

Legislative  
Assembly  
of Ontario



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(Hansard)**

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(Hansard)**

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Mercredi  
2 décembre 2020

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 December 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 décembre 2020

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

OCCUPIERS' LIABILITY  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 MODIFIANT  
LA LOI SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ  
DES OCCUPANTS

Mr. Norman Miller moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Occupiers' Liability Act / Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la responsabilité des occupants.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll recognize the member to lead off the debate.

**Mr. Norman Miller:** I rise today to ask members to support my private member's bill, Bill 118, the Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act, 2020. I'd like to first of all thank Lesley Daw, who has been working really hard on this bill, and also Elizabeth Haig, who is my OLIP intern, who has done a lot of the work, including most of these comments today.

This bill would reduce the notice period for lawsuits for slips and falls on snow and ice from two years to 60 days. We need to make this change because, currently, insurance costs for snow and ice management companies are skyrocketing due to an increased risk of slip-and-fall lawsuits. Some insurance companies have stopped providing coverage to this sector altogether. This lack of insurance, or lack of affordable insurance, has forced many small snow removal companies out of business, leaving Ontarians wondering who will clear the snow and ice this winter. We know we get snow, we know we need snow removal, so we need to do something before we lose more snow removal companies.

I had originally proposed a new notification period of 10 days, the same as the time allotted for notifying municipalities on falls on municipally managed roads and sidewalks. However, after hearing about the challenges that people may face in establishing who to contact after an injury, we amended the proposed limit to 60 days, with the exceptions of extreme cases specified.

I believe 60 days will provide ample time for an injured party to give notice of their injury to either the property

owner, the tenant or the snow remover. I also believe this balances the rights of the injured party to seek compensation with the rights of occupiers and contractors to preserve evidence to defend themselves.

Under the current rules, property owners, their tenants, commercial snow and ice management companies can face lawsuits up to two years after someone falls. They may not even know that someone has fallen. As a result, many small businesses have been hit with frivolous, yet crippling, injury lawsuits. This has become so common that insurance providers have hiked up their premiums and deductibles across the board for the entire snow and ice management industry, including for companies with no active lawsuits against them. Many insurance providers have stopped covering businesses in this industry altogether because there's such a high risk of expensive litigation. This lack of affordable insurance has forced many small snow and ice management companies out of business. Here in Ontario, we have snow and ice every year, so we need companies that can manage snow removal.

As many of you know, I have served my riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka for nearly 20 years, and I often get my ideas for private members' bills from people in my community. In this case, I was first informed of this issue by this by Dave Finch from Wes Finch and Sons, an excavation landscaping business that manages plowing at the hospital in Bracebridge. He told me that insurance for commercial snow plow companies was getting extremely expensive, especially for companies plowing a hospital parking lot.

After I heard from Mr. Finch, I began to look into the issue and learned it was a common problem. When I introduced my bill, I heard from dozens of landscapers and plowers from my riding and across the province. Most of the businesses that reached out to me are small, family-owned businesses. Many have been serving their communities for decades, but have all seen insurance rates skyrocket to unmanageable levels the last five years.

For those of you who weren't involved in the committee hearings, I'm going to share some of the stories we heard. Some of these were received as written submissions, while others are taken from oral presentations to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills on November 16. We heard from snow removal contractors of all sizes, from small, family-run businesses to larger operators; some that have faced huge increases in insurance costs, and others that have been unable to get insurance at all.

Mike Dominick operates Husky Services in Cornwall. This year, his insurer informed him that they would not be

insuring any snow and ice management businesses, and he was unable to get any coverage. He has had to end his snow removal service for his 100 clients this year, causing Dominick to lay off a dozen part-time employees.

We also heard from insurance brokers who confirmed that it is extremely difficult to find insurance providers for snow removal, as the industry faces a much higher number of claims compared to other industries. Jenny Desroches from Tanner Insurance in Ottawa highlighted that smaller operations seem to be unfairly impacted by steep increases, since insurance providers tend to favour larger businesses, as in companies netting over \$1 million a year.

Mr. Gord Fergusson from Youngs Insurance Brokers Inc. broke the issue down even further for us. I'm going to quote him here: "We think with ... the reduction of the time period, it would allow insurance carriers to have a better scope on what they understand to be the risk for this particular customer" or for the snow removal industry in general. When insurance providers know the risk in a timely manner, they can confidently offer renewal and price accordingly, rather than basing their models for yearly insurance rates on the possibility of getting served two years down the line.

For those snow removal businesses that can still get insurance, they're facing huge increases in the cost of premiums and deductibles. I was shocked to hear some of these numbers. Boffo Landscaping in Maple saw their insurance go up 52%, from \$34,000 to \$52,561. Triple J Contracting in London has been in business for seven years and employed more than 30 employees. This year, after their insurance rates rose from approximately \$20,000 to an astounding \$70,000 per year, they were forced to stop offering snow removal services. They have never faced a slip-and-fall claim. Unfortunately, getting out of the snow removal business led to the layoffs of their part-time staff and half their full-time staff. The company also sold some of their equipment at a loss.

#### 0910

A similar story from my riding came from Muskoka Town and Country Services. After more than 15 years in the snow and ice maintenance business, they were nearly forced to shut down operations in 2018 after struggling to find general liability insurance, despite never having a claim against them. They were able to get new coverage, but the premium was five times what it had been the previous year. That insurance company dropped them the following year when they too decided to no longer provide coverage for the snow removal industry.

At committee we also heard from Heather French, a farmer in Caledon who runs a snow-clearing company in the winter months. Over the last two years, her insurance rates have gone from \$15,000 to \$112,000. She was also served with a slip-and-fall lawsuit after one year and 11 months. She told us that a shorter notice period would allow her to make sure video footage is backed up and all the records are straight to defend themselves. As Heather bluntly put it at committee, and I agree, "I have" trouble "remembering what I did yesterday, let alone a year" or two "ago."

TCG National is a large snow-clearing franchise company which has operated in Ontario for 30 years and employs 400 people. Their deductible has jumped from \$500 a claim to \$25,000 a claim, and their insurance rates have tripled.

Spring Flowers Landscaping in Scarborough has seen their insurance rates jump from just under \$15,000 to \$54,000 over the last three years.

We received 60 statements from snow and ice removal companies with similarly dizzying figures.

Like I said, we heard of companies of all sizes. One of the larger ones is Clintar Commercial Outdoor Services. They've been the snow and ice contractors here at Queen's Park since 1997. They serve customers throughout the GTA and the Golden Horseshoe. They pay over \$2.5 million in insurance premiums every year and they've had to get a new insurance provider every year since 2015 because their past insurers have stopped insuring snow and ice contractors.

Of course, these increased insurance costs have to be passed on to customers. At Pratt's Lawn Care in Bala in my riding in Muskoka, the owners have been struggling to keep costs low in other areas of operation and still have had to double their prices. These clients are not just private homeowners; they are stores, places of worship, hospitals or schools that are saddled with these increased costs to keep their properties safe for the community.

A presenter from Perfect Property Maintenance Kings in the GTA told us they have been forced by multiple insurance companies to refuse snow and ice maintenance service to gyms, places of worship and other community areas because of more liability.

Similarly, Telford Property Management in Caledon told us that their insurance provider has directed them not to service any parking lots with more than 10 spaces. With insurance costs at an all-time high and these new restrictions on where he can seek business, the owner is worried he may be pushed out of the market altogether.

Even when the lawsuits are frivolous or otherwise unsuccessful, snow removers end up paying for them in the long run. One presenter at committee was Shannon Burrows from Weeks Construction in my riding in Parry Sound. Her family has been providing snow removal to people in my riding since 1956. In the last two years, they faced two lawsuits for places they had serviced. In both cases they were found not to be negligent, but their insurance company chose to settle, so now they have that mark on their claim history, which leads to even more increases in their insurance rates.

As you can imagine, when insurance rates are jumping so much from year to year it has become very difficult for these hard-working small business owners to plan for the future. In some cases, snow removal companies have multi-year contracts with their customers, so they can't increase the rates and have to eat the dramatic increases in insurance costs until the end of the contract.

We heard from Greentario Landscape, a family-owned company in Hamilton that has been doing snow removal for 30 years. They have 40 employees, and they told us

that over the past three years they've been budgeting to increase wages to their employees to at least \$18 an hour, but since their insurance costs and deductibles keep climbing, he's not sure they will be able to manage this increase. Their deductible on slip-and-fall claims has gone from \$2,500 to \$25,000 this year alone.

Bill 118 will not only help snow contractors, but their customers, including public institutions, large companies and small businesses. One of the owners of Greentario, Mr. Carmine Filice, is also a member of the Hamilton housing board. He pointed out that housing boards in Ontario are also struggling to absorb the increased costs of snow removal while keeping the rent affordable.

The Ontario Association of School Business Officials came forward to say they frequently see claims being made 18 to 24 months after accidents, at which point the evidence, such as pictures of the snow and ice and footwear, is no longer available. The Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association and some of their members expressed the same complaints. For instance, the committee heard from Nolan Quinn, who owns a Dairy Queen franchise in Cornwall. His snow removal costs have increased so much that this winter he will be shovelling the sidewalks outside his business on his own. We heard from many businesses that the two-year notice period is simply too long because it hinders their ability to properly defend themselves: Memories have faded, surveillance footage is lost, staff have turned over, so it is difficult to properly gather the evidence necessary to defend themselves.

One business owner, from Let's Landscape Together in Burlington, was served with a slip-and-fall lawsuit one day before the statute of limitations expired. The claimant said they fell in a parking lot Let's Landscape Together maintains for snow on January 10, 2018, but waited until January 9, 2020, to file. The same claimant then filed a second claim for another accident in the same spot 30 days later. Paperwork for the second claim was received February 5, 2020, for a fall on February 9, 2018. For both cases, the business had some records about the weather and where they had plowed and salted, but video records from nearby businesses were lost, and it is unlikely anyone would remember what the condition of the property was like two years later.

Speaking of video footage, I want to acknowledge that even the 60-day notice period may be a challenge for some security systems. While some presenters told us that their video surveillance systems only store 38 days' worth of footage, we felt that 60 days achieved the best balance between the rights of the occupier and the snow removal contractor, and those of the injured party.

Beyond helping property owners, tenants and contractors defend themselves, one snow operator, from Southwest Property Care in London, also told us that early reporting of slip-and-fall incidents will help them to improve services immediately. If they hear about a fall, they can reassess the services they are providing and make any necessary changes to reduce the risk of someone else falling.

I also want to mention that many of the presenters at committee mentioned that claimants and, indeed, the general public are often not prepared for winter conditions. Snow removal companies cannot guarantee clear and dry pavement in the dead of winter; no one can do that. They do their best to keep conditions safe, but it is still up to all of us to wear proper footwear, stick to designated paths and walk carefully. We adjust our driving habits in the winter, and most of us use winter tires; as pedestrians, we need to do the same thing. Personal responsibility has to come into play somewhere. From time to time I fall down, but it's usually not anybody else's fault; it's usually my fault.

The threat of slip-and-fall lawsuits is creating another problem: an environmental one. Many of our presenters explained that many snow removal companies now rely on using excessive amounts of road salt to mitigate the risk of slip-and-fall lawsuits. I have certainly noticed this walking into Queen's Park and back in downtown Toronto, where you crunch along on what seems like half an inch of salt the whole way. This has devastating effects on our environment, especially on our water quality. As outlined in the province's 2010 Water Quality in Ontario report, chloride concentrations in Ontario streams have doubled, on average, since 1970, with increases in urban areas being greater.

In my own riding, the Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group's recent report identified an increasing level of road salt in Muskoka's lakes as a top source of pollution in my region. The report estimates that road salt pollution affects about 20% of Muskoka's lakes. In Jevins Lake near Gravenhurst, research has shown that excessive road salt has caused chloride levels which violate the Canadian water quality guidelines. The Muskoka Watershed Advisory Group has recommended immediate intervention to manage the level of road salt in our lakes. I believe this law is an important step in that process.

#### 0920

As I said earlier, I had originally proposed a 10-day notification period for slip-and-fall claims, as this would bring the rules in line with the timeline for notifying a municipality about a fall on their roads and sidewalks. The timeline was supported by snow and ice management professionals from across the province.

We also heard from insurance groups, like the Ontario Mutual Insurance Association. They admitted that increased litigation has increased insurance rates for snow management businesses, but said this bill offers "a common-sense approach to improving and modernizing the Occupiers' Liability Act, while still protecting the rights of all parties to this type of litigation."

Similarly, the Insurance Bureau of Canada told us that Bill 118 strikes a good balance to "allow individuals that have been injured as a result of the negligence of occupiers with respect to snow and ice maintenance to advance their legitimate claims in a timely manner, while ensuring that defendant occupiers are not placed in the untenable position where they become obligated to pay for alleged personal injuries for the sole reason that they are unable to provide a defence."

However, we did hear concern from some committee members and through some written submissions that 10 days would be too short. I spoke with the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, who explained that it can take longer than 10 days for an injured party to determine who they would need to notify. As a result of that discussion, I brought forward an amendment that would set the notification period at 60 days and allow the injured party to notify either the landlord, the tenant or the snow removal contractor. Any party that receives notification of a slip-and-fall on the property would be required to notify the other parties involved.

I think this is an appropriate middle ground, and I believe my colleagues on the committee agreed. To clarify, we are not suggesting that claimants have 60 days to serve a lawsuit. We are saying that within 60 days of the fall, claimants must notify the property owner, the tenant or the snow-clearing company of the fall. This will ensure that steps can be taken to preserve evidence from the date of the accident, like backing up camera footage, taking statements from staff and identifying other possible witnesses.

As Tony DiGiovanni of Landscape Ontario told us, snow and ice management professionals are not asking for protection against negligence. They are asking for the reduction of the two-year notice period as one step to deal with the fact that obtaining insurance is a serious barrier to safe operations.

It is my hope that narrowing the notice period for slip-and-fall claims will encourage insurance providers to lower their premiums for snow and ice management contractors, as it would limit the possibility for frivolous lawsuits. I also hope this will persuade insurance companies who have stopped serving the snow and ice management industry to get back into the sector. We need to act to make sure that snow and ice management operators can stay in business, the business of managing the ice and snow we get every year, so that with can all stay safe.

Once again, let me say that we live in a climate with winter. As individuals, we need to take some responsibility for our own safety. We need to watch where we're walking, wear appropriate footwear, and as a province we need to create an environment in which snow removal companies can operate with enough profits to stay in business and without constant fear of being sued. I believe this bill will help do that. This change will decrease the risk for insurance providers, who can then return to providing affordable insurance for snow removal contractors, so that companies can safely manage our snow and ice this winter and every winter to come.

I want to thank everyone who spoke at committee, as well as everyone who submitted written submissions. Finally, I want to thank the House for considering this important legislation. I look forward to everyone's input on this matter.

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** I want to thank the member from Parry Sound for his bill, Bill 118, An Act to amend the

Occupiers' Liability Act. Just for a summary of it: The bill amends the Occupiers' Liability Act so that no action shall be brought for the recovery of damages for personal injury caused by snow or ice against an occupier, an independent contractor employed by the occupier or a landlord, unless, within 10 days—which recently was amended to 60 days—after the injury occurs written notice of the claim and of the injury are served.

That's the legal version. The short version is, if you fall on private property, you used to have two years to make a claim. The original purpose was to bring it to 10 days, which would be in line with provincial and municipal property. That was amended to 60 days as a change.

I talked about the amendment that changed it from 10 days to 60 days. There was another amendment as well. Basically, the English version, I always say, is that if anyone is served, everyone is considered to be served. So if you fall at a mini mall and you hand the notice to one of the tenants in the mini mall, then they're responsible to let the contractor know and let the property manager know, because one of the concerns was who's responsible, and so I think that will go a long way to helping with this.

Before I go on further, I really want to recognize the member from Parry Sound and his efforts to solve this problem. I don't think many of us had heard about these problems, the high cost of the insurance rates. My city of Sudbury normally has a ton of snow every year—in all of Ontario, really. We live in the north; we have to deal with snow removal. In fact, yesterday I think there was a snowstorm all around Sudbury, but not in Sudbury, which I say is because I bought snow tires this year, so we won't have any snow. But it is essential. The bottom line, really, is that these snow removal companies—they can be farmers who are getting extra income in the winter, very small contractors; they can be very large contractors, including the one that services Queen's Park—are getting gouged. It is a really stressful time and they're desperate.

What I heard during deputations—to begin, I didn't get to hear from anybody who was a plaintiff. I would have liked to. There just wasn't an opportunity for them to be there with the timelines that were there. What I heard, basically, was that there seems to be more of a push of this, "If you don't win, we don't get paid," lawsuit advertising, slip-and-fall advertising. One of the concerns I have with the decrease of time is that maybe they'll advertise more and harder. You'll only have 60 days, the timeline is shorter, and that might be an issue as well. Lawsuits have gone up, though.

The difficulty for these operators, and you can imagine, Speaker, is that winter doesn't stay for two years. Typically, they'll find out two years after it happens. They try to keep the best records they have, but it's very hard to verify how clean it was, how sanded it was—all of those things—two year after it happens.

The fourth thing and probably the main thing I learned is that insurance is absolutely skyrocketing, and I think this is the root cause. This is really what we need to address. Because the goal of this bill is to limit the amount of time that you have to put in a lawsuit with the hopes that



it will bring the insurance down. If it doesn't bring the insurance down, we're back to square one. Frankly, when I asked some of the insurance brokers, "Will this bring insurance down?" the answer was basically, "Maybe. Maybe it will." They're going to watch over two or three years. If the claims go down, then insurance might go down. But my history with insurance is that your rates never go down. I've never heard insurance say, "Let me pick up the cheque for that."

I'm going to talk about insurance, and I think these examples are going to talk about how it affects everything else, because what I think is missing from the bill is the government attempting to do something about these really high insurance rates that are gouging the snow removal companies.

One of the quotes from the brokers when I asked about why we are seeing this suddenly—because it's about the last five years the rates have gone up—is that he said that as auto insurance profits are squeezed, insurance companies look elsewhere to make more profit. So as more focus gets into one area, they go to other areas, and it seems to be snow removal is one of them.

Insurance has risen by 350%. Basically, the companies dictate the rates to the companies. Some companies just leave. They just notify them within 30 days of renewal, "We're not renewing you anymore." And they'll change the conditions of renewal. They'll increase the prices, they'll change the deductible, they'll tell you you're no longer insured to do municipal lots. But it doesn't matter if you have a contract for three years for municipal lots. It's extremely stressful and people are scrambling to figure out what to do.

Basically, rates keep climbing, deductibles keep climbing, coverage keeps declining. And the bill is trying to reduce the number of lawsuits, which I think is an excellent incentive, because you want fairness. There are people who legitimately slip and fall, but you need a way to defend yourself on all of that stuff. You have to find the balance. I think that the goal, really, is that if we reduce these, insurance will respond, and what we need to do is put some regulations around insurance or help people with what's happening in insurance.

**0930**

I'm going to talk about some of the notes I had from deputations with insurance. I've shared them with my colleagues, if I run out of time, because it really builds a strong case about what's happening with insurance.

David Jones the vice-president of franchising for The Gardener Inc. said that typically, previous insurance increases were 3% to 5%—like most things, the cost of living increases. Over the past five years, their increases have been between 25% and 300%, and he said that there's no connection to what they've done. It's basically because of the industry at large. They also received a 30-day cancellation notice. That leaves these workers, these companies scrambling for insurance. He said that the cost of insurance has gone from 15% to 50% of their revenue.

At some point, businesses, snowplow companies exit the industry, and that's what's happening, especially with

a lot of the smaller markets. The larger companies can't afford to pick up those contracts, so you're going to be in situations where there will be no snowplowing. But it's the insurance we have to focus on.

Mike Dominick from Husky Services snow removal and property maintenance is one of those companies that exited the industry. He closed down operations due to not being able to locate insurance. They can't afford it. They can't find people to insure them at a reasonable price. It isn't cost-effective. So 12 people who work for him when there's not snow on the ground are laid off during the winter months.

Shannon Burrows from Weeks Construction—I always drive past Weeks Construction. There's a big sign on 69—I don't know if it's called 401 now that most of it is four-laned, but it's a really cool sign. They had two claims. For both of them, they were not at fault, and for both of them, they wanted to fight. The insurance company chose not to fight. They paid out \$20,000, and their rates went up. She also said that when they put "snow" in their literature, their rates went up—just having the word "snow."

David Finch, I believe, talked to the member from Parry Sound about bringing this bill forward, from Wes Finch and Sons—three generations of excavation. They've been doing this for a long time. He was trying to get insurance because he services a hospital, and they were denying his coverage because another hospital that they don't service had claims. He's at the point now where only Lloyd's of London covers them.

Nolan Quinn, owner-operator of Dairy Queen in Cornwall—this is one of those front-line workers struggling to keep their doors open. He's really passionate about his conversations and his deputation. I want to congratulate Nolan for how hard he's working. He was told that the local snowplow company can't do snow removal anymore and he had to search. He said that hospitals, churches and restaurants have been blacklisted. That was his inside track from his friend who had done it before. Snowplow removal companies told him that rates have climbed to over \$25,000 since last year. He's paying 30% more and getting less. His previous contract had plows, salt, sand and shovelling, but he can't afford the shovelling anymore, so he's doing it himself. We talked to him, I believe, on Tuesday, Speaker, and he had worked 45 hours since Friday—and there wasn't snow on the ground yet, so imagine what the quality of the snow removal would be for somebody like this, because they can't afford the insurance.

Greg Wildeboer, Whispering Pines Landscaping, has been doing it for 25 years: claim-free for 22 years. In the 23rd year, someone had a slip-and-fall. Greg's company was found at fault because the property owner chose salt on demand. It's a cheaper option. So instead of salt every time, they say salt on demand and they will let you know when they want salt. Greg's company was found at fault because, in the eyes of the court, they didn't properly educate the property owner about the risks of salt on demand, and so they had a \$27,000 claim. This September, he received notice that 13 different insurance companies had turned them down for insurance and that his insurance

for snow removal would be cancelled at the end of the month, so basically in October.

Heather French, owner-operator of Humberview Services Ltd., talked about grain farmers in Caledon. In order to help make ends meet, they perform winter snow removal in the community. Their insurance has gone from \$15,000 to \$112,000 because of one slip-and-fall accident. Several of the local snow removal contractors had to exit the business. They said that one of the problems is, when you're fighting it, once you have the claim, it doesn't matter if you won or not. Until it's settled, it's on your file and rates climb. I said, "If it's settled, do you get a rebate?" "No. No, you don't." What I said earlier is, basically, insurance almost never goes backwards.

Trevor Garner, president of Landscape Plus Inc., in the Kitchener and Guelph area: 28 employees, snow and ice since 2002. In 2017—and this is shocking—Economical Insurance notified them they won't insure them any longer. His insurance, in 2017, was \$16,191. He reached out to 19 agencies and not one of them was interested in giving him even a quote. He finally got Lloyd's of London. Lloyd's of London seems to be the place that a lot of people are going for insurance. His insurance went from \$16,191 to \$28,742. Then, Lloyd's exited. He had to go to AIG and it was \$38,921. AIG exited. He had to go to Allianz insurance; it was \$92,511. From 2017 to today—and I don't know if it's three or four years, because I don't know if we're including 2020. But within three or four years, his insurance has gone from \$16,191 to \$92,511. That's a drastic increase that no business could survive.

Carmen Filice, president of Greentario Landscaping: He talked as well about having a slip-and-fall claim that he wanted to fight, and insurance decided they would settle. He felt it was no-fault. His rates increased by 100%. I wrote down his quote. He said, "We did nothing wrong. How can our industry keep increasing?"

It's unfair to them that the insurance company owns the deck of cards, owns the rules and deals whatever hand they want. This is an employee who was trying to always pay a minimum living wage; that's going to be in jeopardy. He can't find a carrier that will provide insurance. He does a lot of work with not-for-profits. He's saying, "I can't pass this cost on to not-for-profits. At some point, they won't be able to afford it." It's a real concern, and in a really successful business that could be growing, he can't afford to grow his business. We heard that again and again from different snowplow operators.

Doug Dolson is the owner of Paramount Landscaping. They do 24 cities in the greater Toronto area, with more than 300 customers. He talked about the theme we heard again and again: deductibles increasing; renewals and struggling with those; insurance seeming to be slower and slower to provide quotes, so they have less time to look around and find quotes. He talked about this sort of middle-of-the-fence company that we've talked about. It was a friend of his named Mike Jones. He does snow removal to supplement his farm. We've talked about this several times, Speaker, with farm workers making ends meet with snow removal, which is great. It's a win-win

situation for the community they live in and the farmers themselves.

Mike Jones's insurance climbed 500%: \$145,000. Eight days before renewal, Mike was told that it was going to be a 500% increase. That was last year. This year, after 22 years of snow removal, he was told of another increase that was going to be a smaller increase, but they were excluding any municipal work, and Mike had signed a contract with his municipality. So you're in a contract where you've agreed to provide service, yet the insurance company is changing the terms of your agreement partway through.

