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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Thursday 6 May 2021

Jeudi 6 mai 2021

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Good morning.
Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING
ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA LUTTE
CONTRE LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 5, 2021, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters / Projet de loi 251, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les questions de traite des personnes.

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

Ms. Jones has moved second reading of Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm pleased to have it referred to the standing committee on justice.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.
Orders of the day?

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): No further business.
This House stands in recess until 10:15.

The House recessed from 0902 to 1015.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROAD SAFETY

Ms. Jessica Bell: At 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, at Hurontario and Elm in Mississauga, a five-year-old boy began crossing the intersection with his father when he was hit by a woman driving a Jeep. He was dragged, taken to hospital, and he died.

As a parent of a five-year-old, I can only imagine what this boy's parents will have to endure, but this boy's parents will endure it. And I ask, will there be justice?

Do you know what's likely to happen to the person who killed this boy? If they were breaking a road rule, they will be charged, the media will move on and time will pass. The driver will likely have the option to plead down and walk away with just a fine, because that is what happens. The vast majority of people who kill and injure someone on our roads are never convicted. They never take a driver re-education course; they never have to listen to victim impact statements.

As legislators, we have a responsibility to ensure that tragedies like this never happen again. We can change the rules to make our roads safer; bring in tougher penalties for drivers who break the rules, who speed and injure and kill others; redesign our roads and intersections and our road rules so they are safer. It is a system-wide issue.

We cannot bring this precious boy back, but we can stop these tragedies from happening again and again. We have Bill 282 on the docket right now. We can make an okay bill into a good one, and I urge this government to work with us to make this happen.

MÉTIS NATION OF ONTARIO LEGACY
PRESERVATION PROJECT

Mr. Dave Smith: Normally I would stand and talk about something great that's going on in my riding, but today I'm going to take a little twist, and I'm going to talk about something that is going to be a great initiative for all of our ridings. The Métis Nation of Ontario is launching their legacy preservation project and they're inviting everybody in Ontario to be part of it.

What they're doing is they're creating a time capsule to show the Métis spirit during COVID-19, and we're inviting everybody in Ontario to take part in this. This gives a great opportunity for all of us, as members, to reach out to the Métis communities in our ridings and build that friendship, build that relationship with them.

What this project will do is it will create a time capsule that is going to be buried on November 16, and it will re-emerge November 16, 2085, the 200th anniversary of Louis Riel Day. Submissions for this project can be mailed to MNO Legacy Preservation Project, Post Office Box 1410, North Bay, Ontario, P1B 8K6. The deadline for submissions is October 16.

I want to give a huge, huge thank you to the North Bay women's representative for MNO, Lise Hughson, and the

youth representative for North Bay, Ish Van Der Rassel, for their leadership on this project.

INSURANCE RATES

Ms. Suze Morrison: The pandemic has been especially hard for the local bars and restaurants in the Church and Wellesley Village in my riding of Toronto Centre. Many have been closed for more than six months now, and quite frankly, they're struggling to stay afloat. To make matters worse, local bars are being dropped by mainstream insurance providers and left to pay sky-high commercial insurance rates.

When it came time to renew their liability insurance, the owners of Pegasus as well as Crews and Tangos were both told by their insurance providers that they would no longer cover their businesses. These bars are beloved cultural landmarks for the queer and trans community. Right now, these communities are hanging on by a thread.

They're not alone, Speaker. Large-scale insurance providers are refusing to renew liability insurance for local bars that are community hubs that serve the 2SLGBTQ2+ community and other cultural communities all across the province. They are being forced to pay rates that are significantly higher than what they would have paid in the past, all while they've been closed for months and months on end because of the lockdowns.

These are not big corporate chains. They are small local businesses focused on serving their communities. This is putting the very survival of the Village at risk, which is a living, breathing part of queer and trans history in Toronto.

Last fall, the Premier said he would step in if the commercial insurance industry didn't do their part to support local small businesses through the pandemic, but since then it's been radio silence. Why is this government refusing to protect small businesses from commercial insurance gouging, and when is the Premier going to step up to the plate and finally support the small businesses of this province?

1020

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: I am alarmed by the presence of many new variants of the COVID-19 virus here in Ontario that keep showing up in our communities at a very high pace. We got the B117 variant, detected in the UK, which has infected over 60,000 Ontarians since being detected in December 2020. Studies show that it accelerated the spread of COVID-19 by about tenfold during the month of January. The B1351 variant in South Africa was first detected in February in Ontario, and a little over a week ago, the B1617 variant in India was also reported here. So, Ontario is fighting four different variants of COVID-19 so far.

These variants are threatening our public health care system that was underfunded for more than 14 years. They risk the extraordinary efforts of our health care professionals who work tirelessly, saving people's lives. They

threaten our economy, our small businesses and all the work we continue to do to ensure the recovery of Ontario. In other words, these variants are a grave threat to every aspect of our province.

Mr. Speaker, these variants are here due to the lack of strong response from the federal government and its failure to secure our borders to prevent new variants from entering, despite our request to tighten the borders, place PCR testing and the lockdown. In the last three weeks alone, the government has sent three letters to the federal government. We are requesting immediate action on our borders, and no action is taken.

STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Last week, I met with Benjamin Hill of the Middlesex-London Food Policy Council. About one in seven Middlesex-London households struggle to put food on the table, a number that has grown during COVID-19. The food policy council works with the Ontario school nutrition program to provide breakfast and snacks to over 16,000 children per day in 88 local schools.

Current provincial funding for the program amounts to 13 cents per child per day, which is grossly inadequate to cover a healthy snack, much less breakfast or lunch. The Ministry of Education's own guidelines estimate a cost of \$2.25 per meal, which means a school of 200 children would need \$2,250 a week to feed each student daily, far more than the \$130 they receive.

