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OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 23 March 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

CONVENIENCE STORE WEEK
ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA SEMAINE
DES DÉPANNEURS

Mr. Stan Cho moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 262, An Act to proclaim Convenience Store Week /
Projet de loi 262, Loi proclamant la Semaine des dépanneurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101, Mr. Cho will have 12 minutes to make his presentation. I turn to the member from Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's a privilege to rise this afternoon in the House to speak in support of my private member's bill, the Convenience Store Week Act, 2021. It's a bill that, if passed, would recognize the invaluable and essential work done by employees and owner-operators of convenience stores in our communities by proclaiming the week before Labour Day each year as Convenience Store Week in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, if we've learned anything from this past year, it's how much we all rely on what we now call essential workers; how important our grocery store clerks, transit drivers and school custodians are; how much we rely on the unsung heroes who keep our province running, who keep us fed and stocked on everyday essentials when the world turns upside down.

Over the last year, the more-than-8,500 convenience stores across Ontario have served on the front lines of this pandemic. They've provided safe and easy access to food and other essentials like toilet paper for many communities. They've sold masks, gloves and PPE. When our truckers transport much-needed food, fuel and medical supplies across Ontario, convenience stores provide a place to rest and refuel. And for many Ontarians—the Ontarians living in rural and remote communities, that is—convenience stores continue to be the only source of daily necessities.

Convenience stores have long been an integral part of our neighbourhoods and our economy. They employ 78,000 people across Ontario, the majority of whom work in small family-run stores that employ five people or less.

However, this past year has shown us just how critical these small businesses are. We owe all of our front-line workers in hospitals, long-term-care homes, schools, grocery stores and convenience stores a huge debt of gratitude. They are the everyday heroes who have kept us safe and allowed us to survive this new normal. This bill is but a small step in thanking one such group for their tireless efforts this past year and for all the contributions made long before the pandemic began.

Convenience store owners and their employees are some of the hardest-working people I've met, Speaker. They work long hours seven days a week, 365 days a year, and they're always there when you need them. But they do so much more than just provide those convenient necessities. In many communities, like mine in Willowdale, they serve as the neighbourhood watch. They sponsor our local sports teams. They raise money for community causes, offer friendly advice or simply share a smile to brighten your day. They celebrate the joys of winning a lottery ticket and they protect our children from harm.

Convenience stores work closely with the provincial government as trusted partners on a number of issues. C-stores account for 76% of Ontario lottery sales, working closely with the OLG to return more than \$2 billion to the province each year in non-tax revenue—revenue that is used to invest in hospitals, community centres and universities.

As a point of sale for many age-restricted products like tobacco, they have kept our communities and young people safe. A 2018 study found that the convenience sector had a 96.2% compliance rate for age verification and successfully denying sales to those under 19—higher than any other retail channel.

As this government continues to work on providing more choice and convenience to Ontario consumers when it comes to beverage alcohol—creating more opportunities for our world-class made-in-Ontario beer, wine and ciders, the alcohol producers to sell their product, creating good-paying jobs and supporting local agriculture—many Ontario convenience stores are already home to Ontario's 219 LCBO agency stores, selling alcohol in rural and northern communities throughout the province.

I look forward to continuing to work with the convenience stores on a host of issues, to help them weather the COVID-19 pandemic, to make sure that they can continue to serve their communities safely, to act as trusted partners in delivering lottery products, and one day, to provide choice and convenience to Ontario consumers by selling beer and wine in their stores. In short, when it comes to the Ontario convenience sector, we have a lot to celebrate and a lot to be thankful for.

Speaker, the idea of a day or a week to celebrate the convenience industry is not a new one. Convenience Store Day was first celebrated in 2016 and expanded to National Convenience Week in 2019. Originally organized by the industry itself, Convenience Week has been celebrated in past years by putting community leaders and politicians of every political stripe to work behind the counter and has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support charities like Children's Wish and Make-A-Wish Foundations and to support local children's hospitals. I know many of my colleagues on all sides of this House have stood shoulder to shoulder with c-store workers in their ridings and asked customers to contribute to some of these amazing charities.

The Convenience Store Week Act, 2021, would officially recognize and celebrate the support and philanthropic work c-stores do in their communities, as well as mark the significant contribution that the convenience industry makes to Ontario's economy by proclaiming the week before Labour Day each year as Convenience Store Week in our province.