I know I'm hammering on the insurance, but I'm trying to make the point that this is really what we need to address. The goal of reducing the amount of claims, frivolous claims, I think is a good idea—if they're frivolous. But if the goal is just to get rid of claims in hopes that insurance goes down, we're missing the point. The problem we're having is insurance.

Terry Nicholson, vice-president of Clintar outdoor services: It started in 1973, the largest snow removal service in Ontario. If you're happy with the snow removal at Queen's Park, it's Clintar services that does it. He does about \$30 million in snow. It's the biggest company. He said that every renewal for the past five years has left them scrambling. They actually moved their renewal date back to April so they can try to find a place, because it has become a pattern, and so they can try to adjust prices for the fall. He'll pass those prices along to us, and we'll have to pay for those increases from the insurance companies. He said that the availability of insurance is the greatest cost. They've had four insurers in the past five years, and they have to go to a fifth insurer this year. Their premiums have doubled, deductibles keep climbing and, generally, it's hard to pass those off to the customer because you sign a two- or three-year contract for snow removal.

#### 0940

I asked one of the people deputing, how do you pass it on—if all of a sudden you have a 500% increase in your insurance, how do you let your customers know? He said, "I take the insurance contract and I show them, because most people wouldn't believe it." I said earlier that I had no idea that people were being gouged like this. I don't think anyone has a cozy relationship with insurance. I don't think people like renewing their insurance every year—it's a necessary evil—but when you talk about a 500% increase in insurance, that's amazing.

This gentleman, from the largest snowplow company in Ontario, says that smaller companies reach out to them on a regular basis just asking them to take their contracts and their equipment. They're just drowning in debt. They can't find anyone to take on their insurance, and they can't take them on.

The problem we have, one of them, is that the response to the, "We win or you don't pay" lawsuits seems to be that they figured out the sweet spot where insurance companies will settle any claim that's less than 100 grand. It's not worth it. It's going to cost them 100 grand to fight. I keep thinking of that movie, *Other People's Money*. It's

other people's money, so we'll settle and we'll just increase the rates. This happens again and again.

There seems to be an opinion that these lawyers advertising "You won't pay unless we win" have increased the cases, and from the depositions we've heard, that's likely so. I would like to hear from some plaintiffs to hear why they got involved. But the cases have gone up. The problem with the insurance is when these cases come forward and the snowplow operator says, "No, no. I can prove this didn't happen," the insurance company says, "No, we'll settle," and the rates go up. It's very frustrating for these operators.

I'm running short on time. What we need to do is we need to focus on the insurance. I appreciate the goal of the bill to help these snowplow operators stay in business, and, at first blush, it does look like the problem is that there are frivolous lawsuits. At first blush, it looks that way. The real problem is that insurance has open rein to do whatever they want and seems to have run roughshod over these company offers.

Like I said, when I asked a few insurance brokers who were deputizing, "Will rates go down in response to this?" the answer was maybe—maybe they will. So we could be back here again trying to resolve this and trying to figure out what the solution is or how we wrap our heads around the insurance, because, even though there may be frivolous lawsuits—and I tend to think that, as Canadians, we don't file a ton of those. I feel like that's one of those things that we look down our nose at Americans about because we always see those stories in America, but maybe there are some. Maybe there's 10%. I don't know. But if we change this from two years to six months, there's also an opportunity for these companies—

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Two years to two months.

**Mr. Jamie West:** Sorry, two years to two months—there's an opportunity for these companies to start advertising harder. That you have to file, you have to file. So everybody who slips at all will file right away, just in case.

I did a run for charity about a month ago and my knee was sore afterwards. I wouldn't file a lawsuit, but my initial reaction was, "My knee is sore, my knee is sore." People who fall, the same thing happens. You're a little embarrassed, you don't bring it up, but if there's a company every day saying, "You might be hurt. This happened to Grandma Betty and she broke her hip. You should file right away," we could get more. That gives the insurance companies the right to jack rates up even more and we'll have an even bigger problem with this. Thank you.

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

**Mr. John Fraser:** I want to congratulate the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka—or thank him, I should say—for bringing this bill forward. Somebody came to him and said, "We've got a challenge, we've got a problem." It's a really important problem in the place where we live. Winter is a big thing here in Canada, here in Ontario, and we need to have snow removed, so the bill is a good bill. Is it going to solve everything? No. But we

know we don't do that here on a regular basis. We try to fix those things that we can fix right now. Will it put downward pressure on insurance rates? I think so. How much? I don't know.

I think one of the things that we do have to look at to address this, and I think this came up in committee—the member would be familiar with this—is that in New England, they actually have a code and have some limited protections for snow removal companies. They have to be able to meet certain standards, and they get, I guess you'd say, a certification, because in New England, in New Hampshire, getting rid of snow is a pretty big thing. I think we need to look at that so that we can use it as more of a finely tuned tool to solve this problem. What we're using here is a good but somewhat blunt instrument.

The member from Sudbury made a good point: We might get a reverse reaction in terms of what's going to happen with trial lawyers and injury claims. That's a whole other issue, and the fact that we allow clearing houses for these kinds of things is something that needs to be looked at. Specifically, for what the member has tried to do, he has done the right thing today, but the work is not done, and I think he would probably agree. I think he is probably thinking about continuing that, and I encourage him, and encourage all members to support this bill. Thank you for your time.

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

**Mr. Stephen Crawford:** It's a real pleasure to be able to speak on Bill 118, and I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for bringing this to the Legislature. It impacts everyone in Ontario. It impacts me in my riding of Oakville. I'm a part-time resident, as well, of his great riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, and I've talked to some contractors up there, as well, and they've been affected. Whether you're in Oakville, Parry Sound, Ottawa or Timmins, I think everyone is affected. We get snow everywhere in this province, so first, I do want to thank the member for bringing this forward.

As the winter season is now upon us—we're now entering it; we've got snow outside, as everyone can see, the colder weather is here and the first snowfalls—this is a very timely bill that is proposing to amend the Occupiers' Liability Act to adjust the statute of limitations on slips and falls on private property from two years to 60 days. If passed, this bill would reduce the notice period for lawsuits for slips and falls on snow and ice to 60 days. I know that during committee, for which I was a member, the time frame increased from 10 days to 60 days. Nevertheless, reducing the time period is important for the snowplowing business, and I believe this number of 60 days is a reasonable compromise.

As members of the Legislature, we have the duty to improve the challenges that people experience, and I know that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka worked hard with his staff to engage with many stakeholders on this topic. At the time I last checked, the member had received over 60 quotes in support of this legislation, and I'm sure there are countless others who are now aware of the legislation and support it in its entirety.

Receiving feedback has pointed out specific problems that need to be addressed. Snow removal companies are having greater difficulty securing reasonable insurance rates, and they're concerned about the two-year time frame to issue a claim. Just reading the news, insurance hikes of 400% are not unheard of in the industry.

Many owners of landscaping companies and their staff of seasonal workers depend on the summer months for gardening and planting, and in the winter months their income is earned through snowplowing. But the winter presents a challenge because of the snow and ice that could result in slips and falls.

Looking through the support obtained for the bill, it spans across Ontario. For example, as I mentioned, I've talked to stakeholders in my riding. Dependable Lawn Care, who have been doing business for nine years, stated, "Two years to serve paper and notice is unacceptable and this loophole needs to be adjusted to help the 'small guy' defend themselves from the predatory lawyers.... Due to all the legal lawyer shenanigans, my insurance rates for snow liability have skyrocketed through the roof, and one more increase may force me to close!"

Other small businesses in Halton region have endorsed this proposed legislation, and, again, I want to thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for addressing the concerns for many businesses in my riding. It is unreasonable that someone can bring a lawsuit forward against a contractor who removes snow or the occupant of the property just shy of two years after the event occurred. After this time lapse, events can be forgotten, it's hard to get accurate data, and staff who could serve as witnesses could have left their job. The result is a challenge piecing all this information together in an adequate defence. I cannot imagine going through a lawsuit two years after a slip-and-fall incident that will hike insurance rates to unreasonable levels. Snow removal workers wake up at the crack of dawn to clear driveways, and the last thing they need is a headache from frivolous claims.

**0950**

I believe this bill will solve insurance problems for companies in my riding. Many Ontarians will be turning to snow removal services in the coming weeks, and as the snow continues to fall, lower insurance will help lower service fees. I fully endorse this bill, and I hope every member of the Legislature will do so as well.

I will now be sharing my time with the members from Thornhill and Barrie–Innisfil. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 118, the Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act.

I grew up around law firms. I was going to mention, my mom moved from PEI to Ontario when she was 19 years old and worked for the same litigation lawyer for 42 years. I worked in the law firm moving boxes around in the summer.

I'm kind of surprised that the government didn't speak to more lawyers, get more legal opinions when the member came out with this bill, because it seems to me that it's a little shy on the research side.

In Ontario, if you fall on private property, under the current law you have two years to make a claim and there is no requirement or deadline for providing written notice. However, if a fall occurs on provincial or municipal property, there is currently a 10-day written notice requirement window.

The original version of this bill amended the Occupiers' Liability Act so that no action would be brought for the recovery of damages for personal injury caused by snow or ice against an occupier, an independent contractor employed by the occupier or a landlord, unless, within 10 days after the injury occurs, written notice of the claim and of the injury are served. I understand that after committee, the bill was amended to reflect a period of 60 days.

This bill would be a disincentive for those who want to seek compensation for injury caused by someone else's neglect. I understand there is a serious issue of insurance gouging for businesses; my friend from Sudbury touched on that. It's my understanding that this bill was proposed following the news of a snow removal company operating in the member's riding facing significant surges in insurance costs following slip-and-fall claims that were made against them.

I've also heard of the plight of snow removal companies. There's an article from the CBC: Christopher Thacker, who owned a company called Mr. Mow says that his company may be driven out of business if costs continue to skyrocket. His company's mandatory liability insurance has risen from \$5,000 when he first started to pay to almost \$70,000 just last year. This year, his insurance broker told him to expect it to almost double.

Tony DiGiovanni, executive director of the Landscape Ontario Horticultural Trades Association, says some members are reporting insurance premium increases anywhere from 25% to 300%. So it's a serious problem.

However, the issue of insurance gouging is by no means limited to slips and falls. The Globe and Mail reported on restaurants who were facing skyrocketing insurance costs and dropped coverage. The Premier himself, back in October, discussed the difficulty with the insurance companies, saying "They're absolutely just refusing to insure people, we don't play that game.... You guys don't get to get all the cream and gravy ... and just slough off everything else and think we aren't going to insure it." The Premier said the budget would address the issue, but to date we have not seen any changes on this file or the issue being addressed.

If we talk about victim impacts, insurance gouging is a real problem. The insurance industry has been running amok in the province for years now. However, the solution to that problem is not and cannot be short-changing victims. When someone gets hurt, the last thing on their mind should be, "How fast can I get a lawyer?" It should be getting the medical care they need and taking the time to recover. If this bill passes, it will mean even more pain and suffering for those who have been hurt because of someone else's negligence.

By bringing in these unnecessary time limits, we're not only making it harder for people to get the healing and

compensation they deserve, we risk letting landlords off the hook when it comes to their duty to keep people safe on their property.

Our job is not to find new and creative ways to make life harder for everyday families. It's our job to fight for what matters, and that includes victim compensation.

Some stakeholder reaction: We've had reaction from Allen Wynperle, the president of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. His position can be summed up in one sentence when he said that this bill will hurt victims and that it is "unduly cumbersome." He notes that this bill tries to implement the same scheme currently in place for municipal or provincial property on private property, but the situations are entirely different and will not work in the same way.

For example, if someone slips on municipal property, the lawyers know exactly who to contact and can easily file the notice. However, in the proposed bill, if someone gets hurt at the mall, the owner of the space and the person who's ultimately responsible is often less clear. That means the victim and/or the lawyer must first figure out who exactly the landlord is or who owns the mall, which could require a title search and could end up taking weeks to figure out. Once you find out who owns the mall, you'll have to serve them, but they may not be on the property themselves, which creates another barrier, since the tenants can't be served, they have no responsibility for the property. Allen further notes that by forcing a 10-day window to give notice, people may end up suing who otherwise may not have if they had had more time.

Response from injury lawyers: We've had some response to this bill from them. Bergeron Clifford says, "The concern with the proposed bill is that most people will not be aware of the 10-day notice requirement. In addition, information about the property owner's name and address aren't always readily available. Identifying who is responsible can sometimes take longer than 10 days." And that came, obviously, before the change.

Tullio D'Angela, a personal injury lawyer since the 2000s, wrote, "Those injured in accidents are often faced with significant statutory and policy hurdles, which must be overcome to recover compensation. It appears that further limits on the rights of ... Ontarians is rearing its head. This time it's Bill 118, which is a private member's bill to amend the Occupiers' Liability Act."

He summarizes some of the amendments that he has issues with:

"Limitation period ...

"6.1(1) No action shall be brought for the recovery of damages for personal injury caused by snow or ice against a person or persons listed in subsection (2) unless, within 10 days after the occurrence of the injury, written notice of the claim, including the date, time and location of the occurrence, has been served on one or more of the persons....

"(2) The persons referred to in subsection (1) are the following:

"(a) An occupier.

"(b) An independent contractor employed by the occupier.

"(c) In the case of a tenancy described in subsection 8(1), a landlord.

"(3) Failure to give notice is not a bar to the action in the case of the death of the injured person as a result of the injury.

"(4) Failure to give notice or insufficiency of the notice is not a bar to the action if a judge finds that there is reasonable excuse for the want or the insufficiency of the notice and that the defendant is not prejudiced in its defence."

"The notice provision proposed is" very similar, as I'd mentioned earlier, "to the limits imposed by s. 44 of the Municipal Act and s. 42 of the City of Toronto Act." He goes on to say, "If these changes are implemented, the ramifications could be" very "significant."

"What constitutes a 'reasonable excuse' has been addressed by the Court of Appeal in the case of *Crinson v. Toronto*.... The court held that the trial judge erred in requiring the plaintiff to prove that he was so incapacitated in the 10 days following the accident that he was unable to give notice to the defendant. The question to be addressed is whether in all the circumstances of the case, it was reasonable for the plaintiff not to give notice within the time frame pursuant to the statute."

In this case, "the plaintiff was taking Percocet, a powerful narcotic. He was in a restrictive cast for 12 weeks and required intensive therapy for months. During that period, he was depressed and anxious about his ability to return to work and support his family. He was unaware that he was required to give notice until he was contacted by a lawyer. He gave notice shortly after that. In all the circumstances, the plaintiff had a reasonable excuse for his failure to give notice.... As the defendant did not assert any prejudice to its defence, the action was not barred...."

#### 1000

Another case: "In *Bramer v. City of Hamilton* ... the plaintiff, a lawyer, failed to report the accident within" the time period. "In considering whether there was a 'reasonable excuse' for the delay in providing notice the court considered:

"—the plaintiff had no knowledge of the time requirement;

"—the notice was 'only 27 days late';

"—the plaintiff had not spoken to a lawyer about her fall or potential claim;

"—the municipality's website related to snow on sidewalk issues did not specify a limitation period; and

"—the plaintiff honestly did not know how long her symptoms would last and hoped they would resolve, in which case she would not have commenced a claim."

"The amendments being proposed appear to be just another attempt to curtail the legitimately injured Ontarians from recovering damages for the negligent actions of others. The likely thinking here is that this would help to reduce claims and, therefore, result in lower premiums," as speakers have discussed. But many of the legal opinions "believe strongly in the law of unintended consequences, especially when government is involved."

Many of the legal opinions are that, as a result of the amendments:

“(1) There will not likely be a reduction in claims. Lawyers ... will fight for those legitimately injured.

“(2) A greater number of summary judgment motions may result as defendants will want to take a run at closing a file down sooner rather than later....” Litigation costs and insurance premiums will continue to rise, so this bill will not actually address that.

“(3) Winter maintenance contractors and property owners could take a lax approach in performing winter maintenance or maintaining records if they wrongly assume that missing” a “notice period will result in a claim being barred.

“(4) Even if there is no prejudice, there still remains the possibility that someone with a legitimate claim can be barred from recovering damages because that person did not have a reasonable excuse for the delay. If this is the case, then the amendments would essentially reward negligent behaviour.

“(5) The amendments will not result in improved investigations by insurers. Just ask anyone involved in such claims against municipalities.

“(6) The notice provision is untenable since it is almost impossible to determine whether a third-party contractor is involved within the notice period. Would notice to a property owner bind the contractor? If not, how can a plaintiff determine who is responsible for the winter maintenance? The amendments are unclear and stand to make matters more complex.”

So if the concern is that premiums for property owners and winter maintenance contractors are not affordable, these amendments will rule in even more unaffordable premiums.

Trial lawyers write, “We need to let the government know that this private member’s bill is not the way to go to improve insurance affordability, if that is indeed the goal. I suggest that all concerned contact their MPP and let them know that Bill 118 should not become law in this province.” So that’s what a lot of the experts are saying.

Speaker, I will remind the House that this isn’t the first time that we’ve seen from the government actions that put the safety of everyday Ontarians on the line and take the side of corporations. We’ve seen it with the nursing home liability under Bill 218. This government tabled Bill 218 not long ago, which not only rolled back the ability for municipalities to hold marked ballot decisions, it also limited the liability of a broad range of entities as it related to the exposure of COVID-19. It retroactively banned any court action related to an individual being, or potentially being, infected with or exposed to coronavirus, so long as the person being sued made a good-faith effort to follow the relevant laws and public health direction at the time and was not grossly negligent. So this is not the first time the government has come out with a bill that actually takes the position of corporations over that of everyday individuals.

The government cancelled free prescription medication given to those under 25 through the pharmacare program.

This government has removed legislative positions such as the privatization officer, the chief scientist, the investment officer, the environmental commissioner’s office, the Ontario child advocate and the French language commissioner.

Let’s remember that this government has reduced legal aid by 30%. They killed Bill 148, which provided part-time workers the same pay as full-time workers and guaranteed 10 days off. There have been a series of ministerial zoning orders that degrade the environment, taking the side of developers over the side of the environment and everyday citizens.

There’s Bill 175, which privatized even more home care and removed the existing provisions of public control and accountability. It further privatized—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. I appreciate what the member is doing and saying right now; however, I do have some concern with regard to your content and the bill that is before us. I would ask that your comments be directed to the actual bill that is being debated. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Thank you, Speaker. I guess what I was trying to do is demonstrate that, this bill, as I think I’ve demonstrated through my speaking, doesn’t address the issue of rising insurance premiums. It actually decreases our ability, or the ability of citizens, to sue, and so it actually hurts victims.

The passage of the bill actually takes the side of insurance companies and businesses over everyday people who are injured, and our job here as legislators is really to help everyday people, and so passing a bill that’s going to limit the ability of people to sue when they’re injured—as I mentioned, in Ontario, if you fall on private property, under the current law you have two years to make a claim. Introducing these notice periods really damages the ability of people to sue.

The original version of this bill and the current version really is—let’s say someone fell on a property and they were injured. They should really be thinking about their medical recovery; they should be thinking about getting better. They should not be thinking about these notice periods and possibly losing their ability for compensation.

There’s a long list, and what I was trying to demonstrate is that this government has not been shy about taking the side of corporations and the side of insurance companies and the side of other businesses, and putting them ahead of everyday Ontarians, and I think this is another example. There’s a long list of those things.

I think that when the average person in Ontario slips and falls, and you have trial lawyers all over the province saying that they have a right to sue, they have a right to compensation, coming along with a bill under the guise of something that will lower insurance premiums, when all of the legal opinions say that’s not actually what will happen—what might actually happen is insurance premiums may go up, because this is not going to address that problem. All it really does is—it will protect landlords; it will protect insurance companies; it will protect some businesses in Ontario. It will not protect average, everyday people.

That's just another example in a very long, long line of actions by this government that do not protect average, everyday families, but rather, protect their friends.

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

**Mrs. Gila Martow:** I'm very pleased today rise today and to say a few words on the Occupiers' Liability Amendment Act put out by my colleague.

We've heard a lot about issues with the insurance industry, but what we're debating today is specifically slips and falls and trying to ensure that the companies do what I consider to be an essential service—remove the snow and ice from our roads, sidewalks and walkways so that we can decrease injury. Now, we can't make it a 0% possibility of somebody injuring themselves. All we're trying to do is to maintain reasonable conditions during the winter.

I have Derrad property management in my riding. They have emailed me. They're hugely supportive of the changes we're trying to make, specifically that instead of having two years to serve notice that you're going to sue, it will now be only 60 days; so from two years to two months to serve notice that somebody is injured and that you're looking to launch a lawsuit. That gives warning to the companies that they should save all their information that they have from audiovisual or interviewing employees—which we all know, after two years, it's very possible those same employees aren't even there.

I had an experience when I was an optometrist at the Re/Max building. I had a clinic in the Re/Max building up in Keswick. I actually found out we shared a parking lot, and the cleaning of the parking lot, with the Country Style that was next door. The way I found that out is I got served notice of a lawsuit.

A woman went out to pick up her glasses. We weren't even open yet. She didn't have an appointment, but she decided she needed to pick up her glasses on a day that the police had issued a freezing rain warning to not go out unless it was an emergency. Unfortunately, this woman decided to drive her car and come in the parking lot. It was just an absolute, absolute mess in the parking lot. It doesn't matter how much salt you put down, a layer of ice with rain on top of it is a complete mess. Unfortunately for this woman, and for everybody involved, she fell and broke her hip.

When they were served with the papers, my insurance company, as well as my landlord at the Re/Max building and the Country Style next door—we were all devastated. My staff and I called this woman every day to see how she was doing. She had surgery. She mended perfectly. There was no medical doctor who would say that she had a lasting disability because of it, but obviously it was a horrific incident for her and her family, and for myself, my staff and my landlord as well.

My insurance company wanted to settle with her. They offered her \$10,000 to settle; they didn't want to go to court. They knew it would cost them more to go to court. She and her lawyer refused. To tell you the truth, I didn't

want my insurance company to settle because I felt we hadn't done anything wrong.

But it did go to court and it was a very trying experience for me. I still remember the day I answered my front door with a little baby on my hip. It was a bailiff serving me with papers. That was probably the worst experience of my professional career as an optometrist. I got served the papers and it was a lot of work having to go downtown to give a deposition. In the end, it did go to court and she got awarded zero. So I think that there are sometimes frivolous lawsuits where it might be that the person wasn't really injured. In this case, the woman did fall and did injure herself just getting out of her car. She didn't even make it out of her car; she put one foot down and slipped.

I support my colleague for putting forward this piece of legislation. I think it's very, very important for us that we do everything we can to lower insurance rates in a way that makes sense. We all know it has a domino effect: If there are fewer lawsuits, then it means that insurance rates will go down. Anybody who is severely injured and in the hospital and can't serve notice within the two months, there is a part of this legislation that allows for them to still serve notice under those kinds of very difficult and trying circumstances.

What we're saying here is anybody who wasn't severely injured and not hospitalized has two months to get themselves in order and decide if they want to sue and speak to their lawyer. They don't have to actually launch the lawsuit; they just have to serve the notice so that all the companies involved and all the professionals involved have the time. To go back two months is not unreasonable to go to your employees and go to your audiovisual system.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I hope everybody—

*Second reading debate deemed adjourned.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. Unfortunately, the time for debate has expired, but it is time for members' statements.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### HYDRO RATES

**Mr. Ian Arthur:** Over the past several months, my office has heard from so many Kingstonians who are experiencing significantly higher hydro bills every single month than they are used to. A number of Kingstonians who called my office said that their bills have gone up \$100 compared to the same month last year.

For over 100 years, affordable, public electricity helped build Ontario into an economic powerhouse and a province where opportunity attracted people from across Canada and the entire world. It has allowed each successive generation to build new opportunities. However, since the Conservative and the Liberal governments privatized Ontario's hydro system, the system has come to include

healthy profit margins for private and foreign companies, all at the expense of Ontario ratepayers and their families.

The current government did inherit a mess from the Liberals, but they're making it worse. Few issues exemplify the incompetence of governments like the energy sector in Ontario. While campaigning in 2018, the Premier did promise that he would reduce electricity rates by 12%. Instead, they've jumped significantly, from 13 cents to 21 cents per kilowatt hour for some folks, since the Premier took office. Even band-aid solutions like the Ontario Electricity Rebate—my constituents are still paying more, even making use of those programs. During a pandemic, with so much financial strain, this is unfair for the people of Ontario.

### FIREFIGHTERS

**Ms. Amy Fee:** Last week, I had the honour of meeting with firefighters from my riding. I was immediately struck by just how grateful they were that I would take the time out of my day to meet with them. To me, it is the least I can do to show support for the firefighters in my community, who go to work every day to ensure that all residents are safe.