There are many reasons, Speaker, why kids miss meals, but one thing is for sure: Students can't learn if they are hungry. The pandemic has been especially hard for students who rely on schools for access to nutritious food. In the face of rising food prices, the school nutrition program has negotiated bulk purchases and new procurement arrangements to reduce the cost of items such as apples and carrots. But delivering food to students learning at home has caused transportation costs to soar, and school fundraising can't come close to the real costs of running the program.

Speaker, will this government commit the funding necessary to ensure that all Ontario students have access to healthy, nutritious meals daily in school?

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Mr. Roman Baber: Freedom of speech is becoming a casualty of COVID, a charter right that forms the basis of democracy now under attack by professional associations, social media, cancel culture, political correctness, COVID bullies and this government. Freedom of speech is the holy grail of all rights, because if a regime sought to deprive us of rights, the very first right it would attack is our freedom of speech, because it's through speech that we defend all other rights.

COVID and its purveyors are trying to change that. Doctors, nurses, teachers are afraid to speak. People are being demonized for disagreement, politicians gagged; that's why I now sit on this side of the House. George

Orwell said that freedom means the right to tell people what they don't want to hear. So why are Canadians afraid to speak, and how can anyone allow for this? Remember, we can disagree with each other, but we'll defend each other's right to say it.

People have the right to be wrong. Only dictatorial regimes prohibit speech in the name of safety. Is this what we want our legacy to be? Is this the Canada we want for our children? Absolutely not. My family and so many Canadians are here for this very reason, and we're not letting it go.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker said, "I am a Canadian ... free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong.... This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind."

To anyone watching, have no fear. As long as there is rule of law, the truth will prevail. Don't be afraid. We are Canadian. Speak your voice and let it be heard.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Since last year, the Ontario government and the Premier have been calling on the federal government to take real action to secure our borders. Unfortunately, previous measures have not worked to keep the variants out, and now Ontario has the four main variants of concern. This includes the UK variant, which has become the dominant strain in Ontario. According to new modelling, variants will soon make up 90% of daily cases.

Weak border measures allowed these dangerous variants into Ontario. As nothing is more important than protecting the health and safety of all Ontarians, the Ontario government has also restricted travel by land and water into Ontario from Manitoba and Quebec, but air travel and international borders are a federal responsibility, so we need the federal government to take further action. We're asking for a ban on all non-essential travel, mandatory pre-departure PCR testing for everyone entering Ontario and for the federal government to close the land border loophole.

In the past two weeks, there have been 23 domestic flights and 35 international flights into Toronto with possible COVID-19 exposures. Also, over 150,000 people, not including essential truckers, have crossed Canada's land border. We cannot afford to let a vaccine-resistant variant into our country. More can and must be done to ensure the health and safety of all Ontarians and prevent the fourth wave from entering our borders.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's an honour, as always, to rise on behalf of my constituents in Davenport. This week, I visited the picket line at the Nestlé chocolate factory in my riding, where 470 Unifor members are on strike. These workers have been on the job 24/7 throughout the pandemic, and today, they are fighting for equal pay for equal

work and to ensure new workers are made permanent and treated fairly. They're standing up to a multi-national corporation that has profited throughout this pandemic because of the very hard work and sacrifice of those same employees.

These systemic injustices have really been laid bare during this pandemic, and they demand strong legislative protections: permanent paid sick days; decent wages; decent hours; an end to racism and bullying in the workplace; an end to the exploitation of migrant workers, the abuse and misclassification of gig workers and real protection for temp agency workers.

Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize the extraordinary Decent Work and Health Network—formerly Fight for \$15 and Fairness—the Workers' Action Centre and all the people in my community who are fighting for change, including employers who are making a difference, like the great people at Pause Beauty on Bloor Street West who are committed to changing the personal care industry and leading by example; and the owners of Bernhardt's and Dreyfus, who support the Canadian Restaurant Workers Coalition and the fight for decent work in the restaurant and hospitality industry.

This pandemic has shown us that working conditions can literally make the difference between life and death. It's time this government started to listen.

COVID-19 IN INDIA

Mrs. Nina Tangri: Today, I would like to talk about the dire COVID situation in India. Each day, I have conversations with friends and relatives, all who know someone who has succumbed to this horrible virus.

As you may have seen on the news, record numbers of the population are testing positive. The situation with the shortage of oxygen and other supplies has the whole world stepping up. I am so proud of our Premier and the people of Ontario, who swiftly came to the forefront and are sending 3,000 ventilators to the Indian Red Cross.

Even Punjab has seen massive spread of COVID. On Tuesday, I spoke to the health minister of Punjab, the Honourable Balbir Sidhu, who himself recently recovered from COVID. He was very worried, telling us about the overwhelmed hospitals, staff and the general public, who are desperate.

As our Premier said, "We stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of India during these difficult times. Our government will keep working closely with His Excellency, Ajay Bisaria, High Commissioner of India" and the consul general of Toronto "and stand ready to assist further with India's urgent needs, for as long as we are able to. We are all in this together and we will all overcome this together."

1030

Speaker, COVID-19 is deadly and we cannot be complacent. We need to continue to physically distance, wear a mask and, most importantly, only go out for the essentials.

COVID-19 came to Canada through our borders, which is why we are asking—no, pleading with the federal government to restrict travel and close our borders.

Although we are facing tremendous challenges here in Ontario, with more patients requiring intensive care, our government is taking swift and decisive action.

I want to thank the Premier for his leadership during these difficult times and for his assistance with supporting India in their true time of need.

SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: This previous year has been a difficult one for everyone across Ontario, but it has been particularly difficult for those with developmental disabilities.

I am particularly proud that Ontario was the first province in Canada to prioritize individuals with developmental disabilities to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in phase 2. This group has become eligible effective today.

Members in this House know that this is a community near and dear to my heart.

Near the beginning of the pandemic, I started hosting monthly virtual meetings with representatives from the developmental services sector. Over the course of many months, we have tackled dozens of issues, including ensuring adequate supply of PPE, expanding emergency daycare to our incredible developmental services workers, DSWs, or ensuring that they were included in our pandemic pay.