During the Convenience Store Week two years ago, I spent an incredible afternoon working behind the counter with Muddasir, the store manager at Circle K in the heart of Willowdale. Over the course of a few hours, I served hundreds of customers and raised thousands of dollars for the Children's Wish Foundation. I was reminded about just how gruelling it was to work in a c-store, but it also reminded me how close to the community and their neighbours they are.

True story: Within the first half-hour of working there, my little brother walked through the door. He had no idea I was there and was just coming by as a regular part of his day. I suppose he didn't expect to see me working behind the counter. In fact, the first thing he said to me was, "I didn't know politics paid so little." But it reminded me how much we take for granted the people we see and rely on every day who work behind the counter. Most people don't realize how much they rely on convenience stores and the small business families behind them or how much these stores give back to their communities.

Convenience stores hold a very special place in my heart. They've played an incredibly important role in my life. As I've said in this House before, I am the proud son of immigrants, and I owe everything I have today to my parents and to the country and the province they chose to call home. As I've shared before in this Legislature, my parents immigrated to Canada from South Korea in the early 1970s. They didn't speak English, didn't understand our Canadian culture, but they believed that if they worked hard, they would succeed. As new Canadians, they found work in a convenience store in Guelph, where my parents first settled, and eventually saved up enough money to buy their own Becker's franchise in Rexdale. They worked long hours, seven days a week.

Some of my first memories are sitting in the corner of that store playing while my dad studied for his real estate licence behind the counter. I remember rude customers yelling racial slurs at my parents and I remember our store being robbed at knifepoint. But my mom and dad never

gave up. They only worked harder and harder to give me, my little sister and my little brother a better life than they had had.

Speaker, it's really the story of my mom and dad that led me to politics. I don't tell them often enough, but I'm very proud of them. I'm also very thankful for the tireless sacrifice that provided the opportunities that made me who I am today—thankful for the belief they had in this country, the belief they had in this province, opportunities that in many ways were made possible because of that little convenience store I grew up in.

1810

You know, Speaker, I had a very special moment in 2019 in Guelph when we went to host a pre-budget consultation. I actually got to visit the store where my dad first worked. It was an emotional and humbling experience to see the foundation of my family's life in Canada, of my life and the privileges and opportunities that I've enjoyed. It was so heartening to meet the new owner, an Afghan Canadian who, like my father, had journeyed to Canada to find a better life for his three children, a better life that he, like my family and countless new Canadians, built in a convenience store.

Convenience stores mean so much to me, so much to my family and so much to my community. You don't have to look much further than the popular CBC show *Kim's Convenience* to see how much this industry means to Canadians, although I will say, Speaker, it should have been called "Cho's Convenience."

Every member in this House has a convenience store in their community, a small business family that serves their neighbours with pride and supports their loved ones with tireless work. I hope all members will recognize the commitment and the immense contribution of the convenience sector to Ontario's economy by supporting the Convenience Store Week Act. It's a small gesture, and it is by no means an excuse not to continue the work we are doing to support these and other small businesses, or to forget to thank the thousands of other front-line workers. We can and must do more to ensure these small businesses survive and thrive.

I look forward to celebrating their success this summer during what I hope is the first annual official Ontario Convenience Store Week, and for years to come. I sincerely hope that my colleagues on all sides of this House will join me in supporting the Convenience Store Week Act.

Finally, Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to thank the convenience store industry associations: Kenny Shim and the Ontario Korean business association, Dave Bryans and the Ontario Convenience Stores Association, and Anne Kothawala and her team at the Convenience Industry Council of Canada. I want to thank them for their help and their support in putting this important bill together.

I want to thank my former OLIP intern Chelsea for her incredible work on this project. And most importantly, I'd like to thank everyone in the convenience store sector for their tireless work; for everyone who has to wake up at 4 a.m. to make sure they have the freshest flowers available for their clients; for everyone who is home before the sun

gets up, after going to the cash and carry to stock their shelves; for everyone who works seven days a week, including holidays, to provide for their family; for everyone who displays what is best in the Ontario spirit. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I do want to say to the member from Willowdale—it is of course very emotional to hear the stories of how he came to this place and the people who supported us. Thank you very much for sharing that component of your private member's bill, which establishes Convenience Store Week.