When Ontarians are experiencing an emergency, over 11,000 career professional firefighters are there. I believe most people presume that our career firefighters are qualified to a recognized industry standard, such as the National Fire Protection Association. Many may also believe these same firefighters are certified to the same level from one municipality to another, but they are not. While we have standardized provincial qualifications for other first responders and even skilled trades professionals, sadly, we do not have a recognized industry standard for our career professional firefighters.

Additionally, simultaneous notification with EMS dramatically improves outcomes in critical situations when every second counts. In 2012, Kitchener and Barrie were early adopters of this system, and in Barrie, response times improved by 36% in the first year alone. Last year, Cambridge residents experienced an improvement to response times when Cambridge consolidated dispatch services with Kitchener to ensure simultaneous notification with EMS. Unfortunately, not all departments across Ontario are dispatched at the same time as EMS.

I just want to finish off by saying a heartfelt thank you to all of our fantastic professional career firefighters in Ontario.

### SERVICES DE SANTÉ MENTALE

**M. Guy Bourgoïn:** Je me lève aujourd'hui pour parler de la crise de santé mentale à laquelle on fait face, due à l'absence de ressources de santé mentale dans le comté que j'ai l'honneur de représenter.

M<sup>me</sup> Lyne Levesque de Hearst est la mère d'un jeune adulte ayant de graves problèmes de santé mentale. Comme toute mère, M<sup>me</sup> Levesque a fait l'impossible pour aider son fils. Malgré ces efforts, son fils n'a pas reçu le

soutien que toutes et tous les Ontariens méritent, et depuis un an, ça s'est gravement aggravé.

M<sup>me</sup> Levesque a fait face à l'impensable : elle a été obligée de porter des accusations contre son propre fils. Présentement, M<sup>me</sup> Levesque se trouve dévastée, seule et découragée, alors que son fils est en détention.

Son fils, comme tous les Ontariens, mérite d'avoir accès aux services de santé mentale, peu importe où on demeure en Ontario. Rien de toute cette situation ne serait arrivé si les ressources et les services de santé mentale auraient été en place dans le Nord-Est.

Je demande, donc, au ministre associé délégué à la Santé mentale et à la Lutte contre les dépendances, pourquoi M<sup>me</sup> Levesque et son fils doivent-ils faire face à cette situation bouleversante pour elle, son fils et sa famille? Où est le soutien pour les résidents du nord-est de la province?

1020

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** These are trying times for Ontario small business owners. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for so many restaurants, small retailers and everyday mom-and-pop shops.

In my riding, Markham–Thornhill, hundreds of small businesses have told me of the daily struggle they are going through just to make ends meet, just to keep their workers employed and paid. Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to those small business owners who are worried they might not make it through this pandemic.

Our government is working each and every day to help Ontario's business community in their economic recovery while keeping Ontarians safe from COVID-19. We are making electricity costs more affordable, assisting businesses in areas under lockdown with municipal and education property taxes, supporting businesses through the Ontario Together Fund, the Ontario Made program and the new Invest Ontario agency.

Since the start of this pandemic, our government has invested billions of dollars to support business owners, to protect workers and to remove barriers to our economic recovery. While there is hope over the horizon with a vaccine, I want to remind those small business owners who are struggling through this difficult time, not only in the Markham–Thornhill riding but across Ontario, that we won't let you down.

### MOHARRAM VENTURES

**Mr. Terence Kernaghan:** Today, I rise to recognize a brilliant individual whose creativity and ingenuity are boundless. Tarek Moharram of Moharram Ventures from my riding of London North Centre is an example of someone who doesn't simply accept the status quo. He believes in fostering innovation as well as responsible systems.

In the next 60 seconds, 700 tonnes of plastic will be produced on this planet. His invention, Truly Green



Plastic, a fully biodegradable product, will help mitigate the disastrous impact of single-use plastics. Additionally, Truly Green Plastic uses cannabis plant waste and represents the circular economy at its best.

As if that weren't enough, Tarek also told me about a platform he developed to assist those seeking legal representation. Too often, people call a lawyer from a billboard. I'm sure you're thinking about the astronomical contingency fees charged by these organizations, Speaker. Tarek's platform, contingentSee, is revolutionizing how people secure legal representation. Their system empowers clients as they anonymously post information about their potential case. Lawyers review the postings and then make a bid on the cases they would most like to represent. It helps people on both sides of the equation.

Congratulations, Moharram Ventures, for your brilliant, timely and socially responsible innovations. I look forward to many more.

#### PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. John Fraser:** Tomorrow, we will recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As I've said before, COVID-19 has been a great revealer. This continues to be true when we consider accessibility and inequality for persons with disabilities. The COVID-19 pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing the extent of exclusion, and highlighting that work on disability inclusion is imperative.

Roughly one billion people on this planet have a disability. One in seven Ontarians has a disability, and if you're over 60, it's almost one in two. Over the next 20 years, the number will rise to one in five Ontarians, and the number of people over 60 may actually invert.

Persons with disabilities are one of the most excluded groups in our society and amongst the hardest hit during this crisis. We must recognize the value that persons with disabilities have in our society.

A few weeks ago, I spoke for National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Just like this day of action, it recognizes the potential that persons with disabilities have and how they can provide unique insight and be such a valuable member of any team.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** I'd like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the Chinese community for its generous donations made throughout the past months of the pandemic. Last Friday, I joined Premier Ford alongside MPP Wai, MPP Pang, MPP Babikian and MPP Kanapathi in a virtual donation appreciation meeting to acknowledge and show our deep appreciation to the incredible donors whose support has helped our communities so much during the pandemic.

As our government relies on expert guidance from public health officials to steer our way through this public health crisis, we also count on the public to co-operate to be a part of the solution. It is wonderful to see so many remarkable individuals and businesses demonstrate true

Ontario spirit during this unprecedented time. Those who willingly donate their time, money, food and PPE to help lessen the hardship of others deserve our gratitude.

Our province is lucky to have strong leadership and incredible co-operation from Ontarians as we continue to fight together to stop the spread of the virus. I'm sure we will all get through the current challenges to triumph over the virus because of the collective action of Ontarians, the people who choose to make a difference.

#### WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Once again, Ontario—Toronto—has had a taste of winter, and in northern Ontario we have also had that taste of winter for a while. One thing that comes with a taste of winter in northern Ontario is driving on northern Ontario highways.

We bring this up lots in the House, but this specific incident I would like to bring to the Minister of Transportation's attention—we will send her the video and we want answers as to why this happened.

On November 28, a Saturday, there were no weather warnings, but Marijke Vervoort and her family got in an accident on Highway 11 south of Temagami. Luckily, they weren't hurt, but she took a video of the highway conditions, and she described it as black ice. But the video was very obvious: It wasn't black ice; it was a layer of ice that—people were seen walking; they could barely walk on it. This is the Trans-Canada Highway that should be patrolled, should be salted, should be sanded, and it was obvious on that morning that nothing—nothing—was done.

I'm sure everyone is trying to do their best on the roads, but this video made it obvious that on November 28, a layer of ice was causing accidents on the Trans-Canada Highway and there was no action taken. I would like an answer from the Minister of Transportation.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** I rise today to speak on a matter that I know we all hear about almost every day: the stressful challenges from this horrible year, 2020. I know it has weighed heavily on all the people of Ontario. The anxiety has been extreme for those losing family and friends to COVID and for those unable to even give their last respects to those who are close to them, no matter the cause of their deaths.

Tragically, we have lost elders and even younger leaders in our neighbourhoods, our organizations and our lives. We have lost dreams and promise and people who have made them happen. It has been a challenging year, at best, for all of us.

There's no bright side to COVID-19, yet, despite these adversities, there are heroes who have risen to the occasion, as there always are. They walk among us and make the best of a bad situation. Some are well-known leaders. Some are simply working quietly in the background, enabling us to be fed and clothed, to send our children to school and to go to work safely.

There is inner strength and bravado, Mr. Speaker. Because you know what you bring to the table; we all do. But we also have to recognize when the stress gets too much. So I say to colleagues all and Ontarians: Please, recognize when you need help. Reach out for it. Also to everyone, as we approach this Christmas season, an emotional time of year for many, many people, please be there for your neighbour.

1030

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Mr. Speaker, before I begin I want to give a shout-out to a special little girl who is watching me right now. I just want to say hi to princess Eliyanna. I know you're watching on TV, and Auntie Goldie misses you.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to read a comment that I received from someone a couple of days ago by email. This person wrote to me and said: "Hi Goldie, I just wanted to reach out and say ... as a health care professional and someone who was really sick from COVID, I respect that your government is looking out for people's best interests. I couldn't do your job. People have too much ability to spread hate. Just wanted to reach out and say thank you, Goldie. Take care."

When I responded to this person and let them know that I would like to share their comments in the Legislature, and I asked them if I could identify them, this was their response: "Thank you for your response, Goldie. I really appreciated that.... I think there is so much more we will learn from this virus as time goes on. Until that happens we all just have to do our part.

"Regarding my message, for sure you can share it, but if you don't mind, I'd prefer not" to use "my name. I don't have thick skin like you and I'd be nervous some crazies will try and look me up and hit my social media with hate."

Mr. Speaker, my message to all Ontarians is: I know this is a difficult time for us all. I know that we're all under a lot of stress and we're dealing with COVID fatigue, but I think it's important for all of us to remember that we have to be kind, we have to be supportive, and that no one should be afraid for speaking out against their experiences with COVID.

### QUESTION PERIOD

#### GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Ms. Sara Singh:** My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, nearly 300 more students and staff contracted COVID-19. We now know that that could just be the tip of the iceberg.

Ontario's auditor revealed last week that the Ford government paid a consultant \$4.8 million to, in part, develop some sort of a back-to-school plan. Will the Premier make that report public today?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply? The Minister of Education.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, we unveiled a plan after following the advice and the counsel of the Chief Medical Officer of Health every step of the way to ensure students remain safe. The principal we listened to in the development of our plan is the Chief Medical Officer of Health, which is why Dr. Williams, Dr. Yaffe, Dr. Huyer and so many others have worked with us in good faith to build the plan, and that's why the chief medical officer has endorsed our plan—\$1.3 billion of investment.

Today, 84.6% of schools have no active cases of COVID at all. Of schools with cases, 60% have a single case within them. I should note, of students in this province where we are firmly committed to ensure they remain safe: 99.92% of students are COVID-free, no active cases at all; and likewise for staff: 99.87% of staff have no active cases.

Our commitment is to keep students safe. We'll listen to the science, the medical leadership, to ensure we continue to do that into 2021.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Instead of spending money to keep families safe, this government chose to stuff the pockets of consultants and insiders instead.

Today's Globe and Mail report shows that some Brampton schools have become complete ghost towns as anxious parents pull their children out of school and struggle with online learning.

Speaker, through you to the minister, does he think that spending millions of dollars on a report that apparently didn't even suggest capping class sizes or investing in our students was really a good investment? And will you release that report today?

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Speaker, this is coming from the New Democratic Party, who opposed—twice now—the Support for Learners concept of giving money directly in to the pockets of parents, the same political party who voted in this House against the child care tax credit, providing 75% of eligible expenses for working moms and dads. How is this consistent with the interest of affordability in the midst of a recession, in the midst of a pandemic?

This government will, yes, do both: invest in public education and in the safety of kids, and make life affordable for the people of this province. We will not apologize for doing that.

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** Speaker, the Ford government has completely failed families here in Ontario and the only people who seem to think otherwise are on that side of the House, or people working for big, American consulting firms.

Teachers, students, families—all Ontarians—deserve to know what other advice is in this report. So will the Premier release this unredacted report and will he do that today? And if not, explain to the people of Ontario why you aren't.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Mr. Speaker, the advice we followed was informed by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Why? Because we believe and have confidence in that gentleman, who has provided counsel to government and cabinet about how to get through this pandemic. We will continue to follow his lead. It's why this province stands alone in this country with launching asymptomatic testing in the highest-risk regions, including in the member opposite's region and likewise in my own, in York, and in Peel, in Toronto and in Ottawa.

We will stand ready, working with public health and the Ministry of Health to do more to ensure we keep schools open, a societal imperative that we are absolutely resolved to ensure, working with the Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, to deliver on that imperative.

We are working in close collaboration with our nurses on the ground. We've doubled public health nurses for our schools. We are going to continue to do everything possible, including allocating an additional \$380 million of federal monies to protect our schools and protect the progress we've made in this province.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. John Vanthof:** My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Yesterday, another five families lost loved ones due to COVID in long-term-care homes in Ontario. And, once again, the government declined to tell us why they weren't giving information to their own long-term-care commission and why they are continuing to ignore the commission's advice.

In their report in July, the commission called on the government to address the fact that many long-term-care homes still have residents living three and four to a room, contrary to public health advice. Can the government tell us how many long-term-care homes in outbreak have residents unprotected in those ward rooms?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question. The ward rooms, unfortunately, are a real problem, as wave 1 indicated, really indicating the neglect of the previous government for 15 years to address the capacity issues in long-term care in any fulsome way. Homes built in the 1970s were not redeveloped. Between 2011 and 2018, only 611 beds were built. The capacity was sorely neglected. And here we are now, working with public health, working with our Chief Medical Officer of Health, the assistant chief medical officer of health and Ontario Health to address the long-standing issues not only in the capacity problems but also in the staffing.

My heart goes out to everyone who has been affected by this horrible virus. Ontario is doing everything it can to address this issue. You can see across Canada, whether it's Manitoba, Alberta or BC—fortunately, the Atlantic provinces have been relatively spared so far—this virus spares nobody. That's why everyone has to keep up the effort to make sure that they have a role and responsibility in limiting community spread.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Ward rooms are a problem. We agree with the minister. COVID has often been described as a war, and it is. In the second wave, we have a better understanding of the enemy, as does the government. So it's not enough to say that it has been a long-standing problem and, you know what, these are just going to be casualties of the war.

You've had months to take emergency measures, to understand that ward rooms are a problem. Why have you not come up with a plan for emergency measures and treated this like an emergency and treated seniors like the people they are and not casualties of the COVID war?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll ask members to please take their seats and remind members to make their comments through the Chair.

The response: the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Those comments by the member opposite are very, very disrespectful to the people who are working round the clock to make sure that every measure and every tool—we're looking at the capacity issues, integrating the response to our long-term-care homes, making sure that we have the staff and the response that is needed for these homes in outbreak. We've been doing this for almost a year now and we have never stopped. We've been absolutely diligent in this process.

So for anyone to insinuate that all the good people who are working so hard to address this issue with a virus that has never been seen in this world—I will not allow those people to be insulted. I will not allow our PSWs to be insulted. I will not allow it.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** My mother died in a long-term-care home in March. I have, and our party has, ultimate respect for the people who work in long-term care, for the people who work in the system, for the people who have been overworked constantly and who are now even more overworked because this government didn't take the steps to hire more people.

**1040**

COVID is a war. You field hospitals or rent hotel rooms or do something when you know that people in wards are at a greater risk.

Comparing to other provinces—we don't need comparisons to other provinces; we need a Minister of Long-Term Care who is going to work for people in Ontario, in long-term-care homes in Ontario. Come up with a plan. Act now before more people die in wards.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'll ask the members to take their seats again.

Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** I can assure the member opposite that our government has done nothing but attempt to support and commit to making sure our long-term-care residents and staff and families are supported through this horrible, horrible time of COVID-19. There are so many measures we are taking. I won't list them now, but I would

like to tell you a little bit about the situation in Quebec—and Ontario has really been under siege. I wouldn't equate this to a war—the millions of people who have died in World War II, in World War I, in Afghanistan, in Korea, across the globe in wars.

Everyone can do their part. You heard General Hillier say the other day that this is something that we can do to suppress community spread, to reduce your social contacts: stay home. Reduce the community spread, and you will help our homes. But, ultimately, the truth is that there are no simple solutions to this. The ward rooms were long-standing, thanks to the previous government, supported by the NDP when there was a minority government. We must—

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

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** My question is to the Premier. This morning, Hamilton families learned that public health has had to intervene to impose public health orders on two more long-term-care facilities. This is the fifth time public health has had to issue orders to protect seniors in Hamilton long-term care. Hamilton's medical officer of health says that, unfortunately, long-term-care operators are “still thinking influenza”—the flu. How is it that after everything we learned in the first wave, the government is still treating COVID like it's the flu?

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

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** That simply just isn't the case. We know that COVID-19 can ravage homes. It's ravaging countries. It's ravaging provinces. There's no question that COVID-19 is a very different beast. The transmission is different. The potential for aerosol spread—this is not the same whatsoever.

But I want to remind the member opposite that the reason those public health units are able to do what they do is because they have the power to address the issues in their public health units and in their regions. This is very important, that they do that to be able to respond quickly, to be able to get into our homes, to provide immediate response as soon as there's a first case, whether it's a resident or staff.

I remind everyone that 92% of our long-term-care homes right now have no resident cases, and the ones that have resident cases are getting the support that they need through Public Health, through Ontario Health, making sure that the hospital acute care sector is integrated with the medical expertise, the infection prevention and control expertise, the staffing supports. These are all ongoing, and this government is committed, with a priority of long-term-care residents, staff and families being at the centre of everything we do, to do everything we can to ensure that they are protected and supported.

What you raise is really evidence that our system of response is working. We have been proactive as well, to understand that COVID-19 is not influenza. It is not. I

think that's very clear in the science. So the fact that our public health units are going in and assisting our homes immediately and doing what is required of public health is wonderful and very much appreciated.

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

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Only a few weeks ago, the minister said that 99.9% of long-term-care homes didn't have an outbreak. Now we're at 92% that don't have outbreaks. It's getting worse, not better.

This is the fifth public health order that has been issued in Hamilton. As of yesterday, these five homes have had 257 residents infected with COVID. That's 257 families left wondering if parents and grandparents will survive.

The Premier has promised an iron ring of protection. Long-term-care homes treated COVID like the flu. Why has nothing changed? It has been five orders, five times a public health official has intervened. Please, why has nothing changed?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** It's clear that there have been ongoing efforts, and I'm not sure exactly where that commentary is coming from. To correct the record there, I have said that 92% of our long-term-care homes have no resident cases; that is what I have said. Please don't misrepresent what I have said.

We have a situation in our long-term-care homes where the primary driver of an outbreak is—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I have to ask the minister to withdraw her unparliamentary comment.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Withdraw. I do believe that it's important to make sure that my statements are not put back to me in some way other than what I said.

The public health unit in the region is the primary driver of an outbreak. It is the primary driver. That means if the community spread is high, there will be increased outbreaks. The biggest driver of an outbreak's severity is the number of ward rooms, as we are addressing. That's why we're following the public health advice and the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health: to make sure that we follow their directives and take their measures to secure, as much as possible, residents and staff in long-term care. We'll continue to do that.

#### ADOPTION

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** There are thousands of kids in the extended care of children's aid societies eligible for adoption. These are children and youth who need loving families and a secure place to call home.

In my riding of Carleton, and working with the children's aid societies in my area, it is clear that more needs to be done to simplify the adoption system. One of my constituents told me that it takes years and is a cumbersome process to adopt a child. It is a very complex and outdated system.

In the current system, because there is no centralization, a child living one block north of Steeles Avenue may not know or be able to be paired with a family one block south of Steeles in Toronto, simply because they are two

different children's aid societies. That is absolutely ridiculous and limits the ability of these kids, who just need and deserve the support of a loving family.

Can the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues tell this House and my constituents who want to adopt why these issues still exist, and will she commit to fixing the system?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member from Carleton for that question.

The member is unfortunately correct. Ontario's adoption system is severely lacking. It is slow, disjointed and very hard to navigate for families. But that's why our government has been working with our partners in this sector to make tangible, positive changes so that more kids and families can be connected.

Last year, the parliamentary assistant and member for Ottawa West–Nepean, as well as other members in this House, held round tables with parents, prospective adoptive parents, adopted children, adoption agencies and others to hear about the challenges facing the adoption system. Our government has also been working closely with the sector to listen and identify gaps in the system.

Speaker, this is just one step that we're taking. I announced last month \$900,000 annually to centralize the adoption process so that location is not a barrier for children and youth in search of their forever home. We are bringing the adoption system in Ontario out of the age of the postal code and into the age of the IP address.

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

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Thank you to the minister for the response.

Not only is the system clunky and hard to navigate; for the parents who do make it through and adopt a child, they are often left without proper help and supports on how to be the wonderful parents that they want to be. These individuals, like many in my riding, just want to provide the best care to their child and help them succeed at every opportunity. But they are sometimes left on their own, without guidance, or, after having received initial help, left to fend for themselves. It's concerning that those who open their homes and hearts to these kids aren't being helped as much as they could be.

I know the previous Liberal government left the child welfare system and the adoption system, by extension, outdated and poorly managed. I know the opposition have never asked a single question on this in the House since I was elected in 2018. My question is simple: Will the minister commit to providing more support to children, youth and families?

1050

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you again to the member for that question. I want to thank the thousands of families across Ontario who have opened their hearts and homes to children and youth in need of a family. These mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and grandparents are providing what many of us take for granted: a loving family that is there for us through life's many challenges and celebrations. Through this, Speaker, I can confidently say to the

member that yes, we will commit to providing additional help and ongoing supports for the moms and dads who need help.

In fact, last month I announced nearly \$600,000 more annually to enhance post-adoption training and provide individualized supports to families. This includes funding for classes designed for adoptive caregivers who are parenting children who have experienced trauma and loss as part of their history. It also means funding buddy-mentor programs and pairing caregivers with a local parent to help them find the appropriate services in their community.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. Good morning, Minister. Yesterday, the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit reported that our local public health capacity will soon be "on the verge of collapsing."

Public health officials said they just don't have enough staff to do the contact tracing and the case management in the community. They also said that adding to this pressure is the outbreaks in schools. There are now 25 schools in Windsor-Essex where cohorts have been dismissed, and yet class sizes have not been reduced. Local health staff are working 12- to 15-hour days, seven days a week. They're doing the best they can with the limited resources they have. We need help, and we need it now.

Speaker, will the minister give the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit the resources they need immediately and prevent this looming collapse?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you very much to the member opposite for the question. We are aware there is considerable concern regarding public health resources in Windsor-Essex. We have been following it very closely. There is some more significant community transmission there, which is why we've been putting further restrictions in the area to make sure that we can start bending that curve and helping out.

Still, we understand there are concerns with respect to health resources. We have increased the funding to Ontario's health unit by over 14%. Since 2018, there have been considerably more resources put in there. I can advise that 96.8% of cases and 89.7% of contacts are being reached within 24 hours.

That said, we have also been in contact with Windsor-Essex and are providing over 24 provincial contact tracers to aid with the work they're already doing to try and do that contact management to help get those numbers more under control.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary question? The member for Windsor West.

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** Back to the Premier: I just want to remind the Minister of Health that just last year, they actually cut \$1.5 million from our health unit, which was already one of the lowest funded. When they talk about an increase of 14%, we already started from behind and you put us even further behind.

Health care workers are burnt out. Small businesses are barely hanging on and can't afford another lockdown. The people of Windsor continue to make sacrifices while this Conservative government fails to step up. They just stand by and monitor the situation.

Our health unit has been underfunded for years. Before COVID, we were one of the lowest-funded public health systems in the entire province. This Conservative government didn't prioritize public health and prevention measures before the pandemic, and they've failed to step up with the support that we need now. They're sitting on \$9 billion in unused COVID relief funding while exhausted front-line workers are scrambling to keep the virus at bay. People are getting sick and people are dying.

Will the Premier immediately give our health unit the resources they need to stay on top of screening, testing and tracing, along with the other public health services they provide in our community to keep us all safe?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Significant resources have already been given to the Windsor-Essex health unit. The member may remember that while there were some changes that were being proposed pursuant to the Auditor General's report to modernize our system of public health—we were undergoing that at the time that COVID struck and we mitigated some of the charges that it would have been responsible for. There was no great loss, as the member has suggested.

We have also provided additional resources for tracing and contact management. If more resources are needed for that, we will certainly provide them. But we've also provided an additional 30 beds to the hospitals and alternate health facilities, because we know Windsor-Essex is going through a very difficult time. We will provide the resources as they are needed in order to be able to flatten the curve and protect the people and the health and well-being of the people of Windsor-Essex, which has been our goal since this pandemic began.

#### SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** My question is for the Premier. Jean-Marc Lang is 26 years old. He has autism and severe behavioural issues. Since August 2019, he has been on a list for emergency priority placement in specialized residential care, and an agency has confirmed they have a spot for Jean-Marc ready and waiting. But Jean-Marc is still waiting. What's worse is that Jean-Marc has been in the secure ward of the civic campus of the Ottawa Hospital since February.

Jean-Marc has not been allowed outside to see the sun or breathe fresh air for more than nine months. His mom, H el ene, describes it as being worse than in jail. Jean-Marc's only crime was that he was born with autism and behavioural issues.

I've written to the minister about this. We've spoken on the phone, we've exchanged text messages, and there's still no movement. He tells me that there's no money.

Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has built a budget with contingencies, with reserves, billions of dollars in unspent allocations, and yet there's still no money. My question: Will the government commit to providing Jean-Marc's family relief today and get him into the residential care facility he needs to be in?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for the question. I am aware of the member's correspondence on this topic with the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, but as the member knows, I cannot comment on this individual case here in the House.

What I can share more generally is that in complex cases, a network of developmental and community service partners works with families to identify interim and long-term solutions in order to support the individual.

The ministry also has a consistent province-wide process to help people who require urgent supports. That process recognizes that every individual has different needs, which is why, in each case, it's reviewed on an individual basis. Those determined to be most at risk are prioritized for available resources.

Beyond residential services, adults with a developmental disability are likely also eligible for funding through the Passport Program and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Jean-Marc has been prioritized since August of last year.

Joshua McPhail-Monty is a 23-year-old man from Orl ans with a dual diagnosis of autism and behavioural issues. His parents, Vicki and Jean-Fran ois, have described that Josh's behaviour is so bad that at times it's tough to get through the day. He's constantly in crisis, screaming, and often sedated.

Josh has been admitted to the general campus of the Ottawa Hospital since July 2019. That's approaching 18 months, Mr. Speaker. Like Jean-Marc Lang, Josh and his parents are waiting for placement in specialized care and to diagnose and treat the recent behavioural changes that he has been experiencing. Like Jean-Marc, for a year and a half, Josh has not been allowed to go outside, breathe fresh air or see the sun.

Mr. Speaker, when will the government recognize that languishing in a hospital for 18 months is not right, that Josh and his parents deserve better and that the province needs to provide the support this family so desperately needs right now?

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you again to the member for the supplementary. Our government recognized the growing demand for developmental services. This year, we are providing approximately \$2.9 billion in annual funding for developmental services, including about \$2 billion dedicated to residential services. As part of budget 2020, we are providing increased funding of \$361 million for the developmental services sector to support clients currently in service and support more residential placements for new high-risk clients.

Speaker, I can tell you we are already hearing positive feedback on new investments. Brad Saunders, the CEO for Community Living Toronto, says today's budget announcements "represent a significant step forward toward a modern, future-oriented developmental services sector. Thousands of individuals and families will benefit from new funding and service opportunities, and the agencies that support them will be able to do their work on a more stable and secure footing."

I hope that this member supports budget 2020.

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## HYDRO RATES

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Small businesses in my riding of Carleton have been struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we thank Ontarians for doing the right thing and staying at home when possible, we know that small businesses have been hit the hardest. I know it's even more difficult for businesses that have not been able to easily pivot online but are still paying their full fixed costs like electricity.

Can the Associate Minister of Energy tell this House what the government is doing to support small businesses, like the ones in my riding, with their electricity costs?

**Hon. Bill Walker:** Thank you to the member for that important question and for her incredible work on behalf of the people of Carleton.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, while we make progress to contain this deadly virus, we know people will need to stay home when possible, and businesses will need ongoing support. That's why we announced \$8 million to support small business electricity consumers struggling to pay their energy bills, as a result of COVID-19, through the COVID-19 Energy Assistance Program for Small Business.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business thanked the government for their contribution, saying that they are "pleased to see the government is providing \$8 million in immediate energy cost relief to those small businesses hardest hit by COVID-19.

"Competitive electricity rates will be a key component to small business success as we begin down the long road to economic recovery."

Providing additional rate relief, flexibility and customer choice on electricity bills will help ensure everyone can recover from this extraordinary crisis and lead our economic recovery. We'll continue to do everything we can to support our small businesses and the people of Ontario.

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

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Thank you to the associate minister for his answer. Mr. Speaker, I know this is excellent news for businesses in my riding of Carleton. Business associations like the Osgoode Ward Business Association, the Stittsville Business Association, the Manotick BIA and more will love this great news. I'm sure that they will share it with all of their members.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear that small businesses across Ontario have access to this funding to help cover their electricity bills during this difficult time. As COVID-19 numbers continue to rise rapidly in certain regions, I know that we've had to make the tough but necessary decisions to protect our hospitals, long-term-care and retirement homes by moving some regions into lockdown. For these businesses that have no choice but to close to protect Ontarians, can the minister tell the House what supports are available to them?

**Hon. Bill Walker:** Thank you again to the member from Carleton for her great work. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share that we are now providing \$600 million in relief to support eligible businesses required to close or significantly restrict services due to enhanced public health measures, by doubling our initial commitment of \$300 million made in the 2020 budget, Ontario's Action Plan: Protect, Support, Recover.

Businesses can apply online for temporary property tax and energy cost rebate grants via an easy-to-use one-window portal. The rebates will cover the length of time that a business is required to temporarily close or significantly restrict services as a result of being located in an area categorized as red control or lockdown. We are proud to stand up for small businesses. A detailed list of eligible businesses as well as instructions for applying can be found at [ontario.ca/covidsupport](http://ontario.ca/covidsupport).

Mr. Speaker, we're here for business, we're here for the people of Ontario, and we'll continue to do that until we're through to recovery.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. Hospitals across the province are struggling under the surging second wave and Ontarians are worried about what these pressures are going to mean for their own health care. Hospitals are already trying to catch up from a backlog of surgeries and other procedures created during the first wave. Now, in my region, Grand River Hospital has had to pause surgeries this week because their ICU is over capacity, which means even more people are going to be waiting for potentially life-altering health care because of this government's failure to invest in preventing the second wave.

They've denied the paid sick days, Mr. Speaker. They've done insufficient contact tracing. They've had a sloppy testing rollout across this province. And so right now, we are at a crisis—another health care crisis for hospitals in Ontario. What does the Premier have to say to the families in K-W who are now stressed and suffering because of his bad choices?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I have to start by saying that I fundamentally disagree with the assertions made by the member opposite. In fact, we have planned since the beginning of this pandemic to enhance our capacity, to make sure that we have the capacity, tracers that we need,

to make sure that we can bring forward a response that merits a substantive increase in the cases that we've seen between wave 1 and wave 2.

Clearly, we've seen that wave 2 is having a more significant impact on our health care system, but we planned for that. In fact, we have created over 3,100 beds in the province of Ontario since the beginning of March. We've invested \$351 million to create more than 2,350 new beds at 57 hospitals and alternate health facilities across the province. We've also invested over \$1 billion in testing, tracing and contact management, to make sure that hospitals can continue to do their work to take care of the COVID-19 patients, as well as being able to take care of the surgeries and procedures that were postponed during wave 1.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Mr. Speaker, there is a serious disconnect between that answer and the reality that is facing Ontario's hospitals and communities across this province. The net deficit for the Ontario Hospital Association is predicted to be at \$500 million. That's including a revenue loss of \$320 million.

But, Speaker, it's not just the Grand River Hospital that's facing a capacity crisis right now. St. Mary's and Cambridge Memorial Hospital in the region are also close to hitting capacity, and ICU numbers and hospitalizations continue to grow each and every day in every region across this province.

Ontario is at a breaking point. Thanks to this government's choices and failure to invest, it means that things are only going to get worse, unless there's an immediate and an urgent investment. What is the Premier going to do to ensure that our hospitals have the support they need to get through this crisis? Do it now. We're at the tipping point.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, Ontario is not in crisis right now. You want to speak about who is in crisis? Have you taken a look at Alberta, where they're doubling up patients in intensive care units? We're not doing that in Ontario. We've made substantive investments. We've made significant increases to hospitals, the biggest increase in a decade, in the past year. We've increased the number of beds by over 3,100 beds. We've invested \$1 billion for testing, tracing and contact management. We are flattening this curve.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** It's Ontario. Again, I know it's nothing to brag about, but we're standing at 100 cases per 100,000. Manitoba is at 662 per 100,000. Alberta is at 380 per 100,000. Ontario is still the lowest in Canada—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. The member for Waterloo will come to order. The member for London North Centre will come to order. The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order. The Minister of Education will come to order.

Please start the clock. The next question.

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. John Fraser:** My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Speaker, yesterday I asked the minister about 120 vacant single-bed rooms at the Perley and Rideau Veterans' Health Centre. Thankfully, it's my understanding that today they've restarted admissions, two to three people a day.

Given that the Perley, for months now, has had almost no resident cases, few staff cases, has done an excellent job of managing COVID-19 and is in fact advising other long-term-care homes, 120 vacant beds, in any reality, doesn't make sense. People like Mr. Mroz and Mrs. Tooke, who I mentioned yesterday, and their families are suffering. They're not the only ones.

Speaker, through you: Will the minister take action to ensure that the circumstances that led to this situation do not occur again?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** I just want to emphasize the importance that this is not a simple solution. There are many pieces to this. Whether it's the staffing, whether it's infection prevention and control, there are many aspects to this. It's not a simple process.

But there's a clear contrast to be made, Speaker. The fact is, the previous Liberal government built only 611 beds since 2011, and then opened applications for new beds weeks before an election. The previous government chose not to make investments in long-term care, and the member opposite said, "We all know that we have to build more long-term-care spaces here in this province." This was when he was with the previous government in power. He said, "You've got beds that were built in the 1970s—they're called Bs and Cs—that need to be redeveloped so people are no longer in rooms where there are four people."

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Well, it takes a bit of time to build beds and the time that you had was squandered. Your government chose not—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I once again ask members to make their comments through the Chair.

The supplementary question.

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'll be happy to debate that in a late show, if the minister will come. I am not sure that the Tookes or the Mrozes are going to like that answer.

There are 120 vacant beds. We found a way to bring essential caregivers back in. We found that way. This is an analogous circumstance. I'm just asking you to use that lens, that's all.

Right now the rules exist that if there's one more staff case at the Perley—1,000 staff; 450 beds—the admissions will stop. The minister knows that. These beds are in single rooms. They're at a premium for infection control. Thousands of people are waiting for beds in the community.

We can debate what the minister obviously wants to debate—and I'd be happy to see her next week—but right now she needs to take action. She needs to find a solution to this. There is a solution; she knows that.



I am shocked that the minister responded that way. It's hard to control my anger because you're not really addressing the situation. You have 120 vacant beds—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Once again, the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order.

The Minister of Long-Term Care to respond.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** The reality is that COVID-19 is very, very transmissible. Our homes must have the necessary isolation space for cases, should they arrive. We've learned from the first wave. This has been a continuous learning process to understand how we contain it once it's into the home and how we prevent it from getting into the home in the first place. That's rapid testing, asymptomatic testing and making sure that our staff are trained on an ongoing basis and reinforced by the hospital expertise in terms of addressing infection control issues in the home. This is ongoing.

In terms of the capacity issue, we're looking at every measure possible. We're getting community paramedicine into homes to support people so that they don't need to come to long-term care. We're investing \$540 million to make sure that we have the staffing that is required for our homes.

All of this must be taken together. You cannot simply isolate one aspect of it. It is a complex issue that we are continuing to work at and I would hope that the member opposite would take the time to understand the complexity of this issue. It is not a simple—

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

The next question.

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. It's no secret that the softwood lumber trade between the United States and Canada has been a contentious issue for decades. Softwood lumber is a big provider of jobs to communities in Ontario and across Canada. It is also a significant contributor to our economy.

Recent tariffs imposed by the United States, our largest trading partner, have unnecessarily hurt our softwood lumber producers and the hard-working men and women of this industry. However, last week the US Department of Commerce reduced some of those tariffs on softwood lumber.

Can the minister please tell the House what our government's position is on these most recent changes to American softwood lumber tariffs?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Kitchener–Conestoga and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thank you to the member from Carleton for the opportunity to rise today and talk a little bit about the recent adjustments to softwood lumber tariffs. This is something I'm sure, as an international trade

lawyer, she ran across fairly often through the Ottawa Valley.

This government is fighting every day to take action to contain COVID-19 and prepare for our economic recovery, once we get through this pandemic. It is more important than ever to make sure that we vigorously defend our forest industry, which plays an important role in the economies of not only Canada but also here in the province of Ontario. This industry provides good-paying jobs to communities across the province.

While we are happy to see the US Department of Commerce has reduced duties that are being paid for many players in the Canadian softwood lumber industry, we firmly believe that any tariffs or rates of this sort are unfair and unjustified. We are going to do everything we can to fight for the people of Ontario, to fight for good jobs and ensure a level playing field for the softwood industry here in our province.

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

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Thank you to the parliamentary assistant for that answer. I'm glad to see that this government is taking a firm stand and fighting for Ontario's lumber industry. And, yes, as a former international trade lawyer, Mr. Speaker, I did not have an opportunity to work on softwood lumber, but it is one of the most prominent cases, and all of us trade lawyers know about it. In fact, there are four of them right now: softwood lumber 1, 2, 3 and 4.

This industry is too important to the livelihoods of so many Ontario families, and it's such a significant contributor to our economy. We can't just roll over, do nothing and accept these unfair and unjust tariffs that have been imposed.

As I mentioned in my previous question, the US is our largest trading partner. What's good for Canada is also good for the US, as our economies are very much intertwined. When Canada succeeds, America succeeds, and that's why we need to drop these tariffs. Can the minister please explain what Ontario is planning to do in order to fight these unfair and unnecessary tariffs?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thank you to the member once again for the supplemental question. These rates that have been imposed put the softwood lumber industry and all the workers, their families and communities, especially in northern Ontario that rely on this crucial trade, at an unfair disadvantage during this already difficult time.

Fair and open trade is most beneficial for consumers on both sides of the border: not just here in Canada, but also in the US. We will stand by our decision to defend the Canadian forest industry every step of the way. The rate for all companies here in Ontario should be zero, Mr. Speaker. That is the meaning of free trade.

We will continue to work closely with the industry, the provinces and the federal government, using all available avenues and every tool at our disposal to fight the unfair rates on Canadian softwood lumber. We are going to fight tooth and nail for the people who rely on this industry here in the province.

## LAND USE PLANNING

**Mr. Ian Arthur:** Speaker, through you to the Acting Premier: In July, the government issued a minister's zoning order to enable a glass factory on lands annexed to the city of Stratford. It seems this MZO was the culmination of nearly two years of backroom discussions between this government and Xinyi, the Chinese firm seeking to build the factory.

Over two years ago, the Premier told this House that he met with Xinyi representatives to discuss the location for this factory. In a recent article in the Stratford Beacon Herald, a consultant working for Xinyi described extensive discussions with the provincial government concerning the MZO.

Why has there never been a single entry for Xinyi in the lobbyist registry, Speaker?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant, the member for Milton.

**Mr. Parm Gill:** I want to thank the member opposite for that question. Every single minister's zoning order we've issued on non-provincially owned lands has been at the request of a local municipality. The MZO was requested by the mayor of Stratford with support from the county of Perth and the township of Perth South, who represent the needs of their constituents.

Over the years, these municipalities have demonstrated that this project will bring much-needed economic opportunity to their community, with a \$400-million investment and creating 350 local jobs.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to drive forward economic growth in our communities even more. This project is located next to an existing industrial area that already has heavy manufacturing.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary question? The member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr. Jeff Burch:** Back to the Premier, Speaker: That doesn't sound right. There's no evidence of any request for this MZO from Stratford council. In fact, the Xinyi consultant said that it was the province that offered an MZO to Xinyi even before the Stratford site was selected. This government initiated the MZO on Xinyi's behalf and then wrote it so that only a glass factory could be built on these lands. This effectively forced the city to agree to the Xinyi development on Xinyi's terms, including a cost-sharing agreement that will force Stratford taxpayers to pay \$6 million for Xinyi's infrastructure.

Speaker, why is this Premier sticking the people of Stratford with a \$6-million bill for his backroom deal with Xinyi?

**Mr. Parm Gill:** Mr. Speaker, a letter from the mayor of Stratford dated November 20, 2018, and a follow-up letter from March 11, 2020, clearly shows that the municipality specifically requested an MZO for the glass production plant, and we adhered to that request.

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As I pointed out earlier in my response, this would create 350 local jobs. We work with our municipal partners. I also mentioned the fact that we would not issue

an MZO on a property that is not provincially owned unless it was requested by the local municipality. That's exactly what happened in this case, Mr. Speaker. We are obviously working with our municipal partners to help economic growth, especially during the COVID-19 crisis.

RESPONSABILITÉ  
GOUVERNEMENTALE

## GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Ma question au gouvernement : le récent rapport de la vérificatrice générale a confirmé ce que nous disons depuis des mois; ce gouvernement n'écoute pas les conseils de professionnels de la santé, et le rapport nous dit que le gouvernement gère la pandémie de façon « lente », « incohérente » et « désorganisée »—ses mots, monsieur le Président.

Le premier ministre et la ministre de la Santé ont passé des mois à dire aux Ontariens qu'ils prennent cette pandémie au sérieux et qu'ils ont commencé à demander des conseils et à se préparer en janvier. Ils ont répété à plusieurs reprises qu'ils avaient un plan d'urgence en place.

Cependant, le rapport de la vérificatrice générale a confirmé que le gouvernement de l'Ontario n'avait en fait pas de plan d'intervention d'urgence en place, ce qui a retardé la réaction à la pandémie, et par conséquent tragiquement coûté des vies, en plus de notre liberté. Alors, plus on apprend sur ce qui se passe derrière les rideaux, plus il est difficile de faire confiance à ce gouvernement.

Le gouvernement, peut-il nous expliquer pourquoi il répétait qu'il avait un plan d'urgence en place, lorsqu'en fait ça a été confirmé que ceci est faux?

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

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Withdraw, Speaker.

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Yes, of course we had an emergency plan. We had an emergency plan from the beginning of this pandemic to make sure that we could deal with it, to make sure that we would have the public health resources, that we would have the health capacity resources and have the personnel to be able to deal with it.

Since the abatement between the first wave and the second wave, we developed our fall preparedness plan, which was dealing with how to deal with increases; having a substantive flu plan; making sure that we have capacity to deal with increased cases; and making sure that we would be able to continue with the surgeries and procedures that were delayed because of the first plan.

Not only do we have the plan, we've put resources into it. We've invested over \$350 million in increasing hospital capacity; \$450 million in increasing home and community care, increasing the public health resources; \$1 billion in testing, tracing and contact management. So in addition to

having a plan, we had the financial resources put into it as well.

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

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Également dans le rapport de la vérificatrice générale, on nous apprend que la table de commandement de la santé créée par le gouvernement pour lutter contre la pandémie était composée de personnel politique non qualifié au lieu d'épidémiologistes, de médecins et de responsables de la santé publique qualifiés. Il n'y a pas d'autres mots pour le dire, monsieur le Président, ça fait dur.

It's unbelievable that this government thought that spin doctors should take places meant for actual doctors.

Monsieur le Président, pourquoi le gouvernement croyait-il que des personnes avec aucune qualification relative à la gestion d'une telle pandémie devaient prendre une place importante à la table de commandement de la santé? Comment justifient-ils cette décision absolument ridicule et inacceptable aux Ontariens?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** That was not the case. It was not the case at all. We received the report of the Auditor General, and while we indicated that there were some systemic issues that she raised that do have merit and that we intend to follow up on, we also found that there were some areas, factually, where we disagreed. We tried to resolve these issues with the Auditor General before the release of her report; however, she was not prepared to postpone it or to make any changes.

One of the significant changes was one of the issues that you raised in your question, which was the position of the command table and the central control table. The central table was developed with the assistance of an outside adviser to help bring together all parts of government so that we could take an all-of-government approach. It was never meant to be a health table; it was an organization table. The central command table for health was completed and filled with public health experts, including people from Public Health Ontario, the public health measures table, Dr. Williams and many other doctors who backed them up. It was based on science. It was based on clinical evidence. It did—

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

The next question.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

### FINANCEMENT DES HÔPITAUX

**Mr. Guy Bourgouin:** My question is for the Premier. On November 9, the Ford government made an announcement about hospital beds in northern Ontario. The government informed us that these beds would improve “patient care capacity and hospital beds where they are needed most” and that this would “increase hospital capacity and reduce wait times for patients and families across northern Ontario.” But the announcement is utterly silent about whether this is a one-time fund and

whether these beds will remain in our communities after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Speaker, will the Premier tell northern Ontarians whether these hospital beds are permanent for the years to come after the pandemic? If not, why?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, we have increased capacity in hospitals across the province—north, south, east and west—over 3,100 beds since the beginning of the pandemic. The beds will be there as long as the pandemic is here, which we all hope won't be for very long, especially with a vaccine coming forward.

We've also made an announcement with respect to the redevelopment of the Weeneebayko hospital in Moosonee and Moose Factory to make sure that permanent changes are made there too to ensure that your constituents, the constituents of northern Ontario, receive the excellent quality health care that they deserve, in premises that are suitable for them.

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

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Encore pour le premier ministre.

J'ai l'impression que les membres du gouvernement ne comprennent pas ce que ça veut dire. Les communautés du Nord ont besoin de lits permanents, pas de placements temporaires. On a besoin des lits permanents pour réduire le temps d'attente et les problèmes de prestation de services qu'on voit dans nos régions chaque jour. Les lits serviront, entre autres, à desservir les aînés et ceux ayant des besoins de services de soutien à long terme. Sinon, ils devront aller chercher les soins ailleurs. Mais c'est dur à faire comprendre à un gouvernement qui conçoit les gens du Nord comme des citoyens de deuxième classe.

Le premier ministre, va-t-il donc venir dans le nord de l'Ontario pour informer les gens dans les centres de soins qu'ils devront libérer les lits après un certain temps?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** We certainly understand that there are certain areas in Ontario where there is a scarcity of beds, northern Ontario being one of the primary areas; there are others as well. But we've been making significant capital commitments to build new hospitals and to make improvements to existing hospitals since the beginning of our term here.

We have the \$175-million HIRF fund that comes forward every year where repairs and significant changes can be made in hospitals, as well as committing capital. This is all happening despite the significant increases that we've made in our health system capacity due to COVID-19—the \$351 million that we've already invested to increase hospital capacity; the \$450 million to increase home and community care, which is also relevant in northern Ontario; and the work that is being done to do testing, tracing and contact management, another \$1 billion.

It is significant, Mr. Speaker, I would say that despite all of these significant increases, we have also been making significant increases in capital investments for new facilities.

## HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** My question is to the Minister of Health. Ontario is seeing a troubling rise in patient hospitalization due to COVID-19. As we are in the throes of the second wave, Scarborough General is at 90% capacity, and the COVID patients make up 75% of the ICU patients. Scarborough is consistently seeing positivity rates in their assessment centres at 17%—in the high teens.

I want to thank the hard-working Scarborough Health Network and Scarborough Centre for Healthy Communities front-line health care workers for the assessments that they're doing.

Minister, Scarborough's existing health system cannot handle this level of community spread. Scarborough needs its facilities to be in good repair, and a new hospital, so that it can continue to provide excellent care at this critical moment and in the future.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Will you commit to expediting the master plan for a new Scarborough hospital today?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Certainly, we are aware of the concerns and issues that Scarborough General is having. They're in the middle of one of the hot spots, and that's one of the reasons why Toronto was put in lockdown, to stop this community spread and to make sure that we can bend this curve and get the numbers more under control.

That being said, we are working very hard with the great people at Scarborough General to do the work that they need to do. As the member will know, there is a process for hospitals to be rebuilt. We have been working very hard to move this forward as quickly as possible. This is an issue for many members of this Legislature, but the process moves forward as it does. We're trying to expedite it as quickly as possible.

1130

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

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** I thank the minister for her response. Of course, as you know, the Scarborough Health Network is in that process, and what I'm asking of you today is to perhaps look in on that and move that process forward. They have submitted their master plan and are really just waiting on the ministry for that.

As you know, public health experts have sounded the alarm that Scarborough is, amongst many other reasons, seeing a higher rate of hospitalizations and ICU patients with COVID-19 because of the vulnerabilities in the population. You've said that you acknowledge that we need to protect our most vulnerable populations: those with pre-existing conditions and seniors.

There are many situations in our Scarborough community that make it more vulnerable. Will you work with the public health units on their outreach plan and plan to isolate families who test positive, giving them that option?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I can certainly advise the member that I can make inquiries as to the status of the application for the Scarborough hospital, but you will also

know that I'm not able to interfere in it. There is a process that has to be followed to make sure it's fair and equitable for all parts of the province. That's the way it should be, and I don't think anyone would have any disagreement about that.

But we also want to make sure we can help within the community, to help the public health unit to make sure they can do the testing, tracing and isolating. If they need more contact managers to help there—we've already provided several hundred additional contact managers to Toronto Public Health.

I know there are some situations where quarantine management has been asked for, which is provided by the federal government. I have had several conversations with Minister Hajdu about that. I know that some have been opened in the western part of the city, but if they're required in Scarborough, I would be more than happy to speak with Minister Hajdu about that as well.

## FOOD BANKS

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** My question is for the Premier. Feed Ontario surveyed 200 food bank visitors this past September as part of its recently released Hunger Report 2020. Staggeringly, half of them reported they are worried about facing eviction or defaulting on their mortgages in the coming months. This is terrifying. The cost of keeping a roof over their family's head is the single biggest reason that people go hungry in Ontario.