DSWs, like PSWs, provide an invaluable service in our communities. They work tirelessly with a unique and complex population of kids and adults. I have seen first-hand at my brother's home the dedication that these men and women bring to the job every day.

While we've often taken the time throughout the pandemic to thank our PSWs for their incredible work, today I want to take a moment, on behalf of everyone in this House, to sincerely thank all of our passionate and devoted DSWs. You certainly rank highly in the pantheon of our COVID-19 heroes. Thanks for all you do to provide incredible care to my brother and to all the special guys and gals right across this province.

COVID-19 DEATHS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I've been informed that the Leader of the Opposition has a point of order that she wishes to raise at this time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 199 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 over the past week.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to observe a moment's silence at this time in memory of the 199 Ontarians who have succumbed to COVID-19 in the past week. Agreed? Agreed.

Members will please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Please take your seats.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Following the Armed Forces report back around the end of May last year, the Premier pledged this: "As soon as we received this report on Monday, we launched a full investigation.... And the results of our investigation will be turned over to the police."

Yesterday, it was made clear by the Solicitor General in her media scrum that there was no investigation launched. The investigation he promised never, in fact, took place. Why not?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. The Patient Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the long-term-care commissioners have scrutinized the events of the COVID-19 pandemic in long-term care, and the Ontario Ombudsman is currently examining and investigating as well. All deaths in long-term-care homes are required to be reported to the coroner and, where appropriate, he also investigates.

The Premier promised an investigation in the wake of the Canadian Armed Forces report and that investigation took place. Each home was inspected by two or more inspectors, some of those lasting over a month. Those reports were posted publicly. Had inspectors found potentially criminal conduct, they would have passed that information on to the police.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Leader of the Opposition, supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, there's just no evidence that the Premier actually followed through on his promise for an investigation. There was no investigation. There were no police charges. The commission, we all know, found that 26 people in long-term care died not of COVID-19 but of dehydration and neglect. In fact, for the last several days the Premier and the minister have refused to tell Ontarians when they learned of this horrifying fact—what they knew, and when.

The Premier promised the people of Ontario, he promised grieving families, that there would be an investigation, that there would be accountability, that there would be justice. Why, at the time of these families' greatest pain, did the Premier decide to lie to them?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition will withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I withdraw, Speaker.

Why did the Premier make the promise to families that he had no intention of keeping?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, I reject the premise of this statement that's been included in a question.

The virus moved faster than any government could have. In April of last year we were being updated daily with the situation in long-term-care homes across the province. A whole structure had been created to address this issue. What we did know is that several homes were in very dire circumstances. Their staffing was collapsing. They had critical problems in the delivery of care to residents. We moved quickly to activate the request for the Canadian Armed Forces.

These homes had a large number of staff that were either sick, off because of potential contact with COVID, or afraid. The remaining staff were overwhelmed and the homes were spiralling down. We knew these homes were in a dire situation and that's why we called in the Canadian Armed Forces. The Armed Forces did their preparation and were in the homes by April 26. We knew it was needed and that's why we stepped up, along with all the other measures that we had taken.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sadly, families have learned that the Premier's words are meaningless. There was no investigation, as he promised. There were no criminal charges laid. The second wave of COVID-19 took more lives than the first wave because there was no plan to protect seniors.

After breaking the promise about the iron ring around long-term care, after breaking the promise of an investigation after the Canadian Armed Forces report was released, why would anybody in Ontario believe a word this Premier says about fixing long-term care?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Long before the pandemic hit, our government was addressing the long-standing issues that both the Auditor General's report has pointed to as well as the commission into long-term care—long-standing structural issues both with the capacity, the staffing and the crowding in long-term care that the governments preceding for 30 years did not address.

What we did during the pandemic was absolutely put every resource possible, whether it was the integration with the acute care sector; getting the public health units into the homes immediately; monitoring these homes in a structure that was intended to note in detail what these homes were going through; integrating with the acute care sector; using the staffing like the Ontario resident support aides; also the pandemic pay, the temporary wage increases; making sure that we were getting the IPAC teams into the homes, including the expertise; and really looking at our commitment to an unprecedented four hours of direct care, with billions of dollars to develop the capacity and the staffing—27,000 staff to be hired.

There is a plan, we're acting on it and we've been doing this all along, even through the pandemic.

1040

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. The commission report that was released last Friday was horrific in its detailing of the situation in long-

term care: neglect, dehydration, COVID-19 running rampant. Yesterday, the Premier said, "The buck stops with me," but it looks like the only thing that this Premier is taking responsibility for is passing that buck.

In fact, back in April of last year, on April 23 of last year, he said pretty much the same thing: "At the end of the day, the buck stops with me." He's not here to get that buck, but it stops with him—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Leader of the Opposition knows full well she can't make reference to the absence of any member. Please don't do it again. And conclude your question.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Since that day when he made that claim last year, 3,136 seniors died from COVID-19 in long-term care. So the question is: Is it really meaningful at all when the Premier claims that the buck stops with him? Because the commission said, "There was no plan to protect residents in long-term care." Does the Premier take responsibility for that?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Again, I've said repeatedly that I take full responsibility for the well-being of residents, staff and their families. I was doing this long before I became Minister of Long-Term Care as a family doctor, serving the vulnerable, serving our community and providing, in some instances, life-saving care.

Every government for over 30 years has failed our seniors: the Rae government, Harris, Eves, McGuinty and Wynne. It is this government that began as soon as we were elected to understand the need—the overcrowding, the capacity issues in long-term care—and to understand what could be done; creating a stand-alone ministry; making sure that we had a focus on the needs of residents, putting them at the centre; addressing these issues with a monumental commitment, with dollars behind it for four hours of daily direct care, which no previous government had ever done, which would put us leaders in the country; the 27,000 staff needed to do that; rebuilding the homes, rebuilding the staff—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As I've already said, the families in this province have learned the hard way that the Premier's words are meaningless. On March 30, 2020, the Premier said that there was "an iron ring of protection" around long-term care. The commission report says clearly that there was no iron ring. It was a fallacy. The majority of those who died in the first wave of COVID-19 died between March 22 and April 22, when this supposed iron ring was supposed to be in place.