I have to say, convenience stores are actually very special places in our communities. They are often family-owned. As small businesses, they take on a leadership role in that community, and actually they go above and beyond what those big box stores do across this province and across this country.

I remember very well, growing up in Toronto, there was a teachers' strike in 1975, and, like many families, we struggled to eat. There was an Italian convenience store right next to our house on Fielding, and they gave us store credit to see our family get through the strike. That's what I think of when I think of the value of convenience stores and the leadership they demonstrate.

That said, I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that we are in a pandemic. We just finished a two-hour meeting with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Small businesses across this great province are hurting desperately. We, of course, will be supporting the creation of the convenience store appreciation week. It is a small gesture to indicate to those small businesses that we acknowledge the work that they've done and we acknowledge the leadership that they've shown in very challenging times. But they are also looking for so much more.

Coming from a government that's supposed to understand small business—I think that right now they're trying to figure out where you actually stand with small businesses, and I'll give you an example. Just three weeks ago, the government saw 61 applications from 7-Eleven stores, an American convenience store company, to distribute alcohol in-store, so you would have to consume the alcohol beside the hot dogs on the wheels and the nacho cheese in-store. The convenience store association said, "Listen, not every store has the space and the capacity to offer that kind of a service." We're unsure where that application is, because there has been some going back and forth on the selling of alcohol in stores—which I will remind the member opposite that they did run on that promise, but there have been a lot of promises that have been broken.

On this side of the House, we will support the creation of Convenience Store Week. It is a small gesture, and I would say that small businesses across this province deserve a lot more during these times.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It is a pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak in support of Bill 262, Convenience

Store Week Act, 2021, brought forward by the member for Willowdale. This act, if passed, would proclaim the seven-day period in each year that ends on the Saturday before Labour Day as Convenience Store Week. I would like to thank the member for Willowdale for bringing this bill forward to celebrate our convenience stores, their owners and their employees. It is important that as a province and as a government we champion the role that small businesses have in our economy.

I have a deep appreciation for the role that convenience stores play as job creators in our communities. I know this first-hand because, shortly after arriving to Canada when I was a teenager, my first job ever was working at a convenience store in Scarborough. Thanks to my experience as a store clerk doing tasks such as stocking the shelves or cashing out customers from 6 p.m. to midnight after school, it gave me an appreciation for the value of hard work, and also it involved me with the experience I learned—the customer service experience—on how to serve the community that you are responsible to serve from 6 p.m. to midnight. Of course, at this time, I want to thank my store owner for the training that he gave me. These are the principles that were instilled into me at a very young age.

Right now there are over 6,000 convenience stores in Ontario. A number of these small businesses are operating in my riding of Scarborough–Rouge Park, and I've met most of them. They are some of the hardest-working individuals I know, and all or most of their stores are family owned and are all-hands-on-deck operations.

Mr. Speaker, when our convenience stores were declared as essential in the first declaration of emergency during the COVID-19 global pandemic, they kept their stores open for their communities; they kept the shelves stocked and met the needs of their communities. Because of their past and ongoing efforts, we owe it to them to pass bills like the one we are debating today. I encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and an honour to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin. I'm glad that I was here to hear some of the stories that the member from Willowdale shared with us.

I want to share a little bit of my story as a young lad, because I had a connection to our local corner store. Our local corner store was JR Corner Store in the wonderful town of Gogama, owned by Jeannette and Richard Duguay, who are my relatives. As a young boy, it wasn't just a corner store, it was your Sears—that's where you did your shopping—it was the bank, it was the LCBO, it was also the grocery store and it was also where you got ice cream. If you got there early enough and you got there on Thursday morning, the beer truck would come in. If you helped out, you always got an extra ice cream or a pop with it. And you got the best gossip from there as well because some of the old guys, I still remember them, they were either there or across the street in front of the restaurant, and you got some of the best stories through there.

1820

But there's so much more that we could be doing. You know what? Corner stores are exactly that; they're a cornerstone of many of our communities, the small communities throughout northern Ontario. They provide so much in service. They provide jobs is what they do. But the things that are missing there are paid sick days for some of these businesses. The employers just cannot provide those paid days for those individuals that are going to work sick. Those individuals are having a hard time making ends meet and making those decisions, and some of them are going to work sick. Thankfully, those numbers are not reflected in those communities.