Back in March, the Premier said that people who can't afford to eat and pay rent should choose to eat. As the pandemic drags on, Feed Ontario is asking that the government reinstate a residential eviction moratorium and rent relief so that people don't face eviction or massive arrears because of COVID-19 and so that they can afford to eat. When will the Premier take action to ensure that Ontarians can both eat and keep housed?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

**Hon. Jill Dunlop:** Thank you to the member for that question. We recognize that the COVID pandemic has been difficult for many families across the province. As part of Ontario's efforts to support children, youth and families through this challenging time, our government has provided \$8 million in funding for Feed Ontario. This funding assisted Feed Ontario in producing and distributing prepackaged hampers to support the great work that food banks across this province have been doing throughout the COVID-19 outbreak.

I'd like to give a shout-out to my own local food bank, where I had the opportunity to come in and help work with the hampers and the volunteers who are there, doing the hard work in our food bank.

We also invested an additional \$1 million in the Student Nutrition Program so that it can continue to run throughout the summer. During this time, the program has been adapted to include new local approaches to meal delivery, including distributing grocery gift cards or farm vouchers,

delivering food boxes and meal kits for frozen meals, and supporting food banks.

Our government knows that proper nutrition is a foundation for success, and we are taking every step to ensure that families are successful.

#### NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 36(a), the member for Ottawa South has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Long-Term Care concerning Perley Rideau long-term-care beds. This matter will be debated today following private members' public business.

#### DEFERRED VOTES

##### PUBLIC HEALTH ACCOUNTABILITY ACT (IN HONOUR OF DR. SHEELA BASRUR), 2020

##### LOI DE 2020 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE (EN HOMMAGE À LA DRE SHEELA BASRUR)

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

Bill 227, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to the positions of Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health and related matters / Projet de loi 227, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé en ce qui concerne les postes de médecin-hygiéniste en chef et de médecin-hygiéniste en chef adjoint et des questions connexes.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1136 to 1206.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 227, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act with respect to the positions of Chief Medical Officer of Health and Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health and related matters, has been held.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 25; the nays are 52.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I declare the motion lost.

*Second reading negatived.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1207 to 1500.*

#### ROYAL ASSENT

#### SANCTION ROYALE

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short):** The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act providing for the development of a provincial framework on palliative care / Loi prévoyant l'élaboration d'un cadre provincial des soins palliatifs.

An Act in respect of food and beverage delivery fees / Loi concernant les frais de livraison de nourriture et de boissons.

#### SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I understand the government House leader has a point of order.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding ASL services during statements by the ministry and responses.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding ASL services during statements by the ministry and responses. Agreed? Agreed.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I move that a sign-language interpreter may be present on the floor of the chamber today to interpret statements by the ministry and responses, and that broadcasting and recording services be permitted to incorporate the interpreter into the camera shot where possible.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Calandra has moved that a sign-language interpreter may be present on the floor of the chamber today to interpret statements by the ministry and responses, and that broadcasting and recording services be permitted to incorporate the interpreter into the camera shot where possible.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Motion agreed to.*

#### REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

##### STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

**Mr. Kaled Rasheed:** I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

**The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short):** Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Eating Disorders Awareness Week / Projet de loi 61, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sensibilisation aux troubles de l'alimentation.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

*Report adopted.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### PARYA TRILLIUM FOUNDATION ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2020

Mr. Kanapathi moved first reading of the following bill: Bill Pr37, An Act respecting the Parya Trillium Foundation

**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):** Pursuant to standing order 89, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

## STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

### INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho:** I'm honoured to rise to mark the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3. It is a time to celebrate accomplishments, and to promote the rights and well-being of people with disabilities. It is also an opportunity to increase awareness of the barriers that people with disabilities face in their daily lives, and to recognize that it is everyone's shared responsibility to help bring these barriers down.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has presented unique and difficult challenges for everyone, it has particularly affected people with disabilities and seniors.

Our government has moved swiftly to provide targeted supports for people with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes extending our partnership with the Ontario Community Support Association, providing deliveries of food, medicine and other essentials to people with disabilities and seniors.

Mr. Speaker, we know that 2.6 million Ontarians currently live with a disability, and, while some of these disabilities are visible, many are also invisible. This is why our government is dedicated to helping create a society and economy that is more accessible and inclusive for

everyone. One of the ways we are doing this is through our framework called Advancing Accessibility in Ontario, which is designed to help focus the government's work in four key areas: (1) breaking down barriers in the built environment; (2) ensuring our government is leading by example in its role as a policy-maker, service provider and employer; (3) increasing participation in the economy for people with disabilities; and (4) improving understanding and awareness about accessibility.

Mr. Speaker, collaboration is key in moving Ontario towards our goal of being more open and accessible for everyone. That is why we are working with partners in the disability community, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and the broader public sector to increase accessibility through our many programs and partnerships.

Now more than ever, it is vital for all of us to do our part to identify and help remove barriers to accessibility, working to ensure that our communities are inclusive for everyone. When communities and businesses are more accessible, everyone benefits. People with disabilities can take part in everyday life, and businesses gain potential talent, customers and higher profits. This is especially important as we move together to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. When we work together, we create a stronger and more resilient Ontario.

Our government is proud of the contributions of the skills and talents of Ontarians with disabilities, Mr. Speaker, and we thank them for strengthening our economy and communities.

**1510**

That is why I rose in the House a few weeks ago to speak about National Disability Employment Awareness Month and our ongoing work to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Our government is committed to helping improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It is both good social policy and economic policy. We know that when we provide targeted training, developed in conjunction with those who need talented employees, we can build a stronger and more resilient province. This is key to not only surviving the COVID-19 pandemic but to setting us on the path to emerging stronger and more united afterwards.

I would like to thank everyone who is doing their part to advance accessibility and inclusion in their businesses and communities.

As we recognize the International Day of Persons with Disabilities tomorrow, I invite my MPP colleagues to join us as we work to bring positive change to the daily lives of people with disabilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also, I would like to thank the great interpreter for their good work.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I will ask for responses to the statement.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** Thank you, Minister, for those remarks.

It's an honour to rise today on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. On this day and every day, we have to remember that Ontario has human rights

obligations to people with disabilities, codified under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act passed in this place, the goal of which is to make Ontario completely accessible by 2025. Speaker, as David Lepofsky, probably one of Ontario's best disability rights advocates, often says, today is actually everyone's day, because if you're not disabled now, pretty soon you're going to be. That's just the nature of life. So disability rights are actually for everyone.

With that in mind, Speaker, I have some things to raise as Ontario's critic for people with disabilities. They're serious, and I hope the government is listening, I hope my colleagues across the aisle are listening, I hope the media is listening, and I hope folks tuning in at home are listening. As we all know, we're living in a pandemic, and this pandemic has hit people with disabilities and their loved ones and their caregivers particularly hard, and there are some urgent questions that people have asked me to raise here today.

They begin with an announcement on March 28 of this year, when a draft critical care triage protocol was discussed publicly in this province that evoked great concern amongst disability rights organizations. When they read words like medical professionals must make quality-of-life assumptions, or they must evaluate potential patients on a frailty scale, what disability rights organizations read into that is that if you have a disability and if our tertiary care institutions and our hospitals are overwhelmed, you might rank lower on a triage protocol list, in the event that our system is overwhelmed by this pandemic. That sent, as you can imagine, Speaker, shock waves through the disability rights communities, and they got in touch with me right away and they got in touch with a number of us, I'm sure.

We've had nine months of debate since that draft triage protocol was announced, and I'm happy to say that the Minister of Health and her parliamentary assistant have both said that it was not a reflection of what this government wanted; it was a draft.

But through you, Speaker, I ask the question to all of us in this House: Where did this draft come from? Where did the words around quality of life and a frailty scale come from? I don't want to assign them to any one human being. I think it's a systemic issue that we are still working on in the year 2020, where sometimes we look at folks in our province who are otherwise abled and we have value judgments attached to them. In moments like this, in a pandemic, that's when they are really tested.

On April 8, I joined a number of organizations in this province and co-wrote a letter to the Premier, to the Minister of Health and to my friend the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility asking for an explanation. After nine months of constructive troublemaking, we got a response on November 5, when the parliamentary assistant said, "We've clarified this. We passed on a letter from the top decision-making health tables of this province, clarifying to clinical leads across the province that those are not at all reflective of what we will do in the event of a pandemic."

But I have asked and disability rights advocates have asked since then, what is the plan? This is an urgent question, because we're right now living in a moment when we're seeing 1,700 and 1,800 new COVID-19 cases a day. The particular milestone that many epidemiologists wanted us to focus on, when we reached over 150 ICU critical care cases, was the moment when we were starting to have that debate about our institutions being overwhelmed. My newspaper this morning told me we're at 184.

People with disabilities want an answer from our friends in government. What is the critical COVID-19 triage protocol? In the United States, it's clear, state by state: First responders get the vaccine first, for example, and they get treatment first, and then otherwise immunocompromised people come next, people with disabilities and seniors. We need that answer now, my friends, and I beg you to offer it to us. Today would be a perfect day.

I want to end also by noting that we are having a vaccine debate in this country and in this province. I'm happy to see that the government has hired a competent military professional to head this up, but I ask all of us and I ask our friends in the media, quite frankly, to be asking retired General Hillier, what is our vaccine policy? Who will be getting this vaccine? I can tell you, the people who are immunocompromised want to know that they are going to be safe. I think our province needs to give them an answer, and I hope that answer can come soon.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Thank you to the minister for his remarks.

I am pleased to rise today on this International Day of Persons with Disabilities. I happen to have close relationships with people with disabilities, and I understand and hope that everyone understands the importance to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

These people want and need to participate fully in society without barriers. However, every day, persons with disabilities in this province are more likely to face barriers in accessing health care, education, employment and in participating fully in their communities.

For those living with disabilities that are not immediately apparent, such as mental illness, chronic pain and hearing impairments, among others, these barriers can be less obvious. Understanding what constitutes a disability can help us put measures in place to accommodate accessibility needs.

Living costs are rising, housing has become less and less affordable, and despite progress, infrastructure is still lacking adequate standards of accessibility.

Ce qui est pire, c'est que cette pandémie a aggravé les inégalités préexistantes, considérablement accru les obligations financières, et certaines personnes et familles sont désormais confrontées à la ruine financière.

La véritable inclusion des personnes handicapées passe par des progrès durables et transformateurs, mais je n'ai pas vu la volonté de ce gouvernement de faire ce travail. Je note d'ailleurs qu'un geste simple mais significatif serait d'ajouter le langage des signes francophone, LSQ,

lorsque l'utilisation du ASL est faite en Chambre, en respect des personnes sourdes francophones. Je suis heureuse de voir que la ministre des Affaires francophones est ici pour entendre ma requête.

Il est clair que nos programmes et services pour appuyer de façon adéquate les Ontariens et Ontariennes avec des handicaps doivent être mis à jour. J'ai fait part de mes préoccupations à propos du Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées à plusieurs reprises en Chambre. Cette population était déjà mal desservie, mais beaucoup souffrent plus que jamais.

1520

La prestation d'urgence du début de cette année était bienvenue, mais difficile d'accès et insuffisante. Le manque de soutien aux personnes handicapées tout au long de cette pandémie a été extrêmement décourageant. Alors que nous envisageons de nous remettre de cette pandémie, le moment est idéal pour enfin apporter des changements devenus nécessaires dans plusieurs secteurs.

As the United Nations puts it, we currently have the opportunity to build back better, toward a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID-19 world.

What is this government doing to consult with Ontarians living with disabilities and their representative organizations? Is there work being done to understand where support can be improved and make those changes?

On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I urge this government to listen to Ontarians living with disabilities and commit to doing more to support them.

## PETITIONS

### SOCIAL SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J'aimerais remercier M<sup>me</sup> Miriam Bals de Hanmer dans mon comté pour les pétitions.

"Petition to stop the unlawful practice of social work in Ontario by unregulated and unregistered ... workers...:

"Whereas many children and their families have been and continue to be adversely affected by the actions of CAS youth protection workers who are engaged in the practice of social work but not as registered as social workers ... with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers ... and still have immunity under the Child, Youth and Family Services Act...; and

"Whereas unregulated and unregistered CAS workers are entering schools, detaining children and violating the rights of children and parents ... the right to life, liberty and security of the persons as well as the right not to be detained; and

"Whereas in order to protect the public, the Social Work and Social Service Work Act ... requires that all persons engaged in the practice of social work in the province of Ontario must be registered with the Ontario

College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers...; and

"Whereas the college has a duty ... to regulate the practice of social work in Ontario to protect the public interest and that the college's important role is 'protecting the Ontario public from harm caused by incompetent, unqualified or unfit practitioners';

"Whereas the unlawful practice of social work ... is causing significant harm to children and families, bringing disrepute to the profession of social work and is undermining the administration of justice and the rule of law;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the government of Ontario take steps to ensure that all CAS workers in the province of Ontario who are engaged in the practice of social work be required to be in compliance with the Social Work and Social Service Work Act ... and to be registered with the college as is now required under existing legislation."

Thank you, Speaker. I will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Mr. Mike Harris:** This petition is entitled "Recognize Our Cadets by Passing the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act, 2020.

"To the Legislature Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas army, sea and air cadets are some of the best ... youth" of our province; "and

"Whereas the young men and women of Canada's cadets volunteer and serve their communities with honour and distinction; and

"Whereas their development and service within our community are admirable and should be emulated; and

"Whereas their teamwork, dedication, and discipline are qualities worthy of recognition; and

"Whereas the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act, if passed, would create an annual award for a nominated cadet from within each local cadet corps to celebrate their remarkable acts of citizenship;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act."

I do support this petition, have affixed my signature and will pass it to the usher.

### FRONT-LINE WORKERS

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I have a petition entitled "Stop the PSW Shortage in Home Care.

"Whereas there has been a shortage of personal support workers (PSWs) in home care for many years, creating a crisis situation;

"Whereas PSWs in home care are overworked, underpaid, and underappreciated, leading to a staffing shortage which harms both PSWs and their clients;



“Whereas the PSW profession has been undervalued by the government and should become a viable profession once again;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to give all PSWs in Ontario a significant pay increase which recognizes the value of their work, give PSWs longer shifts, and create more opportunities for full-time advancement.”

I fully support this. I will sign it and send it to the Clerks.

#### RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

**Mrs. Amy Fee:** I have a petition entitled “Food Delivery Charges.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas currently, fees placed on restaurants by food delivery companies can reach as high as 30% in Ontario; and

“Whereas food delivery services have become lifelines for restaurants and their employees, who in many cases have seen traffic plummet by 90%; and

“Whereas our government has repeatedly called on food delivery companies to do their part and work with restaurants to help the restaurant industry through COVID-19 by instituting fees that are fair to the restaurants they depend on;

“Whereas by working with restaurants and delivery companies, we believe we have reached a commission cap that will help out small restaurants while ensuring delivery drivers are protected and consumers continue to have access to these apps;

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

“Pass the Supporting Local Restaurants Act, 2020, before the end of the fall 2020 legislative session so that food delivery fees are temporarily reduced to help support Ontario’s small and independent restaurants, sustain the vitality of our main streets and communities, and protect local jobs.”

Mr. Speaker, I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and submit it to the table.

#### FRONT-LINE WORKERS

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Thomas Forget for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Make PSW a Career...;

“Whereas there has been a shortage of personal support workers ... in long-term care and home care in Ontario for many years;

“Whereas Ontario’s personal support workers are overworked, underpaid and underappreciated, leading to many of them leaving the profession;

“Whereas the lack of” personal support workers “has created a crisis in” long-term care, “a broken home care system, and poor-quality care for” long-term-care “home residents and home care clients;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Tell Premier Ford to act now to make PSW jobs a career, with full-time employment, good wages, paid sick days, benefits, a pension plan and a manageable workload in order to respect the important work of PSWs and improve patient care.”

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** My petition is entitled “Pass Bill 215, Main Street Recovery Act, 2020.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s downtown businesses have experienced much of the negative economic impact of COVID-19; and

“Whereas our downtown businesses are small mom-and-pop shops, employ local citizens and invest in our communities; and

“Whereas our main street businesses have faced unique challenges through the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“Whereas in that same vein, these businesses face particular challenges such as costs associated with acquiring personal protective equipment and expanding their e-commerce capabilities; and

“Whereas if passed, the Main Street Recovery Act, 2020 would offer a grant of up to \$1,000 for eligible main street small businesses, connect them with Ontario’s 47 small business enterprise centres, help them grow their businesses online, and establish Ontario’s small business recovery web page to provide single-window access to small business supports;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass Bill 215, the Main Street Recovery Act.”

I support this petition. I will give it to the usher.

1530

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mrs. Lisa Gretzky:** I have a petition here entitled “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.” I’d like to thank the optometrist who sent it in and Brooke Duquette from my riding, who have signed it.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition, will sign it and send it to the Clerks.

#### ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** “Petition for the Next Phase of Ontario’s Action Plan.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas nobody knows for certain what direction the pandemic will take or what direction our economy will take. We need to be prepared for anything; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve transparency about the public finances—especially given these extraordinary circumstances; and

“Whereas there are countless examples around the world of jurisdictions who have let their guard down and who are paying a steep price. Our government is determined to avoid those mistakes;

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

“Pass Bill 229, the Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020, so that:

—funding is provided to hospitals to make sure they have the resources they need to protect Ontarians;

—jobs and businesses are supported by putting at least \$200 in the hands of every parent and creating a new tax credit to help make the homes where seniors live safer;

—property taxes and job-killing electricity prices for the businesses that create jobs across Ontario are reduced.”

I fully support the petition, will affix my signature hereto and provide it to the Clerk.

#### ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have a petition that comes from youth all over Ontario. It’s called “No More Smoking in Kids’ Movies.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-

screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least” 33,000 “lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A...;

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act via cabinet;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I fully agree with this petition, Speaker, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

#### VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARDS

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** This petition is called “Recognizing our Cadets by Passing the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act, 2020.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas army, sea and air cadets are some of the best youth” of our province; “and

“Whereas the young men and women of Canada’s cadets volunteer and serve their communities with honour and distinction; and

“Whereas their development and service within our community are admirable and should be emulated; and

“Whereas their teamwork, dedication and discipline are qualities worthy of recognition; and

“Whereas the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act, if passed, would create an annual award for a nominated cadet from within each local cadet corps to celebrate their remarkable acts of citizenship;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Cadet Citizenship Recognition Act.”

I fully support this petition, I put my signature and I’ll pass it to the Clerk.

#### DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** J’aimerais remercier Marcia Marsh de Hanmer dans mon comté pour ces pétitions.

Les « Accents en français sur les cartes de santé de l’Ontario....

« Alors qu’il est important d’avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement » de l’Ontario, telle « la carte santé...;

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l’épellation de leur nom;

« Alors que ... le ministère de la Santé » nous a « confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « pour qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario, » et ce, « avant le 31 décembre 2020. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je l'envoie à la table des greffiers.

#### ECONOMIC REOPENING AND RECOVERY

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas nobody knows for certain what direction the pandemic will take or what direction our economy will take. We need to be prepared for anything; and

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve transparency about the public finances—especially given these extraordinary circumstances; and

“Whereas there are countless examples around the world of jurisdictions who have let their guard down and who are paying a steep price. Our government is determined to avoid those mistakes;

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

“Pass Bill 229, the Protect, Support and Recover from COVID-19 Act (Budget Measures), 2020, so that:

—funding is provided to hospitals to make sure they have the resources they need to protect Ontarians;

—jobs and businesses are supported by putting at least \$200 in the hands of every parent and creating a new tax credit to help make the homes where seniors live safer;

—property taxes and job-killing electricity prices for the businesses that create jobs across Ontario are reduced.”

I will affix my signature and pass it to the usher.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes the time we have for petitions this afternoon.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### ONTARIO REBUILDING AND RECOVERY ACT, 2020

##### LOI DE 2020 SUR LA RECONSTRUCTION ET LA RELANCE EN ONTARIO

Ms. Mulroney moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 222, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of transportation-related matters / Projet de loi 222, Loi modifiant diverses lois à l'égard de questions relatives au transport.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Caroline Mulroney:** Thank you, Speaker. I will be splitting my time with the Associate Minister of Transportation.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise in the House today to discuss in more detail the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of transportation-related matters. If passed, this bill contains both legislative and policy measures that would accelerate the planning, design and construction of critical infrastructure projects that will support jobs while laying the foundation for a robust economic recovery.

Our government is building better-connected highways and investing in the construction of world-class public transit networks, creating transit-oriented communities to support the increased availability of affordable housing. These are the types of projects that the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act, if passed, would support by getting shovels in the ground faster so that we can take meaningful steps to improve people's lives across every corner of this province.

Ontario had an infrastructure deficit long before the COVID-19 pandemic. This lack of investment led to deteriorating infrastructure, which weakened product pathways, resulting in higher costs, decreased productivity and fewer jobs. That's why it's time to build smarter and faster. We cannot afford delay. How we act now will be critical to narrowing the infrastructure gap and ensuring a strong economic recovery in our province.

#### 1540

Despite the challenges that we face today, our government has not wavered from our commitment to transit expansion and infrastructure investments. Because we're building more than just infrastructure. We are setting the conditions for the people, businesses and communities of Ontario to emerge strong from this pandemic.

From day one, our government has been focused on the health and well-being of the people of Ontario. This will never change.

Speaker, we never could have predicted the impacts of this pandemic. Our lives have been turned upside down. The economic impacts have shown us just how devastating this pandemic has been—and Ontario's transportation sector has been hit as hard as any.

With Canada's annual gross domestic product expected to contract by 6.2% this year, the global economy will likely experience its worst recession since the Great Depression. This startling decline has translated into substantial job losses across many sectors.

To put this into context, between 2018 and February 2020, employment in Ontario grew steadily, increasing from about 7.2 million to about 7.6 million. Then, this virus caused Ontario's employment levels to decline by almost 1.2 million between February and May of this year. These job losses represent the largest three-month employment decline on record, and the province's unemployment rate is not expected to return to pre-pandemic levels until after 2022.

But you don't need to hear me list off any more statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because we

live it every day. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is real, and it is everywhere. Despite all the pain and loss that we have faced this year, I know Ontarians across the province are doing their part, and I am so grateful for that.

Alors que nous tournons notre regard des défis immédiats de la pandémie vers notre reprise économique à long terme, nous savons que le chemin vers une reprise complète sera long. Mais nous avons un plan pour remettre l'économie de la province sur les rails.

Dans le cadre du Plan d'action de l'Ontario pour la protection, le soutien et la relance à long terme élaboré par notre gouvernement, nous devons moderniser notre façon de réaliser d'importants projets d'infrastructure afin de créer des emplois et de relancer la croissance dont nous avons besoin pour alimenter notre reprise économique. Il ne s'agit pas seulement de regagner ce que nous avons perdu. Le gouvernement actuel s'efforcera de faire de l'Ontario le meilleur endroit au monde où vivre, travailler et élever une famille.

C'est un message adressé à la population de l'Ontario : nous allons reconstruire, nous allons nous remettre sur pied, et nous sortirons de cette période de turbulence plus forts que jamais.

I am so proud of our government's swift actions to support Ontario's transportation partners, stakeholders and the public. We advocated hard for Ontario's municipalities. Premier Ford led the negotiations with the federal government that led to the historic Safe Restart Agreement, which will see up to \$4 billion in urgently needed assistance. That includes up to \$2 billion to support struggling municipal transit systems, which is in addition to the millions in funding we provided to help them implement enhanced cleaning measures. This funding is good news for Ontario's transit systems that, throughout the course of the year, worked tirelessly to ensure that workers were able to get to work and home and to their families safely.

These are the kinds of collaborative efforts that people expect of all levels of government in the response to this virus.

We also introduced the COVID-19 Economic Recovery Act, which supports our government's efforts to restart jobs and to create opportunities for people and to strengthen communities.

We know that hard-working Ontarians are eager to get back to work and that small businesses are counting on us to help them get back on their feet. That's why the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction introduced the Main Street Recovery Act. If passed, this bill would help small businesses meet today's challenges by modernizing or removing outdated, costly and duplicative regulations, making it easier for families and businesses to succeed in Ontario.

These are just a few of the many actions our government has taken to chart a path to economic recovery. As we continue down this path, we are committed to getting people back on their feet to ensure our renewed success.

I think we can all agree that Ontario's economy and the health and well-being of its people go hand in hand. We must address both together.

Throughout history, we've seen how infrastructure development can be used as an effective tool in a government's response to economic shocks.

Back in the recession of 2008-09, Canada's economic actions included increased spending and tax cuts, all designed to curb the effects of a worldwide economic downturn.

In the wake of World War II, renewed public sector investment in infrastructure and other measures designed to stimulate growth resurrected the world economy.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal represented the largest infrastructure program undertaken in American history, and it brought their economy back from the Great Depression.