In fact, the commission said this: "no plan to provide a surge of workers to replace those who inevitably could not or would not come to work in a pandemic"; and "no plan for infection control." Does the Premier take responsibility for that?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Despite the remarks from the member opposite, there was a plan. There was a plan even before the pandemic, as I've mentioned. And during

the pandemic, we were taking every measure to shore up the staffing: Ontario resident support aides, the pandemic pay, the temporary wage increase. We were able to hire into long-term care over 8,600 staff members. We were also making sure that we were integrating with the acute care sector to get that expertise into the home—the infection prevention and control expertise, the public health expertise. And we were making emergency orders and amending regulations as quickly as was possible to address these issues. And then we also maintained during this the imperative of making sure that we could redevelop and modernize the sector, with a plan to rebuild the staffing that had been so long neglected and rebuild the capacity, create the integration into the community, and create the integration into public health.

The Premier said that we stand here and point to all the problems we inherited. We can point to 30 years of underinvestment from government, Liberal, Conservative and NDP. None of that matters because we are the government today and we do not want them to look back in 20 years and say what more we could—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, shockingly, tragically—in fact, avoidably—the second wave was worse than the first wave. On September 24, this minister said this: “We have a comprehensive plan that will address the issues in long-term care to stabilize homes ... to stabilize the staffing. There is a robust plan. There are dollars behind it.” Then she went on to say, “99.7% of our long-term-care homes in Ontario are managing very well.” I think she was taking lessons from the Minister of Education when she said that.

But Speaker, 1,902 seniors lost their lives to COVID-19 in long-term care after the minister made those claims. The commission was clear: There was no staffing plan; there was no infection control plan; there was no iron ring.

Will the Premier of this province take responsibility for that, and if he won't, will he stop saying that he's taking responsibility?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for allowing me the time to clarify that statement. There definitely was a plan. The pandemic pay was able to achieve over 8,600 people into long-term care at a critical time. The long-standing staffing crisis that preceded the pandemic was certainly a stumbling block and certainly put us behind where we would have liked to have been.

We were working with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the public health units, Ontario Health, Public Health Ontario, and our medical officers of health. All of this was a coordinated effort.

And really, the IPAC, the infection prevention and control—we got dollars to our homes and supported the IPAC hubs, the training for the staff, and the infection prevention and control leads in the homes, making sure that we integrated with the expertise that was available. This was being done rapidly because of the long-standing

issues that had been left behind by the previous governments. The commission and the Auditor General reports are very clear on that. These were structural deficits.

The magnitude of the second wave was so enormous that it was very difficult to overcome, and we worked—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sara Singh: My question is for the Premier. Ontarians are sick and tired of empty words and broken promises. They're sick and tired of Liberal governments and Conservative governments promising the moon to get elected, but when it comes time to actually delivering—nothing.

Speaker, we can't let another report on long-term care sit on the shelf and gather dust. Too many Ontarians have already paid the price because Liberals and Conservatives spent years doing just that.

So my question to the Premier is, will he commit to implementing the recommendations in the long-term-care report and will he commit to doing so immediately?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply for the government, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I thank you for the question. We take the recommendations from the commission on long-term care extremely seriously and we thank the commissioners for their insights and their good work. As I said, there are 85 recommendations. Some of those are already being acted on—and also with their interim recommendations.

After many, many years of neglect, the commissioner's report is a guide to help us move forward to help us understand objectively what happened in the past, the long-standing issues, what we're doing that is effective, and what we can do in the future. They've made very important recommendations in terms of staffing and capacity issues and infection prevention and control. We will continue to address the recommendations. We will have very public reporting on this to make sure that the public is aware of our progress as we move through these recommendations to understand more fully how we can implement them.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Taking those recommendations seriously means implementing them immediately, Speaker. Conservatives can flip-flop all they want, but the reality is that no one in the province of Ontario believes a word that they are saying. They promised an iron ring—never delivered on that. They promised to investigate the horrors in long-term care and make sure that neglect never happened; they didn't deliver on that either, Speaker. And they voted against every single motion in this House that we, on this side of the House, presented. Why? We're all unsure of that.

1050

Speaker, my question, again, to the Minister of Long-Term Care and the Premier: Will the Premier and the

Minister of Long-Term Care commit to implementing the recommendations in the long-term-care commission's report? No more delays—they need to fix long-term care, hire more PSWs and make sure that permanent pandemic pay is made available.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Once again, I appreciate the comments from the opposition because it gives me the opportunity to say what we have done and will do. During the pandemic, there was no doubt that we were moving to address all the issues that were creating the problems—the staffing, the overcrowding—creating the specialized care centre that would allow us to create capacity in the long-term-care homes. I thank the Grace hospital for being involved in that.

We have made sure to get dollars, over \$2 billion, to our homes for infection prevention and control, the staffing needs, the capacity issues and measures that would help shore up these homes during the attack by COVID. After that, we made sure to have the dollars behind our commitment to four hours, on average, of daily care per resident.

The 27,000 staff that we're hiring into our long-term-care homes as they graduate through our college programs across Ontario, through the career colleges and through the district school boards—this will be more than 10,000 people.

I ask the opposition, consider why you voted against our \$2 billion into long-term care to fight the pandemic, why you voted against the measures that we were taking to shore up these homes. You should ask yourself that.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Our government has maintained an unwavering commitment to protecting the health and safety of all Ontarians, and yet the people of this province continue to be placed at an unnecessarily higher risk of the introduction and spread of COVID variants due to a failure of the federal government to protect our borders.