What I do want to take the opportunity—speaking to the member from Willowdale—and I know him and I have been talking for the last couple of days. Something I really want to stress, and it's not in the context of this bill, is, let's look at possibly the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. Let's look at expanding it as well. Let's also look at opening up the eligibility to make sure we have more individuals that qualify for this. But the most important part, and I know I'm going to be talking to you about this because I have more cases that came in today, is, let's get some responses. Let's try to help those small businesses so that they can get the supports and the income that they need so that they can get through this period. We've got a March 31 deadline coming upon us. Let's start having that discussion about extending that deadline, because that would help a lot of small businesses.

Anyway, I wanted to tell the member, thank you for sharing your story. I'm looking forward to supporting you in your initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'm happy to stand in support of this private member's bill introduced by the MPP for Willowdale, Bill 262, Convenience Store Week Act. Like many of my colleagues, one of my first jobs was also at a convenience store. My first job ever at 12 years old was of course delivering newspapers, but shortly after, when I entered high school, it was at a convenience store. Convenience stores not only provided me with jobs and equality of opportunity, but also my grandparents, who I came to Canada with—we came as refugees from the former Soviet Union, and my grandparents' credentials couldn't be recognized right away, my grandpa being an engineer and my grandma being a teacher. So like many newcomers to Canada, their first job was also, whether it was a gas station or a convenience store, and that's how they started their humble beginnings and they could save up their first few dollars to buy an apartment and then buy a home and achieve that dream of home ownership.

Those values that a convenience store instilled in my family and me also were instilling the values of hard work, like so many of our convenience store workers did this whole pandemic. I commemorate the member for introducing this bill because it's going to be a big thank you to all the convenience store workers, whether they come from humble beginnings or they just are really passionate for the job or it's their first business.

When speaking about this private member's bill in my community, I can't help but talk about Rod's Esso. It's in Innisfil, in Alcona. That convenience store was recognized and that gas station was recognized throughout COVID because they did everything to keep their customers safe. They wiped down all the handles every moment they could, and something that the owner was talking about his workers—I wanted to read his quote here in the House, because he really wants to celebrate his workers. He says:

“Our staff here at Alcona Esso has been amazing throughout all of this! The staff has had to adapt to all the changes that have come our way (i.e. masks, extra cleaning, barriers, extra hand sanitizing stations). Our staff was at the forefront when we really didn't know what COVID was all about. Some employees were scared and worried but still” went “to work every day!” because they wanted to. “Some customers just wanted to chat as they haven't been out of the house and needed to see people!”

“Thanks to our staff for sticking it out through this pandemic as this has been a life-changing event for us all!” And it wasn't just him, Speaker. I also spoke to Parminder, whose grand opening I went to well before COVID. His family opened up a convenience store right beside the Canadian Tire. They also recognized that this is going to be able to celebrate all of their workers and all the hard work they do.

I wanted to recognize all the convenience store owners. From me to you, thank you for all the work you're doing. I look forward to celebrating you for an entire week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I turn to the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm also happy to support the bill from the member opposite. Nickel Belt is made out of 33 little communities. If you look to the south of Nickel Belt, Alban, Wanup; or to the west, where you have Nairn Centre; Panache to the east; Wahnapiatae to the north, where you have Cartier, the watershed, Biscotasing, Westree, Shining Tree, Gowganda, all the way to Ivanhoe Lake, we have a store per community. You could call it the convenience store, but you could call it whatever other name.

This is where you go to buy diapers or tobacco. This is where you go to buy your fishing lures or your crafts. This is where you go to buy your food or your winter boots. And of course, they all have beer and wine and every other booze you can think of, and have had forever. So this is what shopping in Nickel Belt looks like. I'll call them “convenience stores” because they are very convenient and they are a store.

But I can tell you that most of them are hurting. When they come to me, they say that they can't wait anymore for broadband to come to their area. Why? Because most of the ordering of their products is done online, and we don't have good WiFi in most of Nickel Belt and it makes it really hard to run a business.

They would like to have access to a little bit of capital to buy things as simple as new freezers, so you could have ice cream and you could have frozen dinners and that kind of stuff that people find convenient. They have a hard time gaining access to capital because of where they do business.