Mr. Speaker, history has shown us that when we face a seemingly insurmountable challenge, we can come together to build a better future. In 2020, just as it was in 2008 or the 1940s and the 1920s, infrastructure continues to be the key to answering these challenges.

I've said this before in this House and I will say it again: It's time to get Ontario building.

Si elle est adoptée, la Loi de 2020 sur la reconstruction et la relance en Ontario est une nouvelle étape dans notre cheminement pour favoriser la croissance, le renouveau et la relance à long terme de la province.

Alors que nous continuons à prendre des mesures pour protéger la santé et la sécurité de la population, nous devons trouver les moyens de faire en sorte que d'importants projets d'infrastructure puissent démarrer sans délai. Ces projets créent des emplois bien rémunérés et permettent de mieux relier les collectivités par le réseau routier, les transports en commun et les réseaux à large bande. Ce sont des projets comme ceux-ci qui redonnent vie à notre économie. C'est ainsi que nous nous rassemblerons pour relever les défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés et prendre notre avenir en main.

Our government is taking a different approach to infrastructure. We will build at the best price for taxpayers and make smart, targeted investments that will last for generations.

**1550**

Ontario's population is expected to grow by about 30% over the next 20 years and our infrastructure needs to grow with it. That's why our government has put forward the most ambitious infrastructure plan in the province's history. Our 10-year, nearly \$143-billion infrastructure plan will ensure that Ontario is ready for the future. Speaker, \$62 billion of that is for public transit. That's nearly half of our entire infrastructure plan, to bring improved service to communities, address congestion and provide more sustainable, convenient and affordable travel options for millions. It includes more than \$20 billion for roads to expand and improve our highway network, to connect communities better and to help people and goods travel more efficiently and safely across our province; and billions more for new hospitals and health projects, schools and post-secondary institutions, social and justice infrastructure and much, much more.

La pandémie de la COVID-19 rend l'accélération de ces projets encore plus cruciale, non seulement pour l'économie, mais aussi pour les communautés qui bénéficieront de ces investissements.

Le moment est venu d'agir avec audace, de guider notre reprise et de jeter de nouvelles bases pour une prospérité durable. Et si la reprise économique est une priorité absolue pour notre gouvernement, ce n'est pas la seule raison pour laquelle il est vital d'investir dans les infrastructures, en particulier ici dans la région du grand Toronto.

Projects like our \$28.5-billion new subway transit plan for the GTA will transform the region's transit system into a modern, integrated rapid transit network.

These four projects will increase access to transit in new neighbourhoods, reduce gridlock and emissions, and make it easier to get around the GTA. The construction of these transit lines will also support up to 20,000 jobs. Our priority transit lines will help us meet the needs of the region's growing population, and they will provide jobs that will support our post-pandemic economic recovery.

I am so proud of what we've been able to accomplish in the short time that we have been in office. I could highlight many other examples, because our bold approach isn't limited to public transit.

We know that Ontario's provincial highway network is the lifeblood of our economy and holds our communities together. Our investments in highway projects generate construction jobs across the province. That's why our government has allocated \$2.6 billion in 2020-21 alone to rehabilitate and expand Ontario's highways and bridges across the province. Projects like the widening of Highway 401 between London and Tilbury or widening Highway 17 from Arnprior to Renfrew will support our economic recovery and improve those highways for the thousands of drivers and businesses who use them every day.

There is no time to lose as we move quickly to make bold investments in infrastructure to revive our economy.

Mr. Speaker, all of the funding that I've mentioned today will help address Ontario's decades-long infrastructure deficit that has seen our municipalities struggle to keep up with repairs to critical infrastructure like roads, sewers, hospitals and more.

I want to take a moment to remind everyone about the details of the three legislative proposals within the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act.

First, we are proposing amendments to the Building Transit Faster Act, which came into force in July, introducing measures that accelerate and streamline project delivery of our four priority transit projects in the GTA. The proposed amendments in this legislation enable the extension of these measures, as appropriate, to other provincial transit projects by providing regulation-making authority to name such projects. This would help ensure that Metrolinx can apply a clear and consistent legislative tool kit across various projects as we work to accelerate their delivery. It would help expedite project delivery by providing a backstop measure if we cannot achieve agreement with our partners.

Second, to support the accelerated and streamlined delivery of provincial highway projects, we are proposing amendments to the Public Service Works on Highways Act for provisions related to the relocation of utilities on highway projects. These changes would add a provision for a court order if negotiations with a utility company become stalled and a utility company fails to comply with a direction to relocate, just like the measures that exist within the Building Transit Faster Act.

Third, we are proposing to extend through regulation the measures contained in the Transit-Oriented Communities Act to other provincial transit projects, including GO rail expansion and light rail transit projects, such as the Hurontario LRT. These amendments would allow our government to delegate authority to Metrolinx and other public bodies to enter into new types of commercial arrangements for transit-oriented communities as part of new provincial transit projects.

If passed, the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act will give us the tools that we need to clearly and quickly communicate to municipalities and potential partners to speed up the delivery of transit-oriented communities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear that these proposed measures are intended to be backstop measures only to help prevent significant delays if we cannot reach an agreement with our partners. Our government remains committed to a collaboration-first approach with municipalities, Indigenous communities and organizations, utility companies, the private sector and others. I think that our achievements over the past few years demonstrate our desire to work well with our partners to achieve our shared objectives that will improve the lives of Ontarians.

Finally, I will say a few words about some of the proposal's non-legislative elements.

Last year, our government committed \$315 million over five years to expand and improve Internet and cell service in more unserved and underserved communities. This pandemic has shown how critical these services are for millions of families and businesses. That's why our Broadband and Cellular Action Plan, led by the Minister of Infrastructure, supports efforts to identify and remove policy and regulatory barriers to broadband infrastructure deployment. To that end, the Ministry of Infrastructure is funding the expansion of broadband in communities of need across the province. It will be identifying policy levers that support more private sector investments to accelerate broadband expansion, so we can get more people, businesses and communities the Internet and cell service they need to succeed and thrive in the post-pandemic world.

Our government is working hard to build a healthy community housing system that supports our most vulnerable citizens. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be taking steps to help expedite municipal infrastructure projects to support our efforts. He will be consulting with municipalities on the best ways to do that, including by potentially granting and delegating additional powers to municipalities to accelerate the delivery of local infrastructure projects. Cutting red tape will bring these

projects to market faster, leading to lower housing costs and helping people keep more of their hard-earned dollars.  
**1600**

After inheriting 15 years of underinvestment in long-term care, our government is also looking to jump-start the development of long-term-care beds across the province. To do this, the Minister of Long-Term Care will be exploring ways to increase the availability and affordability of land and to accelerate municipal approvals for long-term-care-home development. That's why we are proposing to leverage existing legislative tools, such as the enhanced minister's zoning orders, to help address zoning, land availability and site plan approval concerns for priority long-term-care-home development. We're speeding up the development of modern long-term-care homes, providing seniors with the quality care that they deserve, and ensuring our most vulnerable citizens can enjoy the highest quality of life possible.

We'll need a strong skilled trades and professional workforce to achieve our ambitious goals. We know the demand for workers in the trades will only increase as the province continues down the path of renewal, growth and economic recovery. That's why the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development is working to help workers and employers increase apprentice registration and training opportunities through these significant infrastructure projects. Our plan will help people acquire the skills that they need to find good jobs and make Ontario stronger for decades to come.

Since introducing the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act and other pieces of legislation that accelerate the province's major infrastructure projects, the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

At public hearings last month, we heard valuable feedback from people and businesses from across Ontario.

One thing is clear: People are passionate and care very deeply about ensuring that Ontario strikes the right balance as we work to set the right conditions for Ontario's economic recovery.

LiUNA, the Labourers' International Union of North America, said our "investments in rebuilding the province will create the jobs we need today, while providing the modern infrastructure we need for tomorrow." They understand that investments in public infrastructure are proven agents of job creation and that, as they put it, "Ontario is the heart of Canada's economy."

If we are to compete globally, we must build a seamlessly connected transportation network that gets people to work on time, food to our grocery stores and essential supplies to our hospitals and long-term-care homes, and brings families together.

In comments submitted by the Ontario Home Builders' Association, they applauded our plan. They highlighted, "For years [they've] stated that the approvals process and timelines for both new housing and major infrastructure projects are far too long, cumbersome, uncertain and expensive."

Decades of red tape have directly contributed to our housing supply shortage and transit infrastructure deficiencies. Eliminating red tape will allow us to quickly

deliver public infrastructure projects that will enable Ontario families to spend more time together and less time travelling.

Another key theme that we heard was the importance of collaboration with municipalities and other partners on all projects. We know that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to Ontario's transportation and transit infrastructure. Every community has unique needs, and it is critical that we recognize and we respond to those through the planning and the construction of these projects.

So far, many municipalities have expressed their overall support of this proposed legislation, which is very encouraging. We remain committed to working with them closely to deliver the right infrastructure for their communities. And we remain committed to working with Metrolinx to ensure that they are a good neighbour while they are in these communities working on these projects.

It is not enough to just deliver better transit and services for people. Our infrastructure investments should also support the communities surrounding these projects. They should create local employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities.

To put us on the right path forward, our government is investing in and expanding skilled labour programs and training across the province—bringing in more local skilled labour to help deliver these ambitious transit projects.

La pandémie de la COVID-19 signifie que nous ne pouvons pas nous permettre d'attendre la relance économique qui accompagne la construction des grandes infrastructures. Ce moment exige que nous prenions rapidement des mesures pour que nos investissements dans les infrastructures publiques soutiennent notre compétitivité économique.

Nous tirons des leçons du passé, et nous nous tournons vers les infrastructures pour stimuler l'économie et nous protéger des chocs économiques à venir, because history reminds us that in the midst of economic upheaval, it is incumbent on government to act boldly and decisively.

The Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act will help drive our stimulus plan. If passed, this proposed legislation will streamline and accelerate our strategic investments in infrastructure.

I want to thank the Associate Minister of Transportation for being the advocate we need to get transit built for people across the GTA.

I also want to thank my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough—Rouge Park, for his support as we work together to build the foundation for Ontario's strong economic recovery.

Under the Premier's leadership, we are laying this groundwork to ensure that infrastructure projects can take off without further delays. This is how we will create good jobs across the province, ensure that communities are better connected by road and by transit, and contribute to a strong economic recovery for every part of our province.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Because you had shared your time, I recognize the Associate Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** It's an honour to rise once again in the House to talk about the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act. Before I begin, I would like to take a minute to recognize and thank the Minister of Transportation for all of her work to develop, introduce and move this proposed legislation forward. I know the Minister of Transportation and I are both very passionate about this proposed act and its potential to help our province recover from this pandemic and set Ontario up for future success. I cannot overstate its importance.

Accelerating our major infrastructure projects is desperately needed. Red tape has held up our infrastructure projects for far too long, especially when it comes to transportation. People are paying the price in the precious minutes being added to their commutes, affecting their quality of life, and our economy is paying the price in lost productivity and other devastating costs of congestion.

We have done a tremendous amount of work, research and consultation to understand the barriers that have caused delays in the past, and much more work to identify ways that those roadblocks can be removed and how our processes can be streamlined without changing outcomes, relaxing environmental protection or sacrificing consultation. We saw that with the Building Transit Faster Act. And we have spoken a lot about how well that legislation was received by our many industry partners and other stakeholders.

We're building on that momentum with the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act. If passed, this legislation will apply these very same principles to other provincial infrastructure projects—modernizing outdated approaches and enabling communities to benefit from our investments sooner. We'll be able to get shovels in the ground faster on major projects that will better connect our communities, create thousands of jobs, provide more housing, and generate more opportunities for local businesses.

**1610**

I think we can all agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has created an added sense of urgency. As the Minister of Transportation has already explained, our economy is suffering. And beyond that, this past year has been so difficult in so many other ways for the people of Ontario. With necessary restrictions being enacted in more parts of the province as we go up against the second wave of the virus, it has only emphasized that our fight is far from over. There is light at the end of the tunnel, but I know that the next few months will continue to present serious hardships for so many.

Our government has a responsibility to do whatever we can to get people back to work safely and get Ontario back on track. This legislation, if passed, will do exactly that. By accelerating our major projects, we'll create jobs and help stimulate our economy faster, getting us on the path to recovery quicker. I have every confidence that we will soon get Ontario back to being an economic powerhouse.

As tragic as this pandemic has been, many have pointed out that it has also presented an opportunity to rethink the way we have done things in the past to emerge stronger than we were before. So many of our processes have gone

unchanged for so long, and we were stuck in the past in so many ways. Surely, we can be a lot more efficient with taxpayer dollars. That's one of the main reasons our infrastructure deficit has been growing steadily and falling further and further behind our population growth.

The time has come to take bold steps. We must make real changes that will put shovels in the ground faster. It can't be an ambition any longer; it must become a reality.

That's exactly what we are proposing with the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act. It's a more modern approach, and if passed, it will enable us to deliver the modern infrastructure that is so badly needed.

Mr. Speaker, since I've had the honour of becoming the Associate Minister of Transportation, everyone here today has heard me talk a lot about our government's commitment to public transit. From the day we were elected, we've made it clear that one of our top priorities was to deliver a better public transit network for the greater Toronto area—a network that people would be proud to compare with other world-class cities.

But over the past year, a lot of people have been asking us whether this pandemic has changed our outlook. Does it still make sense to prioritize public transit, or are people turning back to their cars? Given the huge drops in ridership we've seen across transit systems in Ontario this year, it certainly is a very fair question. But I would like to be clear: Public transit is critical to the future success of Ontario, and this pandemic hasn't changed that. If anything, COVID-19 has made us even more resolute in our commitment to deliver on our ambitious transit plan.

These past months, we've seen just how important public transit is for so many of Ontario's front-line and essential workers, who have been relying on it to get to work each and every single day. They need and deserve a more convenient, reliable transit network.

I want to take this opportunity to again recognize the tremendous efforts of everyone who works for a transit agency here in Ontario. Their efforts to keep people moving throughout this pandemic have been nothing short of heroic, and I think we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

And yes, ridership has dropped significantly. But Ontario will soon emerge from this pandemic, and when we do, people will come back to public transit. It will always remain a safe, affordable and sustainable option for people to get around, and if we can make it more convenient and better connected, we'll see even more people choosing public transit as their first choice.

Now is not the time to slow down our progress or investments in public transit—quite the opposite. We need to keep our momentum going.

We have made unprecedented progress on our transit goals since our government was elected.

As you all know, the Premier unveiled our government's \$28.5-billion new subway transit plan for the GTA in April 2019.

The Ontario Line, a brand new 15.5-kilometre subway, will double the city's previously proposed downtown relief line length, bringing rapid transit to new neighbourhoods and slashing commute times. It will deliver a

state-of-the-art subway in Ontario with the highest degree of automation, on par with subway systems in Paris, Copenhagen and Barcelona—amongst the best in the world.

The Yonge North subway extension, expanding from Finch station to Richmond Hill Centre, will deliver a much-needed and long-awaited rapid transit connection to York region.

The Eglinton Crosstown West extension will provide better transit connections for the people in Etobicoke and Mississauga and enable potential future expansion to Toronto Pearson International Airport, one of Ontario's largest employment centres.

And the three-stop Scarborough subway extension will finally deliver equal transit service for the people of Scarborough, who have been waiting for so long.

It is the most ambitious subway expansion plan in Canadian history. When it was unveiled, we heard the comments right away from those who said it couldn't be done. "Just more lines on a map," they said; we couldn't possibly deliver it. Well, Mr. Speaker, April 2019 was only a year and a half ago. When you consider that it has only been a little over 18 months since that plan was unveiled, we have already come so far.

We've collaborated with our municipal partners and have successfully negotiated preliminary agreements with the city of Toronto and York region, giving us a clear path forward on these projects. I've already mentioned all the work that went into the Building Transit Faster Act, which came into force earlier this year, marking another significant achievement that will help expedite the planning, design and construction processes for the four priority transit projects.

Mr. Speaker, we've moved forward with procurement on three of the four projects already.

In March, we announced the start of procurement on the first phase of construction and tunnelling work for the three-stop Scarborough extension and the underground Eglinton Crosstown West extension. These requests for qualifications were issued right before we saw the first wave of COVID-19. We heard from the market that more time was needed for teams to submit their bids on time. We listened, and that led to a qualified slate of shortlisted teams being announced in the summer.

In August, we took another step forward by inviting those teams to respond to our requests for proposals and provide details on how they plan to design and deliver the tunnelling work for each project. Once those proposals are received, they will be evaluated by Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx, and the contracts for tunnelling are expected to be awarded midway through next year. Mr. Speaker, that's not too far away.

That brings me to the Ontario Line. At the start of June, our government issued the first two of three separate requests for qualifications, to identify and qualify the short list of those who will design, build, finance and maintain this line. Shortlisted teams will soon be invited to respond to a request for proposals.

## 1620

In the meantime, Metrolinx has been actively engaging with local communities and releasing more details on the proposed route of the Ontario Line through their neighbourhood updates on the Metrolinx Engage portal.

Of course, we haven't forgotten about the Yonge North extension. Our recent preliminary agreement with York region was a great step forward. Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario are teaming up with long-standing municipal and regional partners to deliver the Yonge North subway extension in the most effective and efficient way possible. We are incorporating transit expertise from the York Region Rapid Transit Corp., York region municipalities, the city of Toronto and the TTC to find innovative solutions at every turn. And the planning and design work started by our partners has set our team up for success.

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 has thrown at us, we have made progress on these important projects, and that work will continue.

Our progress on transit has not been limited to our subway projects. We continue to make progress on other major projects across the GTA.

The Hurontario LRT is another great example of a transformational project that will make getting around Mississauga and Brampton much easier. The Hurontario LRT will feature 19 stops within two urban growth centres with connections to four mobility hubs. It will also connect to other major transit systems—including connections to Brampton Transit, MiWay and GO Transit's Milton and Lakeshore West lines. Last year, our government signed a \$4.6-billion agreement with Mobilinx to design, build, finance, operate and maintain this project over 30 years. Mobilinx is now wrapping up year one of incredible progress on early-work construction along Hurontario Street, laying the groundwork for some exciting next steps, which includes building track foundations and overhead cable networks to power the future light rail vehicles.

Of course, we continue to make GO rail expansion a priority, as we invest billions to transform the GO rail network by delivering two-way, all-day service every 15 minutes on core segments. The GO rail expansion program will provide a comprehensive, all-day rapid transit network that will change the way people travel across the region by delivering more trains and more service that Ontarians deserve.

When you have an opportunity to see how these projects all interconnect, Mr. Speaker, it's very exciting. A few weeks ago, Minister Mulroney and I held a virtual event to mark the opening of the new Cooksville GO station, where we were joined by the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. When you see a new modern station and parking facility for GO customers and know it will one day connect to the brand new Hurontario LRT, it's hard not to be optimistic about the future state of transportation in Peel region.

Just yesterday, I had the opportunity to tour the brand new Union Station GO bus terminal, which will open in just a few days. To think that, in the not-so-distant future, people will be able to hop off their GO bus into that



modern facility and conveniently transfer to a subway that can take them to York region, to Scarborough, to Etobicoke and even one day to the airport is truly amazing. Being there and thinking about how it all fits together really does bring the Metrolinx tag line, “It’s happening,” to life—because it is happening, and it’s going to continue faster than ever before. This legislation, if passed, will make sure that happens.

It’s all part of our plan to improve the public transit experience in the GTA to prepare this region for the future.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, that plan also includes going beyond just building tracks and stations.

I have the honour to be leading our government’s Transit-Oriented Communities Program—reimagining surplus lands to build bright, new communities around transit stations. Under our plan, we will create dynamic, complete, mixed-use communities around stations. This approach will provide a mix of housing—including affordable housing—retail, commercial and community amenities like daycares around transit stations, putting more services within walking distance of people’s homes and public transit, saving people time and money.

Earlier this year, we introduced the Transit-Oriented Communities Act, which will help us deliver these communities along our new subway projects. Since we introduced that legislation, we’ve heard from multiple municipalities that want transit-oriented communities in their neighbourhoods as well.

These types of communities are the way of the future. Forward-thinking cities across the world, from Paris to Melbourne, are making it a priority to create more complete, livable communities where employment centres, stores and homes are centred around easily accessible transit. That reduces the dependency on cars, frees up space for public spaces, parks, patios—all within a short distance from where people live and work. These are the places where people want to live and spend their time.

Here, in Ontario, we shouldn’t limit it to just the neighbourhoods around our new subway stations. That’s why, as part of the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act, we are proposing to expand our transit-oriented communities approach to other provincial transit projects.

The current legislative measures in the Transit-Oriented Communities Act include the ability to speed up the process of land assembly for transit-oriented communities along our new subway projects. These new proposed amendments would extend those authorities to other provincial transit projects, allowing our government to delegate authority to Metrolinx and other government agencies to enter into new types of commercial arrangements for TOCs. This would facilitate the accelerated delivery of transit-oriented communities and allow the province and our agencies to have a clear and consistent legislative tool kit across TOC programs, making it easier to communicate to municipalities and our private sector partners. We are always looking for opportunities to create partnerships with the private sector and local municipalities to help us deliver on these goals.

The Minister of Transportation and I have talked a lot about the impending population explosion in Ontario,

especially here in the GTA. By 2046, about 9.5 million people are expected to call this region home. As our population continues to grow, we will also need to increase our housing supply substantially. People will need more access to housing that can also provide better access to jobs and employers. Our transit corridors represent a virtually untapped resource that can help accommodate that growth, while also fighting congestion and improving people’s quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, I already mentioned the great response we saw when we introduced the Transit-Oriented Communities Act, and this proposal to extend those measures has been no different. In their letter of support, the Labourers’ International Union of North America recognizes that transit-oriented communities will help address the growing need for housing infrastructure as our cities continue to grow. This proposed legislation, as they put it, “will allow our members to build the transit-oriented communities that Ontarians are looking for. Local economic development will no longer be limited to the established neighbourhoods in our cities’ downtown cores.”

#### 1630

Of course, I am not going to stand here and say that we’ve only heard rave reviews about this proposed legislation from all sides. We’ve also heard some apprehension from people who live and work in some of the neighbourhoods near some of these projects. Mr. Speaker, I can certainly understand that perspective. It’s no secret that construction of major infrastructure can be disruptive to local communities. It is difficult, but it is a necessary step to deliver better transit for everyone who lives and works there. People want assurances that disruption will be minimized, and they expect clear communication about what to expect in their local neighbourhoods.

The Minister of Transportation already talked about the need for Metrolinx to be a good neighbour, and I could not agree more. In addition to the ways that she spoke about—creating jobs and opportunity in communities and collaborating with municipal partners and stakeholders—being a good neighbour also means treating the people and the communities where they are building with the utmost respect. And as we work to deliver these infrastructure projects, Metrolinx knows this is the best way to build.

Metrolinx already works with communities to address construction concerns, including minimizing noise and vibration, and ensuring designs are sensitive and respectful of communities. That includes providing advance notice of closures or interruption to services and engaging neighbours and area businesses through construction liaison committees.

But we know that communication is critical, and we have heard loud and clear at committee that there is a need for Metrolinx to better engage with communities. There is always more work that can be done on that front. That’s why we are actively expanding how Metrolinx delivers information on all phases of construction, so that people can receive information in ways that work for them. This includes through the Metrolinx Engage portal, door-to-door canvassing and sending newsletters and regular digital notices.

Metrolinx has also conducted a business survey along the Ontario Line to better understand each business and what challenges they may face during construction so they can get the support through the business readiness and support program.

And we are not stopping there, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work with Metrolinx to increase and improve their community engagement processes throughout the construction of our major projects, whether it's subways, GO rail or anything else.

The proposed Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act is another building block in our made-in-Ontario plan for growth, renewal and long-term recovery. And, once more, it is a critical part of our plan to build an integrated and smart transportation network that will position us to compete today and for generations to come. The status quo simply won't work any longer. We need new, innovative ideas and new ways of thinking. We need to be bold.

Fuelled by the enduring spirit and character of the business community, our partners, stakeholders and Ontarians everywhere, we will get our province back on track and come back from this pandemic stronger and better prepared than ever, and we'll be ready to build the transit network and the communities that our province needs to make sure our province is ready for a bright future.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** It's now time for questions.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** To the associate minister: I'm from Windsor; I don't know much about Toronto's subway transportation system. I get on the subway, I go to Bloor-Yonge and I walk to work. I get on at Queen's Park and I go home. But I know that the relief line was expected, and out of the blue came the Ontario Line. I know the associate minister mentioned it, but why did that happen? What is the difference in the expense that that decision will have on taxpayers? And what will it mean in the sense of timing and delays? Is it going to be longer than the relief line would have taken, or is it going to improve on that?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much to the member opposite. Certainly, I would look forward to taking the TTC with you any time you're in the city—especially free to come out to Etobicoke.