Can the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction tell this House what steps the government has taken to urge Ottawa to finally get serious about protecting our borders?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for that question. Since December, our government, led by Premier Ford, has been urging the Prime Minister to take stronger actions at our border. We have sent three official letters to Minister Blair and the federal government asking them to take action to protect Ontarians. Unfortunately, we have received no response.

We know that since February, over 5,000 air travel passengers have tested positive for COVID-19. We need to ensure that the people of Ontario are protected from these variants. We now have confirmation of the B1617 variant in Quebec. In Ontario, we have it in Ottawa now, as of yesterday, as the chief medical officer for Ottawa had mentioned.

We need to ensure that we do everything we can to get through this third wave, and for that, we need the Prime Minister to step up and secure our borders.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Clearly, these variants are not swimming into Ontario. We know that these variants of concern coming from other countries are now the dominant forms of the virus in Canada. When it comes to international travel, border protection is a federal duty, and they have a responsibility to protect Ontarians.

Speaker, can the minister please explain why strict measures at our borders, including a ban on non-essential travel, would help protect Ontarians from variants of concern?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We know that 90% of cases today are variants of concern. We know that Premier Ford was first Premier in all of Canada to implement the testing at our borders after the federal government refused to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we have three simple asks: Ban all non-essential travel into the province of Ontario and the country, close the loopholes at the borders, and ensure that there is pre-departure PCR testing before landing in Ontario for domestic flights as well. We know that people are flying into the United States in Buffalo or Windsor and walking across our borders so they can circumvent mandatory requirements for border crossings. This is unacceptable. As we face the third wave here in the province of Ontario, we need stronger measures and we need the federal government to act now.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: After a very difficult year, parents were looking for a bit of hope this week. They hoped to hear about a fully funded plan to safely reopen schools, to get our kids off screens and back in classrooms. What they got instead was a minister who seems to have given up on safe schools and who introduced a plan to make painful online learning permanent.

Why is this government using the cover of the pandemic to try to force this radical change on our public education system—now, of all times—instead of supporting our kids, our educators and our families where they need it most: back face to face in smaller, safer classrooms?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I am proud that under our Progressive Conservative government, we are investing more than any government in the history of this province, \$1.6 billion, specifically in COVID-19 resources. After months of the members opposite and the teacher unions asserting that there would be a reduction, I'm proud that there is a \$2-billion enhancement for next year to ensure we continue to have public health nurses in our schools, asymptomatic testing, access to PPE, more staffing, more cleaning and enhanced screening. These are the investments that the medical community have called for that our Premier is delivering—in fact, Speaker, a targeted plan of \$85 million to help support learning recovery.

Yes, we believe, on this side of the House, that choice for parents at a time of—it's still unknown where this pandemic will take us in the coming months. Giving parents the choice of remote learning is a strength, knowing full well that we've invested \$40 million more in our most recent budget to hire more staff, to expand our infrastructure and to build upon the nearly 200,000 more tablets and Internet connections supporting families. We're going to be there for students and make sure schools reopen in September safely while maintaining excellence within our classrooms.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what's historic: What's historic is this minister's exaggeration. Ontarians across this province are just tired of it.

A closer look at school board funding shows an actual increase of just 0.28% over last year's grants. I want to point out that that is way below inflation. The Pupil Foundation Grant is down, despite a projected increase in enrolment, and boards are going to be forced to dip into their depleted reserves once again. This flatlining of funding means real cuts to classrooms, and parents know that this absurd plan for permanent online learning is about moving more dollars out of schools into private companies and undermining public education. That's no choice at all.

Our kids need care, not cuts; safe schools, not more screen time. How can this Premier and this minister possibly justify this?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, let's hear from some of the stakeholders who have commented on the matter. The head of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association said that they are "pleased that the government will continue to provide funding for many pandemic-related items, including personal protective equipment, public health nurses, and renewal of technology and devices."

In the words of Lawrence Barns, the president and CEO of the Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario: "By resourcing educators to better meet the needs of all students, Ontario is advancing more accessible, caring, inclusive learning in our education system."

In the words of Katherine Hay, the president and CEO of Kids Help Phone: "We are grateful to the government and to the Ministry of Education for continuing to provide critical funds to support the mental health of youth in" this province.

Our commitment is to ensure schools reopen in September safely, with a \$1.6-billion plan that has been designed following the best medical expert advice, giving choice to parents, in-class and online, and maintaining the high standards within our schools. That's our commitment and that's what we're going to continue to focus on for September.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. There are two ongoing investigations connected to the

Premier's friends: Vaughan Working Families and his pick for OLG chair. There is, however, one investigation that hasn't happened yet.

Last May, after the Canadian Armed Forces filed their final report into the conditions in long-term care, the Premier told all of us a full investigation had been launched and the results would be turned over to police—never happened. The Solicitor General confirmed that yesterday. Despite 26 residents dying from dehydration and malnourishment and other horrific findings in the report, no investigation was launched.

1100

Speaker, through you: Will the Premier explain to families who lost a loved one why the investigation he said he launched never happened?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I certainly refute the accusations of the member opposite. The Patient Ombudsman, the Auditor General and the commissioners have all scrutinized the events of the COVID-19 pandemic in long-term care. The Ontario Ombudsman is still investigating. All deaths in long-term-care homes are required to be reported to the coroner and, where appropriate, the coroner investigates. The Premier promised an investigation in the wake of the Canadian Armed Forces report, and that investigation took place. Each home was also inspected by two or more inspectors, some of those lasting over a month. Those reports were posted publicly. Had inspectors found potentially criminal conduct, they would have passed that information on to the police.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Perhaps the minister should speak to the Solicitor General, because it hasn't happened, and if she actually read the commission's report and saw some of the things that were in there and also understood the commission's lawyers' remarks afterwards, the failure to provide the necessities of life or death from negligence could trigger criminal charges against home operators or the corporate directors of the people who own it.