I can tell you that the CFIB has called Ontario COVID support of businesses “the worst in Canada,” and that affects every single one of the convenience stores that I represent. The pandemic has been hard. We live away from the testing centres, so if one of your staff has a sign of COVID, they’re not going to come. They follow our public health. You will drive an average of one to three hours to go to the closest centre that will do your COVID test, drive back home, wait for three, four days to get your results. During all that time you are without an employee. You have to make do with what you have, and this is very hard.

They want paid—they want the government to support them with paid sick days so that they can hire new help when somebody has to isolate for 14 days because they have tested for COVID, but none of this is available to them. Same thing with the small business grant: We need more flexibility so that the small businesses of Nickel Belt actually qualify for those grants.

So am I happy to celebrate the day for convenience stores? Absolutely. I have convenience stores throughout my riding, but they need way more than a week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Lindsey Park: It’s a pleasure to rise in support of my colleague the member for Willowdale and his private member’s bill, the Convenience Store Week Act, 2021. This bill would proclaim the week before Labour Day every year as Convenience Store Week, and it would create an annual opportunity to celebrate, to recognize and to increase awareness around both the economic and non-economic contributions thousands of convenience stores in this province make every single day.

I really appreciated both the member for Willowdale and the member for Algoma–Manitoulin speaking about their childhood in convenience stores. I think we all remember the convenience store in the neighbourhood where we grew up. It’s, for some, the first store you’re let loose in as a kid, I guess because parents figure you can’t get into too much trouble in a small space with often only a couple other adults in the store at the same time as you. I think convenience stores also seem to do a good job at keeping anything dangerous up above a height a kid would be able to reach them at.

In my own riding of Durham, our community just wouldn’t be the same without the family-owned Enniskillen General Store, for example, as this beloved store is a location that sells Kawartha Dairy ice cream, sold by the bucket and served by the cone, drawing customers from across Durham region and beyond.

The Enniskillen General Store goes back generations in the life of our community. The first store, originally built in 1840, was a Canada Post office at the time, but soon developed into a general store, supplying the needs of the community. Since those small beginnings, the store, which is owned by the Sheehan family, has grown to four locations in the region of Durham, and three of them are in my riding of Durham. And so you can tell residents of Durham really love their ice cream.

1830

One of my staff was quick to remind me of another favourite store in her neighbourhood: Food Worthy Variety and Ice Cream, at the corner of Trulls Road and Highway 2 in Courtice. The 36 flavours of ice cream they serve up is certainly a big draw, and perhaps also the famous Ringo the Cat, who likes to keep warm near the fans of the pop machine and who relishes the adoring affection and strokes of customers who frequent the store.

Speaker, these are just a couple of examples of how connected to the community convenience stores often are as a close-to-home provider of essential goods. We really saw, during this pandemic over the last year, the essential role they play in our community. These stores are often independent, family-owned and essential threads in the life, the history and the colour of our communities.

For all those reasons, I am pleased to support the adoption of this proposal by the member for Willowdale for a Convenience Store Week in Ontario to recognize the great contributions of convenience stores to our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s a pleasure to join this debate on the creation of Convenience Store Week, brought forward by the member from Willowdale. I listened intently. I heard the story about his upbringing.

I often talk about my upbringing on a farm. I can honestly say—my farmer friends won’t like it—that the only people who work harder than farmers are the people in convenience stores. I can remember coming home after a hard day on the tractor and we’d stop at the convenience store. We would be done, but they would still be working.

The first convenience store I can remember was Gary’s Variety in Englehart. A couple of us would sneak off the schoolyard at lunchtime, and we’d score a bag of candies at Gary’s Variety for 25 cents.

There are lots of convenience stores across my rural riding. The one I’d like to mention and the one I stop at most often, because it’s close to my house and they have a gas station and they sell beer, is the Dam Depot in Latchford. When I drive down here in the mornings, sometimes I stop there at 6:30 in the morning, and they have a table in the corner with the senate. When you walk in, the senate always has questions as to what we’re doing here—and believe me, the senate isn’t even happy with the Ford government.

People who work in convenience stores and the families who run them deserve to be recognized. I think the people who work at convenience stores deserve, as all business people do, a bit more than just to be recognized for the services they provided before the pandemic and provide now during the pandemic. People who work at convenience stores, like all other front-line workers, are essential workers, and they deserve more than a week. They deserve to be recognized with paid sick days. They deserve to be recognized with workers’ compensation. They deserve to be recognized with a lot of things.