In terms of our transit plan that was released in 2019, this is something our government is very proud of. One of the reasons why we're very proud of this transit plan is because it touches every single corner of the city. We will be providing access to public transit on the west side of the city, on the east side of the city, on the north end, of course, reaching out to Richmond Hill, but also providing relief on Line 1. That was something that was very important to us.

The previously proposed downtown relief line that was proposed by the city of Toronto was so short. This Ontario Line is double the length, as you know, and because it is double the length and has a number of interchange stations, we will be able to really relieve the pressure on Line 1, and that's very important to the TTC as well.

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

**Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto:** I want to thank the associate minister for everything you're doing for transit, especially in Mississauga–Lakeshore with the Hurontario LRT. I think there will probably be future projects coming to Mississauga, as well.

The other day in the second reading debate, I heard the member from University–Rosedale highlight that measures in Bill 222 would strip rights away from businesses, municipalities and residents. This is simply false. As the Associate Minister of Transportation has said many times, this is a backstop measure to avoid project delays if we are unable to reach an agreement with our partners. Could you please elaborate on that?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** As the minister and I mentioned in our remarks, being involved at the Ministry of Transportation, one of the things we looked at very carefully were reasons that have caused delays in the past, because we wanted to make sure that we never had to go through that process again. I think people along the Eglinton Crosstown West have been very loud and clear about how they feel in terms of delays of major infrastructure projects.

Under Minister Mulroney's leadership, we've also been very clear in terms of our collaborative approach. We are working very closely with the city of Toronto and York region on this transit plan. We've also highlighted, in both the minister's and my remarks, how far we've come in the last 18 months. We will continue down that road.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** It was interesting listening to the minister, who talked about when Franklin Roosevelt, after the Great Depression, put forward an infrastructure construction program.

After the Second World War, we put forward an infrastructure construction program.

After 2008, we put forward—yes, you get it—an infrastructure construction program, which really helps a lot of men.

Unfortunately, in 2020, it is mostly men who get the job of building infrastructure construction.

Is there anything for women in there?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** I think the point that the minister was trying to make is that in critical economic times such as this, the one we are facing today, it is extremely beneficial and fruitful to invest in infrastructure projects, because, as you know, infrastructure projects employ people and certainly provide benefits to the community.

When I was speaking to mayors in the GTA and checking in with them in terms of how they were doing during the pandemic, one of the items they highlighted to me very clearly was that they support city-building initiatives, such as our transit plan, and they want to keep moving forward.

To that member opposite: I just want to talk about how many women are truly going to benefit from having access to public transit so that they can get home to their families

faster. The amount of women I see waiting at cold bus stops because they don't have a subway near them—certainly, this will benefit women, men, everyone in the city of Toronto and in York region, and so we are going to get building.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** One of the elements in the legislation is to allow the government to designate new priority transit projects to circumvent environmental requirements and engineering requirements. Can the minister elaborate on what criteria will be used to determine what these new transit priority projects are going to be?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you to the member for the question.

We have been very clear that the tools we will be using to expedite the building of our subway projects as well as other provincial transit projects will not include relaxing the environmental standards. This is just simply making government more efficient and getting the work done quickly.

I think one of the greatest challenges we've had in the province of Ontario is how long it takes to build something in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, you've been in this House for a very long time; you've been here in Toronto, and I think you've heard, very clearly, from the residents here how much they just want us to get on with the building of subways.

1640

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

**Mr. Vincent Ke:** Thanks to the Associate Minister of Transportation for her wonderful speech.

During the summer, we passed a bill, the Building Transit Faster Act, which outlines measures to expedite the delivery of four priority subway projects: the Ontario Line, the three-stop Scarborough extension, the Yonge North extension, and the Eglinton Crosstown West extension. The Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act builds on this and, if passed, seeks to extend these measures to other key provincial transit projects, such as the Sheppard subway line extension from Don Mills station to Scarborough Town Centre. Could the Associate Minister of Transportation tell us how this stands to benefit the constituents of my riding of Don Valley North?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much to the member for the question, and thank you for being such a hard-working colleague and a real advocate for improving transportation in the city of Toronto and in the greater Toronto area.

As I mentioned before, constituents in the city of Toronto, whether they live in the west end, in the east end, in the downtown core or in the north, have been very clear that one of the most important issues is the fact that they want to see us actually invest and expand our subway system to make their lives easier, so that they can get to work faster, so that they can get home faster, so that they can spend more time with their families, and so that they can go out and do the things they enjoy.

We have an opportunity before us today. We are working very closely with our municipal partners. We have made a tremendous amount of progress in the last 18 months, and we will continue.

I thank the member opposite for his advocacy.

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** I enjoyed the comments from the associate minister. One of the things you talked about was housing and how housing could potentially be a benefit. I'm wondering if you could point me to the part of the legislation that will actually make that a deliverable thing. I ask this question because at home we are having this debate around the LRT. In fact, one of the latest announcements we've heard is that we could lose 120 units of affordable market rental housing because of the path of the LRT, and it's really concerning for people back home. So could you point us to where in this legislation the people of Ontario can expect more affordable housing?

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** That is a very important topic that the member opposite raised.

What I would like to speak to is the Transit-Oriented Communities Program and the Transit-Oriented Communities Act that we passed through the House in the summer and that we are extending to other provincial projects. Using transit-oriented communities, we will be able to build mixed communities and also include additional affordable housing units. This is something the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I are very passionate about, and I would like to provide you with more information.

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

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you very much to the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation for your presentation on Bill 222, the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act.

I'd like to spend a few minutes responding to some of the pieces of your speech, as well as some of the questions and answers that were given, and then I'll move to the bulk of my speech and what I have learned in committee and through my consultations with stakeholders around what this bill means.

First off, to the presentation that was given: When Minister Mulroney mentioned that we are in an economic recession and that a new-deal approach to getting us out of this recession, which would include significant investments in infrastructure—it's of course something that we support. The challenge is that when we look at the latest budget that has come out and we look at how much money is allocated to transit and transit infrastructure, what we see are cuts. We see a cut of \$700 million from the 2019 budget to what we have today in terms of real dollars spent this year on transit infrastructure. We also see the Financial Accountability Office doing an assessment of the Ontario government's transit infrastructure plans and concluding that this government is looking at cutting transit infrastructure investment by 40% over five years. Those are not the actions of a government that is looking

at driving us out of this economic recovery through investments in infrastructure.

I notice that the Associate Minister of Transportation mentioned Pearson airport and the very real need to increase and improve public transit options to Pearson airport. That is also something we support. Pearson airport and the surrounding area is the second-largest employment hub in the region, and it's also a transit desert. When we worked with many of the unions that represent the lowest-income workers at the airport, they would talk to us and we would meet workers who would describe to me what it is like to get public transit to the airport right now.

One lady, Monica, described to me how she would sleep in her friend's car in the car park overnight because there was no public transit to get home and back from when her previous shift ended at 11 p.m. and when her next shift started at 4 a.m. That's a very uncomfortable sleep in a car in a car park. She described to me how she wasn't the only one. That was common, because if you're a baggage handler, which she is, you have to be there first before any customer arrives.

So the idea of improving public transit to the airport is a good endeavour. I encourage the Associate Minister of Transportation to look into the potential value of turning the Union Pearson Express transit line—because we already own the tracks—into a mass transit line fully integrated into the TTC, because that could provide the quick transit infrastructure results this government is looking for, and it would also get people to work on time at an affordable price.

I also want to make reference to the Associate Minister of Transportation's comment to a question about how they chose to go with the Ontario Line instead of the relief line—because the relief line was shorter. There is no debate that the relief line, as it was currently designed, was shorter than the Ontario Line, but what the associate minister forgot to mention is that there were plans in the works to extend the relief line along much of the Ontario Line's route. Metrolinx and the Ontario government refused to do an apples-to-apples comparison between these two lines and, instead, decided to do an apples-to-orangutans comparison where they compared the Ontario Line, which is still a line on a map, to a relief line that was at 15% design, that had three levels of government behind it, where they had spent \$150 million in planning and doing an environmental assessment and had the community on board. I wanted to mention that because that wasn't mentioned in your answer.

An additional piece I also want to talk about was the Associate Minister of Transportation's response to the question around affordable housing. I'm very pleased to hear that the associate minister is interested in including housing and affordable housing in the transit-oriented development and the transit-oriented communities process that is essentially in this act. The challenge, however—and I think the MPP for Ottawa Centre referenced this—is that when you actually look at the act and what it means, it has no commitments at all to affordable housing. All it does is it gives the Ontario government the right to exempt

themselves from municipal planning laws and impose their own planning laws on any land they choose to designate as transit priority land—and it doesn't even need to be near a station. That is what the law says. That's very different from providing affordable market rental, which is an issue in Ottawa Centre and Toronto, and it's very different from making hard and binding targets to create affordable housing, including the really important two-to-three-bedroom missing-middle affordable housing that our community desperately needs.

**1650**

That said, I do look forward to this government's work to turn its speeches and statements into real, tangible regulation and results. At this point, I don't see it, but I'm looking forward to seeing it in the future.

Finally, I do want to respond to the question that the MPP from Nickel Belt asked about what is in this bill that will improve the lives of women. That's a very good question. When you look at it, in theory and in the long term, this bill could improve the lives of women. Women, on the whole, take public transit more frequently than men, and lower-income women and racialized women, especially in the city of Toronto, are more likely to take public transit than men. The challenge, however, is that this bill does absolutely nothing, zip, zero, to improve public transit now. So when we're talking about that lady at a bus stop who is waiting for her bus to arrive—there is nothing in this bill that is going to make her bus come more quickly, her bus travel more frequently and her fare be more affordable. For that to happen, this government would need to do what previous governments used to do before Premier Harris came to power, and that is to match the municipalities' commitment to operating and maintenance costs of every transit agency, the 105 transit agencies across Ontario. If we did that, we would see real and tangible improvements for people's daily experience commuting all across Ontario, and those people include women.

Those are my responses to some of the highlights and issues that came up in questions and in the relevant speech the Minister of Transportation and the associate minister gave.

Now I want to turn to the bill itself. I just want to summarize what the bill does. Bill 222, the Ontario Rebuilding and Recovery Act, allows the Ontario government to speed up any transit construction it wants using a variety of measures, and those measures include removing some rights or taking away some rights from businesses, municipalities and residents.

In addition, Bill 222 allows the Ontario government to more quickly expropriate nearby land for developers and move forward on zoning changes as they see fit, to allow them to build big in return for partially financing station construction. That's the idea behind it. It relates very closely to Bill 171. What this bill essentially does is that it says, "Okay, all of these rights that we are removing from businesses, municipalities and residents in Bill 171—we are going to give ourselves the right to apply Bill 171 to any transit project that we deem fit." They do not identify

the criteria that they will use to decide what priority project is chosen or not. There is reference in the speeches that the Minister of Transportation and the Associate Minister of Transportation have given that it will likely include the Hurontario LRT from Mississauga to Brampton, and that it will likely include the GO On Corridor expansion project to bring about all-day, two-way electrified GO, so that we can turn our disconnected transit system into a fully integrated transit system. It's not clear to me at this point if it will include the third phase of the Ottawa LRT. Because Infrastructure Ontario was involved in the Ottawa project, my sense is that if Infrastructure Ontario is involved in the next phase of the Ottawa LRT construction project, the Ontario government might apply Bill 222 to it as well. But that, I guess, will be decided through regulation later.

So that's a summary of the bill, or an overview of the bill. I want to go into some of the schedules in the bill, and I will also be relating to Bill 171, because essentially this bill says, "Bill 171 applies to any transit project we want." I'm also going to summarize what I heard in committee, as well as some of the concerns and issues that have been raised with me directly by stakeholders. We did a round table with over 60 residents groups while this committee process was happening, and I'm going to be raising some of the concerns that came up there, as well as some of the concerns that were raised with Bill 171 because they're very similar.

I'm going to summarize the amendments that we introduced into Bill 222 in order to turn this flawed bill into a bill that is closer to the idea of being a model bill for what transit construction and planning could look like in the GTHA and beyond. Then I'm going to talk about some solutions which will allow us to address this goal, which is the purpose of this bill, to help more people get from A to B at an affordable price quickly and reliably.

I do want to say that the need for transit in the GTHA and beyond is very real. The Ontario government and our party—I'm sure all parties agree with the notion that this is an extremely important endeavour that we should be pushing towards. Not only will it allow us to tackle the huge climate change challenge that we have facing us by reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector, which is a huge emitter of greenhouse gas emissions—we all know this—especially when it comes to looking at the car, the personal vehicle, but also improving transit will allow us to grapple with the very real fact that the GTHA has some of the longest commutes in North America and, in fact, the Western world. The average commute continues to increase. As it currently stands, the average commute is about 48 minutes, which for one way is a long time.

What is concerning is that the people who have the longest commute are the people who earn about \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year. They are the people who are often more likely to be just above minimum wage. They are the people who, during this pandemic, are likely less able to have the luxury of being able to decide when they start and finish at work, less able to have the option to choose to work at

home because their work doesn't allow it, quite frankly. These are our supermarket workers, our long-term-care home support workers, the people who work in our hospitals, the people who are the baristas, the people who work in the small businesses all across our region. Many of these people are essential workers and they have been doing the heroic job of keeping our economy running, and many of them have been bearing the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic, where they are more likely to be infected with COVID-19 and more likely to get sick. That's a huge problem, and it speaks to the need to move forward with improving transit, which this bill aims to do.

In addition, I think that the Minister of Transportation, Associate Minister of Transportation and the government can also agree that there are huge transit inequities within the GTHA and beyond. There are some regions in Toronto that have access to really good transit. They have multiple subway routes running through their neighbourhoods. They have choice. They could choose the streetcar, the bus, the subway or bike. Then there are other areas—poorer areas, racialized areas—that really have very few options. One of the things I find very interesting and exciting about the extension of the Ontario Line into Thorncliffe Park is that it's one of those areas that has really been disenfranchised and excluded from accessing good public transit. I used to work near that area. I used to catch the Pape bus every day, and it's quite a haul. You get stuck in traffic. It's usually overcrowded. You're waiting a long time. It's not so great, and that's an experience that a lot of people are having right now.

I also see real value in expanding transit along the Eglinton West corridor and real value to expanding the Eglinton East LRT network as well. There's real value in that because it addresses the inequities that we see.

The issues that we can agree on in terms of the problems that we face—there's a lot of commonality there. The challenge I see is that this bill doesn't really address a lot of the challenges that we are experiencing within the GTHA, and, if they do attempt to do that, they're doing it in time frames that are hard for people in our region to even fathom. We're talking 10 years, if things go well. So that's a problem.

**1700**

I want to look at Bill 171 in more detail, because that is what I said I would do. I'm going a little bit into the schedules here. The first schedule that we have heard a lot of concerns about—the whole idea behind this is to speed up transit construction, that's the general concept of this bill, and one way that they aim to do that is to speed up the process of expropriations. How this government aims to do that is by eliminating the hearing of necessity, which is essentially one of the steps that needs to be taken in the process of a homeowner losing their home and having the government take it from them. It's just a step. It's a non-binding process, but it means that the individual, the homeowner, gets their day in court, they get to make their case, and someone gets to say whether this is valid or not. That matters. If you're going to lose your home, it is fair that there is an accountable, honest and clear expropriations process. What Ontario had before this bill was

introduced was pretty good. We're known as having some of the strongest expropriation laws in Canada, and there doesn't seem to be a huge amount of value in changing it, but change it they did.

One of the concerns that residents and even the Ontario Home Builders' Association did bring up in committee and in their submission is that they want to see what the alternative process is going to be. If you're not going to use a hearing of necessity anymore, if you're going to change the expropriations process, then what is the new expropriations process going to be? At this point, the government has not outlined what that expropriations process should be, and I believe that you should, because these are people's lives that you are dealing with and there is a value to due process in a democracy like ours.

An additional concern that this bill has in an additional schedule is that this bill gives the ministry or Metrolinx the right to take over municipal assets that get in the way or are affected by any transit project that they see fit. The logic here is that the Ontario government essentially wants to provide certainty to a construction company—because they want to build quickly, they're taking on the risk of building, they want to know that if there's an obstacle in the way, they can just pick up the phone, call the ministry or call Metrolinx and get the municipal asset out of the way and have it not be a problem anymore.

There are some examples that have come up already with the Eglinton Crosstown. I do want to just mention them because it will apply to some of these projects in the future. We saw this with the Bathurst and Eglinton intersection. Metrolinx and the consortium wanted to take over the Bathurst and Eglinton intersection for a period of months in order to speed up transit construction, and there was understandably a lot of outcry over that because that is a major arterial for many Torontonians to get downtown, and it's also a major bus arterial. There was a negotiation that happened with the city, as it should, to close it partially, which was a fair compromise.

I think that it is reasonable—if we're looking at treating municipalities with respect and working with them in a collaborative fashion, which is what this government has said it wants to do, then giving itself the right to take over any municipal asset they want at any time is pretty draconian, and the city of Toronto has written a letter expressing concern about it. My hope is that you'll listen to that and not use that power.

The third schedule that people brought up as being concerning is the idea of being able to move utility assets—maybe assets that are owned by Enbridge or Bell—in order to make way for a transit construction project to be built. Certainly, if a construction project needs to happen, of course, Enbridge or Bell or a utility company should be required to move their infrastructure in order for this transit project to be built. No one has an issue with that, because we're city building. The issue is that this bill and its related Bill 171 lets the ministry decide that a transit construction project gets to jump to the front of the queue, damn everyone else. Here's the problem of playing with that—the problem of not playing nice and

collaborating. The problem with that is that there are actually many important road-building, infrastructure-building activities that happen in municipalities, and they all need to be carefully coordinated. You might have a situation like Waterfront Toronto is experiencing right now where they need utilities to move—Enbridge—some of their underground infrastructure because they need to do flood management work. That's fair. The challenge, and how it usually works, is that the municipalities, the utilities and all the players get together and they coordinate how they're going to do it so a road isn't ripped up twice or a piece of area isn't ripped up twice. It's done carefully so that everyone can save money. That makes sense. But in this schedule, what you're saying is that transit projects rule and everyone else can wait, and any additional costs that you're going to incur because you're going to have to rip up this road later to do that necessary infrastructure work—maybe it's a sewage upgrade; maybe it's flood management—you're just going to have to pay for that cost yourself.

Once again, I've heard the government opposite talk about how they want to be truly collaborative partners with municipalities. Well, the city is telling you very loud and clear that they've got concerns with that, and when this was raised in first reading, and when this was raised in committee, this government didn't take that out. That's a concern.

An additional concern that was raised is around corridor control. Once again, this is related to Bill 171, but Bill 222—they're very similar. What corridor control means is that any new development along the transit corridor requires a permit and things that pose an obstruction to construction can be removed, such as a building. The problem with this is that there's no clarity on the kind of compensation that someone would receive if their property is within this corridor and there does need to be some changes or, potentially, some damages. There's also the related concern that if someone attempts to hinder the work of clearing a corridor, they lose their right to any kind of compensation.

The idea of what “hinder” is is not clarified. That's a problem. We might be talking about people who want to go to court to contest something that Metrolinx or the transit construction company is doing. Does that mean they lose their right to compensation? As the bill is currently written, it's really not clear, and that lack of clarity is a concern. I encourage this government to provide more clarity in regulation or in the future so that people know if they're eligible for compensation or if they're not eligible for compensation, because I think that could smooth many residents' concerns.

An additional piece of the bill that we are following very closely is the transit-oriented communities piece. What this essentially does is that it allows the minister to exempt itself—the minister already has the power to exempt itself from municipal zoning, and now this transit-oriented communities piece allows them to impose new zoning on any piece of area they consider to be important for transit building.

Essentially the whole purpose of this is to make it easier to do land assembly, which means putting a whole lot of pieces of land together so that you can build big on multiple blocks, and to give developers the right to build big in return for partially funding station construction. That's the idea.

I have some concerns with this market-oriented approach to deciding where stations are built, how stations are built and what transit route will exist. My concern is that transit will be built in order to benefit developers, and it will be built secondly in order to benefit the city and ridership. When you think about the logic of this, what this potentially could mean is that a route and a station selection is more likely to be built in areas where developers can make a big profit, like where they could build a subdivision in an area which has very low density. Areas where transit is truly needed and the ridership is great, such as in downtown Toronto—there's less appetite to build there, because the costs of building are very expensive, and the costs of building a station are very expensive, and it's very hard for developers to build big in the same way. So I've got some concerns about what this could actually mean for how transit is built.

1710

I have raised this before, and the two examples that come to mind are the decision by Metrolinx to jump some stations to the front of the queue and to allow other stations along the GO line, which this will impact, to the back of the queue. For example, Metrolinx has decided to move forward with the Woodbine Entertainment Group's request to construct a GO station right next to their casino, and there has been a decision to move forward with the Mimico renovation, where Vandyk is building big in order to partially fund station construction.

You know, maybe this will work, but what my concern is, if those stations are being built now, is what happens to all the stations that Metrolinx has clearly identified as being important to our city? What happens to them? What I'm seeing right now when I pore over the city of Toronto documents and all its many press releases and announcements that come out about GO is I see really important stations that would truly improve ridership and would really help our city grow languish. I look at the St. Clair-Weston GO station. What's happening with that? If you can't find a developer to build that station because the profit margin isn't there, what happens to that station? We don't know. What happens to the Spadina-Front station? It's very difficult to find a developer there, according to what people in Metrolinx are saying to me, even though it's a station that's critical to ridership. What happens there?

Now, I have asked the Ontario government to clarify numerous times: What stations are you going to move forward with, what stations are you holding back and how are you making these decisions on which stations are good and which stations are less good? I haven't heard back yet. That is a concern, because taxpayers pay for these stations, and there's only so much appetite and so much money to build transit, so we have to build it right.

These are my concerns around the transit-oriented communities piece, and the Minister of Transportation and the associate minister have heard me say this many times. The idea of transit-oriented communities is a really good idea, especially if we can factor in affordable housing and mixed retail, and ensure that the kind of infrastructure that builds community and not just development is integrated into it: schools, daycares, parks, cycling routes. It's a very exciting idea, but the problem that I see with this bill and Bill 171 and the TOC Act is that the details just aren't there—the details that something very different, or that could be very different, could be planned here, where instead of a fully realized community we get a bunch of 70-storey condos like we have at Bloor and Yonge in order to go cheap on transit construction. I don't think that's going to pay off in the long run. I think we can do better than that and this government can do better than that.

I do want to talk about some of the amendments that we introduced in committee in order to turn this bill, Bill 222, closer to the model of what transit planning and transit construction could look like in our region and in Ontario. We introduced five amendments, and I do want to go through them. The first one that we introduced was this idea of ensuring that before a transit project is built, a true environmental assessment is done. The reason why that is important—I'm going to just look at these; I have them right here. I had them all neatly here.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** We're not here till midnight. Come on.

Give me one second. Here we are.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I usually have a lot to say.

Okay, so here are the amendments that we introduced. The first amendment we introduced was that we wanted an environmental assessment process to be part of projects that are included within the Building Transit Faster Act. The whole purpose of an environmental assessment is that you do proper consultation, you assess the negative and positive impacts of a transit project, and you take measures to mitigate the impacts. That's it. It's a really important process because it ensures that you build the right transit projects.

What is so concerning is that this government has shown a bit of a disregard towards the value of environmental assessment and its importance to planning. In Ontario, we already have a very fast environmental assessment process for transit projects. We don't, at this point, even require an environmental assessment to compare alternatives to consider the best option. That's why we have situations where Metrolinx can come out with an environmental assessment process that just compares the Ontario Line, a very minimal design, basic design—and not compare it to what a full relief line could look like. They can just say, "This line is great because we're making it double based upon this map that we're drawing, and we're just going to make the relief line really short, and now we're going to say that this one is better because it's longer." You can get away with that, even with the

environmental assessment that the former government introduced.

But what this government has done is you've sped up the environmental assessment process even more, where construction on early works—which means anything; it can even mean station construction—can happen even before an environmental assessment process is complete. So this government can start building stations, and there is no clear idea on what the route will be, the station will be, the cost will be—none of it.

In fact, that's actually what is happening now with the Ontario Line. An environmental assessment process was done; it's many, many pages long. But in the environmental assessment process, it was acknowledged that there is still no clarity on how much it will cost, when it will be built, what technology will be used, what businesses and residences and land will be expropriated, where the stations will be, what the route will be. None of that is known. This government doesn't even know when the Ontario Line is going to be complete. Eighteen months ago, this Ontario government said it was going to be done by 2027, but looking at Infrastructure Ontario reports, there is not a chance at all that it is going to be built by 2027.

So we thought, "Okay, let's introduce an amendment that says that a real environmental assessment process is done before we build so that we know what we're getting into, so that we can measure twice and cut once instead of measuring and cutting at the same time." That amendment was rejected.

Next we introduced an amendment which is one of my favourite amendments, which is the community benefits agreement amendment.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you, MPP for Ottawa Centre.

So the whole idea of a community benefits agreement is that before a contract is signed with a consortium: Before you move forward on a project, you set up a community benefits agreement with the municipality and local residents and come up with legally binding hard targets, hard enforceable targets, on how this community is going to benefit from this project.