In November of last year, the government passed legislation that would shield itself and long-term-care-home operators from COVID-19-related lawsuits. The government also failed to enact provisions in Bill 160 that would have made it easier to take over a home or to suspend a licence. It also would have increased fines for home operators and directors and corporations that were found to be in non-compliance.

Speaker, can the Premier explain why it's more important to protect his friends in large long-term-care-home for-profit operations than it is to find justice for families who lost a loved one?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I want to be clear that this has been devastating for families, residents, staff and for many long-term-care homes. Getting the Canadian Armed Forces into the homes, using the hospitals, the local public health units, Ontario Health and working across government and the sector to shore up these homes—no one will

deny the tragedy that occurred, but it does not automatically mean that someone broke the law. The appropriate people to determine whether a crime has taken place are the police and the courts, not politicians. I don't think it's appropriate for the opposition to politicize our courts, our police services or this tragedy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The member for Guelph said the other day that taking responsibility is taking action, and that's exactly what we've done throughout this pandemic, and that's what we're doing as we move forward with our plans to modernize long-term care and bring it into the 21st century. We have a plan, and we will commit to that plan.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Stricter border measures stop and slow the spread of COVID-19. This is a fact backed by the science and data, and our respected allies around the world have implemented them with great success.

While our government continues to ask for real action to secure our borders, this is not a priority for the Prime Minister. It is even more disappointing to see Steven Del Duca and the provincial Liberals resort to ugly attacks in order to score cheap political points.

Speaker, I was offended by the Liberal leader's racial remarks. Can the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction tell this House if the government's policy on securing our borders are somehow xenophobic or an attack on Ontarians, as Mr. Del Duca suggests?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I agree with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. I don't understand why certain members of the opposition are making light of serious concerns about our safety and engaging in this divisive and hurtful rhetoric.

Over a two-week period, we know that at Pearson International Airport, 35 international flights and 23 domestic flights have landed. We know that over 150,000 people in that same two-week period have crossed our land borders. In April, the region of Peel and the city of Brampton passed unanimous motions asking for the federal government to secure or restrict flights into Pearson international, given that Peel is a hot spot and is suffering from many of these variants.

Is the leader of the Liberal Party suggesting that the region of Peel or the city of Brampton councillors are racist? This is absurd.

We will continue to call on the federal government to have stronger actions at our borders to protect—

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I know many of my constituents and people around Ontario continue to follow the rules and make sacrifices in order to help defeat COVID within their community. Can the minister share what he is hearing

from his constituents in Brampton, one of the most diverse and fastest-growing parts of Ontario?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We know that these new variants are not originating in Ontario or in Canada. They're not swimming across the ocean. And people continue to use loopholes to circumvent the rules that have been put in place to protect Ontarians and secure the safety of all, especially in Brampton and Peel region.

My constituents are frustrated. They are doing their part. They are following the public health advice that has been put forward. But the federal government, after three official requests, has refused to take actions that the Premier of this province has put forward and put to the federal government.

We need to ensure that our borders are secure. We have three simple asks: Ban all non-essential travel into Ontario and Canada, close the loopholes at our land borders, and implement PCR testing to fly, even domestically, into the province of Ontario. We must secure our borders.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier emerged from a 14-day quarantine after a close contact in his office tested positive for COVID-19. Unlike the thousands of essential workers in Ontario who can't work from home and who don't have paid sick days, the Premier collected his full salary while he was in self-isolation. Thank goodness he didn't develop COVID, but if he had, he would still have collected his full salary. He wouldn't have had to rely on three paid sick days capped at \$200 a day, then apply to the federal program and wait to see if he qualified for a weekly benefit of \$500.

Why does the Premier think that he deserves 14 days of full pay while following public health advice, but the essential workers he likes to call heroes don't?

Interjections.

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

To reply, the parliamentary assistant, member for Burlington.

Ms. Jane McKenna: Let me remind the member opposite that we announced that we want to double the federal program to \$1,000 per week for four weeks, plus three paid sick days. This is the most comprehensive plan in Canada.

If a worker needs to take time off to get vaccinated, they can be paid. If a worker needs to take time off to recover from a vaccination, they can be paid. If a mom or dad has a sick child at home or symptoms related to COVID-19, they can stay home and be paid. If a worker in Ontario is suffering from mental health challenges related to COVID-19, they can stay home and get paid. This is the most generous, open and flexible plan, and balanced, because we're reimbursing all small businesses and employers.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Not only did the Premier ignore the experts calling for 14 paid sick days, but he has also made things worse for the lowest-paid Ontario workers. If low-wage workers are sick and need a full week off to recover, this government's program only pays them for three days, which is \$300 at minimum wage.

Under the federal program, they would have received \$500 for the week, but to access the federal program workers must notify their employer in writing that they will be taking unpaid sick days, apply for CRSB and hope they qualify: more barriers to prevent workers from staying home if they are sick.

1110

Why won't this government give all workers the ability to stay home if they are sick without losing their pay?

Ms. Jane McKenna: Just to be clear, without any help from you helping us at all, we worked diligently with the minister and our government to go from 12 to 14 days, down to three to five days and from 10 to 20 days. Right now, we have three paid sick days. You keep talking about 14. The math is, we have three paid sick days, and coupled with 20 on top of that, it's 23 days. It's the most comprehensive plan in Canada.

PLACES OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: My question is for the Premier. Freedom of religion, religious liberty, is a fundamental principle that supports the freedom of an individual or community in public or private to manifest its beliefs in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

This is a principle that the current government professes to support when looking for votes at campaign time, but last Sunday, Trinity Bible Chapel in Woolwich township had its religious liberty attacked, its doors locked—no service, no prayer, no congregation—as a result of the Attorney General going to court to get an injunction to take over the property and the building and shut the church down.