I commend the member for bringing forward this bill. I hope he will work with us to try to convince his

government to do the things that will make an even bigger difference to the people who have provided us not only childhood memories but who continue to provide us the services on which we all rely—because we do; at least, I do. I rely on the Dam Depot, because I forget lots of things, and I just go there to get razzed sometimes. There are places like that across this province. They deserve our respect, and they deserve this government's support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I will take this opportunity, as I always do, to speak on behalf of the members of my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

I want to commend the member from Willowdale for bringing forward a thoughtful piece of legislation when it comes to recognizing the hard work of convenience store owners.

I've been listening to the debate and everyone has been telling their convenience store stories, so I will share mine.

Growing up as a young child in Pickering, actually, my brothers and I would venture off to the Pick Quick. The reason I remember it is because you had to cross a very big street to get there, which was Highway 2. So not only did you get to go into this place where you can get as many snacks as you want, but there was a little bit of adrenalin because you had to cross the street very safely.

So I remember fondly my adventures into convenience stores, and I know how hard the industry has worked. They have not been shut down during COVID-19, in fact. They have continued to serve their customers. Some of their members have come forward to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs to talk about the loss in revenue, particularly lottery revenue, over this period of time.

Speaker, I want to draw to your attention that not all convenience stores owners are small, independent ma-and-pa locations. Some of them do belong to multinationals like 7-Eleven. Right now, this government is looking to support this multinational in changing the rules for convenience stores, where they're pretty much all the same, to this one having special status as a restaurant so that it can serve alcohol in stores.

Just this week I received a letter that's signed by 11 city councillors in Toronto, including the councillor from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, Councillor Paul Ainslie. They've written to the government, to the Honourable Doug Downey, the Attorney General, to really petition the government against supporting this, against making alcohol available at these locations which, in everyone's mind, are convenience stores. And now they want to say that they are restaurants. The letter goes on to say that the 7-Eleven is not a restaurant, that it is a multinational chain using a policy to create and to support small businesses, in terms of our support for local restaurants during the pandemic, for its own gain. It speaks very, very clearly against the government supporting this type of action. It creates an uneven playing field for convenience stores, in fact.

While we support the bill to have a convenience store celebration—I fully support that—I just want to put it on

record that I do not support creating an unfair advantage for one multinational and leaving all of those independent ma-and-pa convenience stores out in the cold because they do not have that same advantage, and will be left behind.

So I do think that the government needs to support our small, locally owned and independent operators, particularly coming out of COVID-19 and recognizing that this type of support for 7-Eleven would create an unfair advantage for them, and leave those local stores out in the cold.

Thank you to the member from Willowdale for this legislation, but I did want to also remind the government of some of the other activities that are affecting the convenience store industry because we want them all to thrive and to do well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate?

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: It is absolutely an honour to rise today to speak in support of my friend and colleague's Bill 262, An Act to proclaim Convenience Store Week. Honestly, when the member spoke to me about this bill, I said, "Absolutely, I would love to speak," because my first job, when I was in school, was actually at a convenience store as well.

To my colleague's point about a place where individuals used to come and gossip and talk, I actually learned a lot about sports and Pro Line. I remember local community members used to come, especially on Monday Night Football, or whether it was Thursday night or Sunday, and they would be playing the lottery, and you would be learning quite a bit about sports, not only American football, the NFL, but also the NHL and NBA. So I learned quite a bit about how to check-mark things on the lottery Pro Line. So it's a good learning experience when it comes to customer service, as my colleague from Scarborough mentioned, but also how to deal with customers and all about the service industry.

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Also, I want to talk about one of my favourite shows that my wife Sofiya and I always watch: Kim's Convenience. It's a story about a family business and their struggle, so much so that Mr. Kim and Umma cannot even go on a date night. They have to find ways before they can even actually go out for a dinner. It talks about the true Canadian values and Ontario values about family business and families working together, the struggles—and I think this is our way of saying thank you to these individuals, these families, who go above and beyond. Even in that show we see how at 6 in the morning Mr. Kim is going out and buying supplies so that his customers can be served.