We have an example of what this could look like right here in Toronto, with the Eglinton Crosstown. The former government did agree, after considerable pressure, to move forward with community benefits agreements on four priority projects. The goal was, once those projects were done, that there would be a commitment to integrate community benefits agreements into every infrastructure project that was going to take place in Ontario. In fact, that community benefits agreement rule was meant to be enacted in 2020, which is interesting. I just looked that up before. It seems like we are a very long way away from that.

1720

I did have a look at what the community benefits agreement process could look like, or does kind of look like, with the Eglinton Crosstown project because that was the first, big signature project that was going to be used as

this example—this model of what community benefits could look like. The agreement was that with this \$5-billion-plus project, there would be a requirement to hire racialized people, lower-income people—people who live nearby—into good apprenticeship jobs, including carpentry jobs, steelworker jobs, and the goal was 10% of all jobs. They got the local unions on board. They got the trades on board. They got the labour council on board, and the consortium was on board too.

There was also an agreement to ensure that professional administrative and technical positions also had that component as well, which also gets to the reality that, with these massive transit construction projects, we're not just talking about construction projects; we're talking about projects at every level, different types—office worker jobs, construction jobs and whatnot.

There was also a requirement that the consortium would have to procure products and services locally, which is very exciting because the businesses along the Eglinton Crosstown, including Little Jamaica, have really suffered the pain of transit construction. They need help, and one way is to offer them and provide them with a stable contract to provide a service. That could range from things like materials to catering to supplying water—I don't know. But it's a very good idea to have a target so that these businesses can benefit.

So a community benefits organization was set up to work with Metrolinx to ensure that these targets were met. What's frustrating is that because there were no hard commitments to the community benefits agreement, there was no enforcement if the consortium fell behind. Unfortunately, it is sad to say that the Eglinton Crosstown project is behind on its commitments. It has only hired 4% of apprentices instead of 10%, as an example. When I spoke to the community benefits organization, they said that there need to be hard, enforceable targets. I agree. We introduced an amendment asking for that, and this government voted it down. When a government votes down a thing like that, I've got to say, it makes the press conferences and the speeches about wanting to tackle racism and wanting to give people good jobs—it weakens it a little bit. When an amendment is put forward to say, "Okay, the rubber hits the road, are you going to support it or not," and then you don't—well, the truth is in the vote.

The additional amendment that we introduced was an amendment that came out of the conversations we had on Bill 171 around what it is like to live near a transit construction project. Most of the people we spoke to who live along the relief line route were adamantly in support of transit construction. They had bought into the relief line. They supported it; they were advocating for it, but they were very concerned about the behaviour of Metrolinx as they had seen so far. They had also been talking to people who live along the Lakeshore GO line who are also experiencing some of the consequences of construction.

I believe that a balance can be achieved. We need to build transit, we need to build it right, but we need to do it in a way where we're not tearing communities apart and they can never recover from that kind of transit expansion.



As a result of these conversations, we introduced a motion or an amendment called “Community member rights during construction.” It would mean that the minister would meet with representatives of the community and the transit project and set and enforce some reasonable standards for what safety could be, what noise levels could be—can it go on 24-7, night after night for six months, for instance; what vibration levels could be; as well as ensuring some access to businesses, homes, municipal services, rights-of-way and utilities. The reason why is because we did hear in committee, with Bill 171, some pretty horrible stories about what construction can look like when Metrolinx is at the helm.

It’s very good to hear that the associate minister is interested in working with Metrolinx to improve how they communicate, how they listen and how they respond. I’m very pleased to hear about that, because, so far, there do need to be some significant improvements.

We heard from the Riverside Business Improvement Area. We heard from the South Riverdale Community Health Centre. We heard from residents who live near Pape. We heard from business owners such as Lefteris Grigoriadis from Phyllo Café. It was concerning to hear what they had to say. Just the lack of clarity on what this could mean to their business and their life—it was not great. That’s why we introduced this amendment; the government chose to vote that down.

We introduced two more amendments. The fourth amendment we introduced—and I’m sure the member for Ottawa Centre will find this relevant—is that we asked that no priority transit project be financed through a public-private partnership. The reason why we asked for that is because the Ontario government does not have a wonderful track record when it comes to private sector delivery of public transit projects.

What we are also very concerned about is that the projects that are slated to be moved forward, such as the GO expansion, the Hurontario and the four priority projects, are all—the model that is looking to be used is a model where the private sector finances it, designs it, builds it, maintains it and operates it. That’s very, very concerning.

I’ll give some examples. We’ve seen this with the Eglinton Crosstown. The idea behind the Eglinton Crosstown is that we’ll get this consortium; they’ll build the project; we’ll give them a premium at the beginning—that’s how P3s work—and, in return, they take on the cost overruns, they take on the risk, and they basically lose any bonuses if they fall behind schedule. That was the deal that was made. The problem with the Eglinton Crosstown, and we see this with most P3 projects, is that when there are cost overruns, increasingly it’s the government and then taxpayers who have to foot the bill. That happened with the Eglinton Crosstown. The Eglinton Crosstown was late, so then Metrolinx and the Ontario government gave the company another \$237 million to finish the project late, in the hope that it would meet this extended, new deadline. When it didn’t meet the deadline, because it’s not on track to meet the deadline, I’m guessing that Metrolinx and the government turned around and said, “Well, we want to

take that \$100-million teaser back that we promised you if you finished on time,” and then the company has turned around and they’re suing you, which is what they do. They want that \$100 million and they want to keep it, so they’re going to take you to court. That’s a P3. The challenge with that is, we have to pay for these court costs. If we went with public delivery, we wouldn’t be paying for these court costs and we’d have more say over what this project looks like, where the stations are and so on.

We also see this with Presto. Presto is an example of the former government choosing to make a deal with Accenture, a company that had never been in the business of fare payment systems before. They said, “We’re going to give you a chunk of money to come up with a privatized fare collection system called Presto.” Anyone who has used the TTC knows that Presto is plagued with delays and glitches, it’s years late, it is the most expensive fare card system in the Western world, and the technology is out of date. We were promised Presto in the hope that it would allow open payments, which means we could just take out our debit card and our credit card and pay to get on the TTC or Mississauga or Hamilton. Nope. We still don’t have the technology. The technology is still not there, even though, in a few short weeks, Peel will be paying a 9% fare commission every time a Presto card is used. That is so high. That is higher than any commission I have ever seen in my entire life on any fare collection system, and it still can’t do open payments. That’s another example of how privatization of our fare collection system can go wrong, and it’s also an example of what happens if we move forward with automation, which the associate minister seems to be very enthusiastic about, without thinking through the unintended consequences—because there are always unintended consequences.

**1730**

I’ll go back to transit infrastructure.

We have the Ottawa LRT, a project that, by any measure, is an unmitigated disaster. The MPP for Ottawa Centre was telling me that city councillors can’t even get access to maintenance contracts because of commercial confidentiality. That’s what happens when we sign massive, multi-year, 30-year contracts with private consortia to maintain and operate our transit systems.

That’s why we put this amendment in the bill—because public delivery works. It has worked for over a hundred years in Ontario. It’s a tried and true way to get transit built. The government rejected it, and we’re going to remember that. There will come a point five years from now when we will see the consequences of these contracts this government is signing with private companies that are going to make so much money to deliver a project late.

The final amendment that we introduced, one that is very important to me and to many people who live in urban areas, is the requirement that any new transit-oriented community development that is done near a station has an affordable housing component. The reason why we introduced this is because what we have seen with this government so far when it comes to transit-oriented community development, where we’re building big near

stations in order to partially finance station construction, is that it seems to be designed to allow developers to make a lot of profit. I believe that if we are going to be building transit in our city and we are going to be approving development in our city, then we also need to build community. When we are building community, that means we need to build affordable housing so we can tackle the unbelievable affordable housing crisis that we have in the city. I mentioned this in the beginning: We did ask the Ontario government to put a requirement in—a prescribed percentage of affordable housing units that will be built with any new transit-oriented community project, because this government and the ministers have said very clearly that they're interested in affordable housing. So we said, "Okay, if you're interested in affordable housing, then you can vote for this amendment." We were even nice. We even said, "You can decide the percentage of affordable housing"—also because we were in a rush—"but just give us something. Just give us some kind of hard targets so that the promises you are making show up in legislation." This government voted that down. That is a real shame, because in my riding and in many ridings across Toronto, there are a lot of people who cannot afford to live in this city anymore. Even with some reduction in rent that has happened in the core of downtown for condos, we are still at rental prices which are at 2019 levels. And the last time I checked, we had an affordable housing crisis in 2019, and we still have an affordable housing crisis now. If we are looking at using government land—this is government land—then we should be meeting affordable housing targets, because housing is a human right.

I want to spend the final period of my time talking about some of the measures that we need to move forward on to achieve this goal of building transit and making sure that people can get from A to B at an affordable price.

The whole idea of this bill is to improve public transit and to speed up transit construction, but what I find difficult to fathom is that this bill does absolutely nothing to address the two main reasons why transit construction projects get delayed in our region and in Ontario. I want to turn to those points now.

Number one, transit projects aren't built because there is flip-flopping. That's when a new government promises a lot before an election, and then after the election nothing proceeds; or a government says they're going to build a transit project but they don't allocate any money to it, and then as time goes by, the project never gets built. We've seen this time and time again, and we're already seeing it with this government, as well.

Toronto is a graveyard of failed transit announcements. I'll give you some examples of transit projects that have been promised and funding that has been announced, but they never got built.

We have Eglinton from Pearson to Kennedy, so the Eglinton Crosstown, including Eglinton West—that has been promised many times, but it's still not built because the money hasn't been promised.

The Sheppard extension was meant to be delivered in 2014. It got delayed.

The Finch West extension, which was a very exciting project, would have been built in 2019. That has been delayed.

The Eglinton Crosstown is finally getting done, although it could have been done a lot earlier if someone's dad did not use that cement thing.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It's okay; you can say "Mike Harris."

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you. Well, you're here.

There's the Eglinton East, which is, I like I said, a very exciting project. This government did promise to build the Eglinton East extension to the University of Toronto Scarborough campus during the 2018 election, but now there's no money for it.

There's also the waterfront LRT, which would have been built and would have helped the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, but now there's no money for that project.

So when we are looking at the real reason why transit doesn't get built, it's not because transit construction needs to be built a little more quickly; it's because there are a lot of announcements but there's no funding attached to them or there is a decision to change projects that are already in the works.

I have mentioned this before, but the decision by this government to cancel the relief line and replace it with an Ontario Line and then announce that they are well on the way is frustrating. It's frustrating because this government never references how far along we were with the relief line, where the environmental assessment was ready to go. Our city had been waiting 110 years for the relief line to be built. All levels of government supported it. All levels of government had put up money for it. The Minister of Finance, then the Minister of the Environment, had approved the environmental assessment, and \$150 million had gone into planning. The route had been chosen. People were at peace, and construction was meant to start in 2020. But then flip-flopping happened, and now we're back to square one.

When I look at Infrastructure Ontario's reports, which I have referenced, I see that the projects that this government is looking at building keep getting delayed. The Ontario Line—this is from Infrastructure Ontario—just got delayed another 18 months. The GO expansion project just got delayed another year. The Scarborough subway extension just got delayed again. The Lakeshore East-Central Corridor expansion project was moved from starting planning in 2018, but now the close date is to be determined. That's what Infrastructure Ontario is telling us about how projects are progressing. They're being delayed. The main reason why they're being delayed, aside from the flip-flopping, is also because the money is not there.

When I look at the Financial Accountability Officer's report, and when I look at the Ontario government's budget, it tells me very clearly that the amount of money that's going into transit infrastructure spending year by year is dropping, and of course we can see that, because Infrastructure Ontario is telling us that these projects are being delayed. That's the real reason why transit is not being built in this city.

There are some additional measures that I do encourage this government to move forward on in order to improve transit now while we build transit for the future. As I have mentioned, the number one way to improve public transit is for the Ontario government to invest funding into operations and maintenance for all the transit agencies across Ontario.

I'm going to give the government credit here. The government has chosen to invest \$1 billion to match the federal government's commitment into the Safe Restart Agreement to stem the hemorrhaging of fare revenue money that transit agencies have been experiencing throughout this pandemic, and that was a good move. It was a move I supported. The challenge is that funding is going to be ending on March 31—and that's phase 1 and phase 2—and I've got to ask, what happens then? Previous governments provided stable, ongoing funding. Toronto once had a world-class public transit system. I'm calling on this government, if you really, really, really want to help that lady at that bus stop in the cold, invest funding into operations and maintenance.

1740

I also encourage this government to look at the gas tax, because that is an example of stable operating funding. I was recently approached by the Ontario Public Transit Association—I'm sure they talked to you, too—and they highlighted some troubling information to me, which is that the amount of gas tax revenue that goes to transit agencies is slated to be reduced by 14.5%.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Wow.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, starting this year. That's a concern, because it doesn't cover the same time frame as the Safe Restart Agreement. So you can't just say you're just going to move safe restart money over. It's a new time frame. That's a concern because that will lead to very real cuts to transit agencies' budgets; it will lead to fare hikes and service cuts. I'm already hearing agencies in London tell me that they're facing some really tough challenges right now because they don't know what to do to make up that 14.5% shortfall. That's a concern.

I urge this government, when we're talking about improving transit now, to do your part and match the capital purchasing that needs to happen now in order to provide transit for the future. When I say that, what I mean is that agencies right now need to buy buses, streetcars, Wheel-Trans vehicles and subways in order to simply maintain the service that we've got. As it currently stands, they need the provincial government and the federal government to step in to provide that funding so that there can be streetcars and subways running in 10 years' time on current lines. I've raised this with you. With the TTC's latest request, they are purchasing no subway vehicles—none—even though they should be purchasing 80 just to meet current needs, because the provincial government is not stepping up.

When we are talking about improving service for the riders of today and tomorrow, there are some very practical things that this government can do right now that you're not. So when this government talks a good talk about how they're going to help transit and they're going

to improve transit, I have to say that people look at “how am I going to get to work today and six months from now and what is this government going to do to help me do that?” When I look at the reports and the announcements this government is putting out, I'm not seeing a lot, and they can see that too.

I want to conclude: Bill 222 is a flawed piece of legislation. It does take away residents', municipalities' and businesses' rights, and I urge you to put them back because we can build transit right and respect people at the same time. It's been done before, and it can be done again.

I also urge this government to move forward with the kind of vision that would really help us recover from this pandemic and build transit that will truly benefit everyone, and that includes integrating community benefits agreements into these transit projects. It includes setting basic rights for residents who need to deal with the pain of construction. It includes treating municipalities with respect. It includes making sure that there is affordable housing near every station so that everyone can have a home.

We can't just build transit; we need to build it right. I encourage you to look at these amendments and turn this bill into something that we can all be proud of.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Thank you very much. It's now time for questions. I recognize the Associate Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite. My question is, don't you believe that it is completely reasonable for the government to extend the tools included in Bill 171 to a municipality, should the municipality express great interest and enthusiasm to build a transportation project that they've been wanting for quite a long time?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I think it would be useful if the Associate Minister of Transportation clarified the rights that you're talking about. I have a letter here from the city of Toronto that is asking for more clarity when it comes to what power they have to move utilities and when. But they also expressed real concern around how they're not eligible for compensation if they're forced to have a municipal asset taken away from them. So I just need some more clarity on what specific rights you're referring to.

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

**Mr. Wayne Gates:** I would like to congratulate my colleague from University–Rosedale on your presentation. It was incredible. The two things that you touched on were P3s and how much more they're going to cost the province of Ontario—we found that out in the AG's report when it was \$8.2 billion under P3s under the Liberals—and also highlighting the importance of affordable housing.

My question to you is, the Ontario NDP is calling on the Ford government to build transit using the public delivery model, and to commit to made-in-Ontario targets to help the province recover from COVID-19 and jobs. Why?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for that question. We are calling for made-in-Ontario commitments and we are calling for public delivery of transit, because the money that we are investing into building infrastructure, we should keep in Ontario.

We have a situation in Thunder Bay right now where the Thunder Bay plant is at risk of going under, because they don't have enough contracts—good contracts—to build trains and streetcars in order to keep that plant running and supply the very real transit needs for Ontario. It makes a lot of sense to keep it all in our province so we can benefit in multiple ways.

I also thank the member for referencing the Auditor General's report. The Auditor General has done an assessment on the costs of using P3s to deliver infrastructure projects, and the Auditor General has very clearly found that it costs more. The theory is that the risk is transferred, but the practice is that it is not.

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

**Hon. Kinga Surma:** The member opposite in her remarks said that she values the benefits of the Ontario Line, the Eglinton West extension and the Scarborough extension because they provide access to racialized communities. My question to the member opposite is, if you support improving access of public transit to racialized communities in the city of Toronto, why don't you support the government looking at every tool and resource possible to make sure that we can speed up the delivery of public transit projects that will connect to these communities?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for raising that question. When we are talking about improving the very real needs of transit riders in underserved communities, I did suggest some very pragmatic ways that we can improve transit right now: We can invest in the TTC's operating and maintenance budget so that people in Thorncliffe Park can get immediate service improvements. We can stop flip-flopping on transit projects and start putting the money in the budget, which this government has not done, so we can start building sensible transit projects that actually make sense. Those are my concerns. We do need to be building; it's just a question of how we're building, because we need to build right. We can't just build.

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** I want to congratulate the member from University–Rosedale, especially when she talked about building jobs in Ontario. I think if we made these cars in Thunder Bay, if we mined it in Sudbury, if we produced the steel in Sault Ste. Marie or Hamilton, we'd have a winning connection

My question, though, is about Presto. I don't understand Presto cards, because I can pay with my credit card—I can't take out my Presto card, but I have it here—I have to reload it with my credit card, I can buy a pop at the corner store using my phone, but for some reason, I've got this green card that I can't use for anything else that costs extra. Like you said, Peel is paying 9% commission on every fare on it. I don't understand why we brought this in. I don't understand why we don't get rid of this. It makes no sense. Can you elaborate on the whole deal with Presto?

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I wish I could hear the member from Conestoga, but I can't because you have a mask on.

1750

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Ask John Fraser; he's right there.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Yes, I was about to say that. Presto was brought in with the former Liberal government, and it was brought in basically as a coercion. They said to municipal transit agencies, "If you don't adopt our privatized fare collection system, then we're not going to give you your gas tax money." So a lot of transit agencies were like, "We like our gas tax money, so we're going to adopt Presto." The problem is that the former government went with Accenture, which, as I mentioned, had no history—this was its first fare collection system contract. It didn't go with a known provider; it went with someone who was a novice, and we are paying the price for that.

The challenge—well, this is an opportunity, I guess. The Accenture contract is up in 2022, so I do urge this government to look very carefully, long and hard about whether we want to continue our contract with Accenture or whether we want to return Presto to public ownership, public hands, so that we can start fixing the mistakes with Presto without paying an exorbitant fee to do every change, which is what we currently have to do now.

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

**Mr. Logan Kanapathi:** Thank you to the MPP from University–Rosedale for your comments, passionately talking about this bill.

Mr. Speaker, as a transit and transportation system, I'll talk about it from York region's perspective. The Yonge North subway extension: We talked about decades and decades to extend it for six kilometres, during my time as councillor—12 years. This is another good example of how we are behind in building this type of major infrastructure projects in Ontario—for decades.

My question to the member: Our government wants to not only build transit, but we are looking to build quickly. What taxpayer-friendly plan does the opposition have that would accomplish either of those things? What's your plan, please?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you for the question. We are in support of the Yonge line extension. It should be built. The one thing we need to consider—this is not an opposition at all; we support it—is that if we build the Yonge line extension, we need to make sure that the sections of the Yonge line closer to downtown Toronto don't become overcrowded. So before we put the Yonge line into service, we need to build support lines, such as, potentially, the relief line or the Ontario Line so that the Yonge line can handle the ridership.

But, once again, we are in support of the Yonge line extension.

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

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** What a great job you did, fine member from University–Rosedale. The government has a great disregard for the value of the environmental assessment plan and process when it comes to pending transit projects. My question to you is: What suggestion you may have to correct that deplorable situation?

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** Thank you to the member for Windsor. Not doing a proper environmental assessment before a transit project is built can lead to unforeseen and very unpleasant costs in the future, when a construction company realizes that there's a river running through that section or it would have been cheaper to build a station here.

An environmental assessment process, a thorough one, was done with the relief line. A decision was made to move the line. There was proper consultation. Because of that proper consultation, residents were at peace and were in support. Because when you listen and respond, you do get community and municipal buy-in. If you don't do it, you can get a lot of backlash. And if you do it right, you can get everyone behind you.

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

**Mr. Joel Harden:** It's a pleasure to rise today. People from Ottawa are always happy to talk about transit. Although I have to admit, Speaker, not all of us are wearing smiles on our face lately when we do so.

We've had quite a debate in our city about the latest mass transit project, the light rail project, a \$9-billion project. We're now looking into the extensions for later phases of the first phase.

What I want to do in commenting on Bill 222 is bring, if you will, the Ottawa experience to our debate, because I really do want to understand what my colleagues in government are saying. I've listened intently. They want to build transit: I've heard government say this again and again. They talk about the sustainability of the move. They talk about the job creation aspects of the move. As I mentioned in a question earlier to the associate minister, affordable housing gets discussed. These are all worthy, worthy objectives. People need that.

The member for York Centre is often heard yelling, "Transit, transit, transit," like you're fired up over there—

**Mr. Roman Baber:** Subways, subways, subways.

**Mr. Joel Harden:** "Subways, subways, subways," excuse me. All right.

So they're fired up over there, Speaker, about subways. Here's the problem, though: Rather like Subway the franchise, if you eat the wrong sub, laden with the wrong content, there's a price to be paid, okay? There's a price to be paid, and in Ottawa we're familiar with that price.

Speaker, let me take you to the very first moment I had an inkling of what was to come. I was sitting with the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, actually. He's a member of the government. He's my neighbour to the west. You know, in Ottawa, Speaker, the socialists and the conservatives can sit together and have pleasant conversation at many government events. It's not like other parts of the world where fisticuffs would erupt.

So MPP Roberts and I are there, and we're getting ready for the mayor of our city to talk about this major project. We're sitting in this beautiful transit station, the Pimisi station, and it struck us as odd that as the kind of rigmarole of the event was ramping up—you know what

these things are like, Speaker: pomp and pageantry. People, rather like the member for York Centre over there, want to be excited. I think the member for Ottawa South was there too, right—in broad daylight, the organizers of this event, the Rideau Transit Group, were orchestrating a smoke and light show—in broad daylight—so it was kind of funny. You could faintly see the smoke and the light trying to catch through it, but if you've seen the Pimisi station, Speaker, it's this beautiful, modern, angular thing with a lot of light coming through, and you couldn't see anything.

I said to the member for Ottawa West–Nepean, "Is this a metaphor for what's to come? I'm worried. I'm worried that this project may be a lot of smoke and mirrors," and we had a little laugh. Well, it's not funny anymore, because this project has proven to not be delivering on what Ottawans wanted. What we wanted is a solution to congestion in our city, which chokes our city, as in most of the major cities of this country. We wanted something that was affordable. We wanted something that was predictable. I'll quote the associate minister's words: something "convenient, reliable." We wanted it to be a gateway to more affordable housing around the crucial nodes of the light rail.

But that's not what we got. We got a system where, six months after it was introduced, you literally had a serious component of our city council begging the Ontario ombudsperson to intervene, because my colleagues—in Ottawa Centre, at least, the city councillors that serve there—were attempting to figure out what was embedded in the \$5-million maintenance contract that Ottawa had signed, a 30-year contract. They were told, as the member for University–Rosedale recounted from our time at committee, that they weren't allowed to have a copy sent to their offices, the councillors' offices. So they inquired: "Why is that?" And they said, "Well, this is a proprietary document." "Oh. Well, where can we see it?" They were told that, one by one, they could go to the city solicitor's office and read the document, but take no notes. They couldn't have a digital copy; they could only have a hard copy. It was like they were brought back in time, Speaker, to the 1960s or 1970s, except without the ability of note-taking.

So it rings alarm bells. It rings alarm bells when we start to realize that being in a rush is not always the right motivation. Doing things right, as my father, grandfather, grandmother and mother have always told me, is the best objective.

So what happened? Well, the tea leaves had been read, Speaker. We have a lot of great investigative journalists in our city: Mohammed Adam for the Ottawa Citizen—

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls):** Excuse me. Unfortunately, I'm compelled to end the debate on this temporarily because it is 6 o'clock, but when debate on this bill is resumed, you will have an opportunity to complete your debate.

*Third reading debate deemed adjourned.*

*Report continues in volume B.*





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Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
<b>Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
<b>Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)</b>	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<b>Hatfield, Percy (NDP)</b>	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
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Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)</b>	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
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Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	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	
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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	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	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
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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	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
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