What is the government's justification for being the first government in Ontario's history to attack religious liberty by taking control and shutting down a church from congregating and meeting in prayer?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): And to reply, the member for Durham and parliamentary assistant.

Ms. Lindsey Park: Everyone in this House respects freedom of religion. That's never a question. In this particular case, I understand church services were held at Trinity Bible Chapel on Sunday, April 4, April 11 and April 25, 2021, despite an injunction order. As this matter is before the courts, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this time.

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

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: In addition to the injunction, the church potentially faces millions in fines and possible jail time for the church, as well as the pastors and elders. It is my understanding that the government, this week, is attempting to ask the courts to also grant its

injunction request that would give the Attorney General control of the church building and property as long as this government keeps emergency orders in place.

My question: Does this government plan on taking control of any and all church buildings of any church that congregates with more than 10 individuals while emergency orders are in place?

Ms. Lindsey Park: The court granted interim relief in the form of an order directing the sheriff to lock the doors of the church on a time-limited basis. The doors were ordered to be locked before midnight, May 1, 2021, for one week. On May 1, the sheriff locked the doors of the church. On May 6, the parties will attend court—actually, this morning—for a hearing to determine whether the order of April 30, 2021, should continue or be varied. Of course, because this is an ongoing court matter, it's really inappropriate for me to comment further.

TUITION

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: Students and their families are dealing with great social and financial uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I know our government has always put students at the centre of our education policies, and that was why I was so pleased to hear that our government is continuing with our pre-pandemic plan to help increase access to post-secondary education by ensuring its affordability for all Ontario residents.

Speaker, would the Minister of Colleges and Universities please tell the House what the government is doing to help students with more financial certainty during these difficult times?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the member for Northumberland—Peterborough South and parliamentary assistant.

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the member for that great question. We understand that students and their families make great sacrifices to pursue higher education in our post-secondary institutes across this province. That's why we're extending the tuition freeze for all post-secondary students in Ontario. This builds on the historic 10% tuition cut that this government introduced when we first took office.

Under the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, as we navigate this together, when it comes to the tuition for students across this province, we understand that in these uncertain times you need a government that's here for you and that's working with you. That's why, Mr. Speaker, my message to the students of Ontario is, as you embark on the 2021-22 student year, your tuition will not change.

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

Mr. Kaleed Rasheed: I know that our government has always put students first, and that has not changed with this pandemic. I'm glad that our government is ensuring the affordability of post-secondary education in our province for another year. I know that this is welcome news for students and their families in my riding because clear commitments like these will help increase predictability and ease the financial strain on family pocketbooks.

Speaker, would the minister please elaborate on why this important announcement is so needed for students in Ontario?

Mr. David Piccini: Again, thank you to the member for that question. After a decade in which Ontario students and their families saw the largest tuition increase in Canadian history under the previous Liberal government, our government took historic steps to lower tuition by 10% across the board for all students in this province. This was the first of its kind in Ontario, saving students and families an estimated \$450 million. Mr. Speaker, after 15 years of unchecked tuition growth that made summers all the more hard for the hard-working students of this province, our government stepped up.

In 2019-20, StatsCan shows Ontario was the only province in this federation to introduce a tuition decrease, while tuition concurrently grew in eight other provinces and one other territory. Before I was elected, tuition was the highest in Ontario across this country. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's no longer the case. Students in this province can understand that this government—

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

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Suze Morrison: My question is for the Premier. Small businesses in Toronto Centre are fed up. They've been closed for more than six months. Many have had to permanently close because they can't hold out any longer. Our once-vibrant main streets have been replaced with empty, boarded-up storefronts.

The supports that this government promised have not materialized. Some business owners in my riding who applied for the small business grant have yet to see the money actually arrive, and many have been denied without any explanation. Even those who are accepted are telling me that the grants don't cover the tens of thousands of dollars it costs to pay their rent, hydro and insurance.

Why isn't this government fixing the flawed grant program that is leaving so many of our small businesses behind?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply, the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction.

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We recognize that this is a significantly difficult time for many small businesses across the province. That is why we've put forward the largest program in all of Canada to help support small businesses through very this difficult time.

To date, for over 108,000 businesses, a total of over \$1.5 billion of direct payments have been made from the first Ontario business support grant as we continue to work through many applications. There have also been over 73,000 second automatic payments that have been made to small business owners automatically into their accounts, because we recognize that this is a significantly difficult time for them. That's another \$1.1 billion that has flowed into the accounts of small business owners. That's a total of \$2.6 billion for small businesses.

That does also recognize that we have programs in place to cover 100% of their energy costs, 100% of their property tax costs, and then they can also access Digital Main Street grants of up to \$2,500 to help them pivot digitally, because we know that during this time, strong e-commerce platforms are needed to support businesses. We'll continue to do whatever we can to get that money flowing into businesses as quickly as possible.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: Back to the minister: Andrew is a small business owner in my riding and told me he was hopeful when the government announced the business support grant program. He runs a store, and during COVID, it has been incredibly difficult. He desperately, desperately needs the help, but for weeks, he heard nothing back from your program and then was denied with no explanation. Despite making several calls and sending emails to ask why his application for the only lifeline this government is willing to offer him was rejected, he has yet to receive a reply. The stress of having absolutely no safety net after two lockdowns is getting too hard to carry.

1120

Why is this government refusing to help small business owners like Andrew, and how do you expect these businesses to have a fighting chance of making it through this third wave?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: We have tripled the support staff behind this program to ensure that business owners get responses as quickly as possible. I would love to ask the member to provide some more information to me afterwards so we can look into this case.

All eligible businesses that can apply to this program will receive the funding. As we have noted, over 180,000 first payments, totalling over \$1.5 billion, have been paid out. Over 73,000 second payments, totalling another \$1.1 billion, have been paid out. That's \$2.6 billion in direct supports to small businesses to date. We will do anything and everything we can to support these small businesses, including the 100% property tax relief, the 100% energy costs relief that are still out there for these businesses to access.