Honestly, thank you so much, and I'm really, really excited. Hopefully we pass this second reading and then third reading and make it a week where we celebrate these individuals and these families and continue to thank them because, while we stay at home, these individuals are out there and working around the clock.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I guess to no one's surprise I now find it most convenient to turn to the member from Willowdale and allow him two minutes to respond to what he has heard.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you so much, Speaker, and thank you so much to everyone who spoke to this bill today, the members from Scarborough–Rouge Park, Barrie–Innisfil, Durham and Mississauga East–Cooksville—although, I have to say, on Kim’s Convenience, I don’t find documentaries funny, so the humour passed me a little bit.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood, I appreciate you bringing up Pick Quick. I think I actually remember that convenience store. My sister and brother and I had a different street to cross from church on Sundays to get to our convenience store, it was Bloor Street, and we remember dodging those cars, so a very similar story there.

The members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Nickel Belt and Timiskaming–Cochrane brought up great stories. I really relate to what you said, from Algoma–Manitoulin, about JR convenience. You’re right; it’s a place of gossip, advice and stories. They’re so much more than just business owners. You go there to comfort your soul at many times, and they become real friends—the neighbourhood watch, as I said.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane mentioned how hard-working these people are, and they really are. They really take pride in being open and there for the people that they serve. That bag of candy you may have gotten for 25 cents—I had to work for my candy; it was a lot more of a price for me growing up. But I certainly appreciate that.

As all of those members mentioned, including the member from Nickel Belt, they’re very valuable too, these convenience stores, in providing more rural communities with things like age-restricted products, including beer and alcohol and other things like that. They play a series of crucial roles, not just providing those essential goods and services, but much more than that.

Finally, I do want to thank the member from Waterloo for her support for this bill. I know that member and her party have opposed every single support measure we’ve introduced for small businesses during this pandemic, so it’s very encouraging to see her support this bill at this time. I appreciate that it looks like I’m going to get support for this bill.

Thank you once again to the convenience stores for all you do. I look forward to this getting through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time provided for private members’ public business has expired.

Mr. Cho has moved second reading of Bill 262. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to the standing committee, or does the member have a preference on where this—

Mr. Stan Cho: I prefer to refer it to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Regulations and private bills. Any objections? All in favour of that? Agreed? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

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

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): However, the member for Scarborough–Guildwood has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer given earlier by the Minister of Long-Term Care. The member for Scarborough–Guildwood will have up to five minutes to state her case, and a representative of the minister will have up to five minutes to reply.

We turn then to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Once again, it’s a privilege to rise in this House on behalf of the people of Scarborough–Guildwood. Indeed, it is an important matter that we speak of this evening, in terms of long-term care and the importance of making those investments, as well as investing in things like paid sick leave to strengthen our workplaces across the province.

It was just over a year ago that I stood in this very chamber to ask this government to take meaningful action in long-term care to protect the vulnerable residents who are there. More than a year on, we are still struggling with the fundamentals such as staffing shortages, substandard conditions, while new variants threaten to make a third wave a reality in this province, and it is even more dangerous; I just received an update from my community in Scarborough in terms of these variants of concern.

Since March 2020, the number of the most vulnerable seniors in our province in long-term care is just startling—those who have died. It’s 3,753 people who were lost in long-term care and 11 staff members, including Christine Mandegarian, who was a personal support worker who died needlessly of COVID-19. Christine worked at Altamont long-term-care home in Scarborough for 31 years, and she was much-loved. I had a chance to attend a memorial for her put on by SEIU, the union which she belonged to. Some of the comments were, “She was the life of the party, a much-loved and valued member of our team.” She, indeed, was much-loved and respected by the whole care community in Scarborough, including in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

A great many of these preventable deaths happened in Scarborough. I want to just remember some of those: Tendercare Living Centre lost 81 residents, Midland Gardens Care Community lost 43 residents, Kennedy Lodge lost 41, Extendicare Guildwood lost 48, Seven Oaks lost 41 residents, and the list goes on and on. Each one of these residents have families that are still grieving.

The issue that we have is that that our system has failed these members. There are still staffing needs at long-term-care homes in Ontario that continue to be critical and there are direct consequences of those. The government still has done very little to improve the wages and the working

conditions of long-term-care staff. Even though the long-term-care commission has asked for a minimum four hours of care—I remember in September, they put out an interim report to say how urgent this was and that we need approximately 20,000 full-time-equivalent workers in long-term care, including personal support workers, RPNs, RNs—and that’s just for the existing beds. If we think about creating 15,000 new beds, that’s an additional 12,823 staff that are needed.

