lead, and that institution has charitable status under the Canada Revenue Agency. One has to question how an officially registered charity can be loaning almost \$900,000 of income that is received from donors to the people who are in charge of that institution.

We also understand that some of the curricula vitae, the CVs, of senior executives completely misrepresent academic qualifications, claiming a PhD when there is in fact no PhD. So there are some huge concerns about how this schedule got into the bill and why the government has so far refused to withdraw it.

I do want to talk about some of the other statements that have been made by Mr. McVety, because they are very troubling. I talked earlier about the fact that the founder and president of the institution has taken positions that are contrary to the anti-hate and anti-discrimination standards of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and I just wanted to share some of the comments he has made.

He has said that 2SLGBTQIA+ people prey on children. That is promoting transphobia. It's promoting homophobia. It is promoting hate in our province.

He has said that Muslims pose a threat to the western world. That is promoting Islamophobia, Speaker, and we have seen the consequences of Islamophobia in New Zealand. We saw it in Quebec. We are seeing it in our own communities. I suspect that many of us who have mosques in our communities were recently asked to write letters of support, because there's a federal government program for mosques to install security cameras because they need security. Our mosques are under attack more and more from people who espouse hate, and to see validation for somebody like Charles McVety who has openly espoused hate by the comments he has made about Muslims—it has no place in this Legislature. This is the people's House.

Why are we talking about this in the people's House? We should be talking about how to make Ontario more inclusive, more equitable, safer for everyone, not more dangerous for people who are LGBTQ, for people who have different faiths.

We also heard him talk about Islam as not just a religion but a faith whose mission is a hostile takeover. All of these comments, Speaker, are so troubling, and that's why we are just so appalled and horrified by the fact that schedule 2 has been included in this legislation.

I'll turn now to talking about what could have been in this legislation and the missed opportunity—we see this over and over—that this government has had to actually do things that would be better for people and smarter for business as we all work together to try to survive this global pandemic that we are in. For businesses to survive, we have heard over and over and over again in those—I don't know; was it 800 hours of deputations that were made to the finance committee in the summer? We have heard it over and over in emails from our constituents, in media reports who have been following what's going on.

In the business sector, we've heard it from the Retail Council of Canada, the organization that represents the hospitality industry. Businesses are hanging by a thread, Speaker. They are hanging by a thread, and we're looking at the potential loss of I think it was one in six—or was it 60% of restaurants that are potentially going to close because of this pandemic? Businesses, small and medium-sized businesses, are the lifeblood of our communities. They create jobs. They employ our neighbours. They generate local economic activity. They are so fundamental to the well-being and the livability of our communities, and they need direct financial support.

But we have continued to see this government fail to step up and provide that direct financial support. We saw them insist for months that there was nothing wrong with the federal-provincial CECRA program that required businesses to get their landlords to apply for commercial rent relief, and we heard over and over from businesses who were saying, "My landlord is refusing to do it or doesn't meet the criteria." Businesses who really, really needed commercial rent assistance were excluded from any kind of ability to access that program. We said from the very beginning that a program that relies on landlords, that is designed around landlords making the application to help commercial tenants, is not going to work.

We saw the federal government finally come to its senses and develop a program that will allow the commercial tenants to apply, which is what should have been in place from the very beginning, but that program hasn't started. The funds haven't started flowing yet, and in the meantime, the ban on commercial evictions ended on October 31. We're now—what day are we? We're November—I don't even know the day.

Interjection: Nineteenth.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Nineteenth—we're at November 19, so we're almost three weeks out from the end of that ban on commercial evictions, and I know all of us are

hearing from businesses who got that notice from their commercial landlord the day after the ban on evictions was lifted, and they don't know what they're going to do. They don't know what they're going to do. They can't meet payroll, and they want to. They want to continue to employ these valued employees. They don't want to have to lay them all off if they can make it through the other side.

Speaker, if we actually wanted legislation that's going to be smarter for business, it would include direct financial support to compensate small businesses who are being directly affected by this pandemic, many of whom have had to close their doors or pivot and are just doing a tiny fraction of the business that they used to do. They need help to deal with rent and payroll.

We should also be looking at paid sick days. We need a program. It's one thing for the Premier to say, "Stay home when you are sick," but if you're forced to have to choose between making your rent that month or giving up your salary at work, you might not feel that you have an option to stay home when you're sick without access to paid sick days.

We also need for businesses—they need help with PPE. There's so much more I could say, but I will end it now.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will not have time for questions and answers, it being 6 o'clock.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Report continues in volume B.

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Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Wayne Gates, Randy Hillier
Andrea Khanjin, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Mitzie Hunter, Logan Kanapathi
Sol Mamakwa, David Piccini
Jeremy Roberts, Amarjot Sandhu
Sandy Shaw, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Robin Martin, Norman Miller
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

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

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

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

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

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

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stephen Blais
Stan Cho, Stephen Crawford
Catherine Fife, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Daryl Kramp
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Fraser
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford
John Fraser, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

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

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