Yet the government’s recent funding of 8,200 PSWs is not even 20% of the need in the sector. If we look at Quebec’s example, they have taken responsibility and trained 10,000 orderlies, who are the equivalent of PSWs, last summer.

There’s no excuse for this, Mr. Speaker. We see that with the lack of investment, long-term care was devastated even more in the second wave. There were 50% more outbreaks, and the number of deaths rose in the second wave.

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Here we are again, Speaker, in the third wave of this virus, with variants of concern spreading even faster. There are families in my riding, including a gentleman by the name of Greg McVeigh—I want to say his name again and remember him, because he lost both parents in the span of just nine days at Seven Oaks in my community. It is for these individuals, Speaker, that we must act urgently and aggressively to address the issues that we face in long-term care.

On behalf of the president of Unifor Local 229, Kari Jefford from Thunder Bay, I want to speak up, because she, too, has expressed concern about the working conditions on behalf of her members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The parliamentary assistant to the minister, the member from Oakville North–Burlington, will now have up to five minutes to respond.

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: In her question two weeks ago, the member for Scarborough–Guildwood cited one program to imply our government wasn’t doing enough training of personal support workers and not investing enough in the pandemic response. I’d like to take a few moments and remind her of what she has clearly missed. She cited one program. There are in fact three. We’ve invested \$4 million with eight colleges across the province to train 373 new personal support workers. We’ve invested \$2.4 million in a pilot program to train up to 300 PSWs in the Ottawa area, and we are providing \$115 million to train up to 8,200 new PSWs.

Our government has invested \$1.38 billion into the COVID-19 response to date to protect residents, caregivers and staff in long-term-care homes. These investments include:

- \$786 million to help homes with operating pressures, including IPAC, staffing and PPE;

- \$61.4 million for repairs and renovations in homes to improve IPAC. This may include updating HVAC systems or replacing furniture or equipment;

- \$40 million to support homes that have stopped admissions of third or fourth residents in ward rooms;

- \$30 million to allow long-term-care homes to hire more IPAC staff, including \$20 million for 150 new personnel and \$10 million for training;

- \$26.3 million to support PSWs and supportive care workers.

Clearly, she’s missed these investments, too. These vital investments have been made under the historic leadership of our Premier and the Minister of Long-Term Care. I’m proud to work with a government and a minister who are committed to improving and expanding long-term care, who have fought to protect residents since the beginning of the pandemic, who are committed to building more high-quality homes for our seniors in long-term care, committed to better care and more care for all residents.

In addition to our investments, our government invested \$461 million to increase PSW wages. That is a \$3 raise that took effect in October for 50,000 PSWs. Just last week, we invested \$239 million to continue the temporary wage enhancement until June 30. Much of that funding was voted against by the member for Scarborough–Guildwood and her party. Here are just some of the pandemic supports they voted against: \$28,726,458 in Scarborough, \$4,369,200 of that to her own riding. Extencicare Guildwood received \$2,012,600. Extencicare Scarborough received \$1,074,500; Seven Oaks, \$1,282,100. Every dollar of these investments she and her party voted against. Clearly, she forgot about that.

I would remind the member for Scarborough–Guildwood our government was taking action in January of last year to fight COVID-19 in long-term-care homes. I’d also like to remind the member that in the seven years from 2011 to 2018, her party built only 611 new spaces, while the population over 75 grew by 170,000. She was a member of this Legislature for five of those years and in cabinet for four. She had the opportunity to advocate for better long-term care. So did Steven Del Duca. Clearly, they had other things on their minds.

The contrast is clear: Our government has prioritized long-term care in a way the Liberals could have, and should have, but didn’t. We committed \$1.75 billion to build 30,000 new spaces and, just last week, announced an additional \$933 million to build new spaces and upgrade new ones to modern design standards. In Scarborough alone, we have 983 new beds in the development pipeline. That’s 160% more than what her government got done in the province in those seven years.

Ours is the government that is addressing the long-standing issues facing long-term care and building a long-term-care sector that is resident-centred and meets the needs of the 21st century. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further matters to debate, I deem the earlier motion to adjourn to have been carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1856.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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	
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Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
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Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

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Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
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Phillips, Rod (PC)	Ajax	
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
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Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
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West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna
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Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
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Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter
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Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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