I will ask the member afterwards to alert me to the application, and I will take it back and ensure that we get a response for Andrew and his business.

PHYSICIANS

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last Thursday, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario issued a notice and warning to the medical profession regarding the alleged spread of misinformation: "Physicians hold a unique position of trust with the public and have a professional responsibility to not communicate anti-vaccine, anti-masking, anti-distancing and anti-lockdown statements...." Further, "Physicians who put the public at risk may face an investigation by the CPSO and disciplinary action, when warranted."

This is frightening and unacceptable. It carries the risk of vitiating informed consent. It dangerously infringes on the doctor-patient relationship. The CPSO is governed by the Regulated Health Professions Act, provincial legislation.

Will the minister support Ontario's doctors speaking their conscience, and publicly disavow the statement by the CPSO?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, as you know, the CPSO is the regulator for physicians. They are simply indicating that they want physicians to be informed and to answer any questions that people have and to provide people with accurate advice. I don't see anything wrong with that.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: There is no room for ambiguity here. The statement of the CPSO speaks for itself, and it shocked many doctors in the medical profession. COVID or no COVID, we're still a Western democracy. This government, this minister have a responsibility to defend speech. We're talking about doctors duly licensed in the province of Ontario, not rogue dissidents who are threatening the regime. A doctor should be able to say that a lockdown is harmful. A doctor should be able to say that masks outside make no sense even if public health recommends them in some outdoor situations. Censoring medical speech because it's dangerous to people's safety is something you would expect from a totalitarian regime. Is there a line that we will not cross?

I ask the minister again: Will she stand up for Ontario's doctors and disavow the threat they made against Ontario's doctors last Thursday?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I would say to the member, through you, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand what your significant concern here is. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is simply advising the doctors to rely on their own medical information and knowledge and experience, and speak to anybody asking questions of them and provide them with accurate medical advice. That's what the college should advise the physicians to do, and that is what they are doing now, so I don't believe that there's any concern with this whatsoever.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Jessica Bell: My question is to the Premier. I have surveyed local businesses to find out how the Ontario Small Business Support Grant program is helping the business community of University–Rosedale. Many businesses aren't even eligible for the program, but for those who are eligible and who have applied for aid, 85% of the businesses have not received their money—85% of eligible businesses that have applied to the government's small business program have not received their money.

Premier, I have a list of over 150 eligible businesses that have applied for the program and have been approved that have not received their money. Can the Premier commit to helping them?

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

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Yes, we will definitely—if the member opposite could pass over that list.

Every eligible business that has applied to this program will definitely get the supports they need.

As I have noted, over 108,000 businesses to date have received their first payment. That's \$1.5 billion in direct payments and support to small businesses. On top of that, we have done an automatic doubling of those first payments, and of those, 73,000 businesses have received the support; that's another \$1.1 billion. That is \$2.6 billion that has been paid out by this government to support small businesses that we recognize have had significant challenges during this time.

We also encourage those business owners to apply for the property tax rebate of 100%, the energy costs rebate of 100%, and to apply to other programs so they can get 90% of their rent covered and get their wage subsidy covered up to 75%.

Mr. Speaker, we will definitely work with the member opposite to look into the concerns that she has raised on those specific applications.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Jessica Bell: I have the list of all the businesses with their contact names, emails and phone numbers. They have requested that I give this letter to you, with the information to follow up, so I will be handing this to you after question period.

Back to the Premier: There is no question that this government is failing to help the small business community in my riding. It has taken 11 months and two province-wide shutdowns for this government to finally offer support. We're now in the third state of emergency and, quite frankly, there's not enough money flowing into University–Rosedale to help these businesses get by.

There's no money for Maria Galipo of Sicilian Sidewalk Cafe, who said that her application process was incredibly stressful. The staff in the program were uninformed and unable to help.

There is no money for people like Emile, a medical equipment manufacturer, who told me that they are at a complete breaking point and worried about paying the rent.

There is no money for Jason of One Plant in Kensington Market. He has applied, he has been approved, and he just wants to know when the money is going to arrive.

Premier, when will you fix the small business grant program so businesses can get the support they need?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: Since the start of this pandemic, we have put forward significant resources to help support small businesses that we know have been struggling during this time. That started with the first month and ensuring that they got rent relief in March, April and May, and that program has continued to date.

We have ensured that we put forward the main street relief grant. That was a \$60-million program to support the PPE costs that businesses were facing.

We have ensured that those in red zones and those in lockdown zones have always had their property tax covered to 100%, that they have had their energy costs covered to 100%.

The small business support grant—the largest support grant program for businesses anywhere in Canada—has already put forward \$2.6 billion of direct supports into the accounts of small business owners. We recognize that there are some business owners who haven't received it. We will work with the member opposite and others and ensure that those small businesses that need the support get the support and direct payments into their account.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. This past year, the pandemic has been difficult for Ontario families to navigate. The uncertainty of businesses opening and closing has been an unpredictable experience shared by schools and child care facilities. Not everyone can work from home. It is even more challenging for parents if their children are at home, as well. It is mostly women who bear the burden of caring for and educating their children at home, and it is their careers that suffer. This has been established as a major characteristic of the she-cession, and yet we hear nothing from the government about a she-covey.

Speaker, the federal government has budgeted for a \$10-a-day daycare plan, and today Steven Del Duca and the Ontario Liberals have promised to do the same.

Will the Premier work with the Liberals, the federal government and the women of Ontario to provide the economic infrastructure of affordable daycare and quality early learning so everyone in Ontario can build back better?

1130

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: The Del Duca Liberals announced, within their first hundred days, action, but for 15 years, for 5,000 days, the legacy they left is income stagnation, the highest child care costs in the nation as well as rising costs of living. It was one of the most expensive child care systems in the world under your watch. It really is regrettable, with 800 child care centres closing over a four-year period under your watch.

I think the sharp contrast is under our Premier where we have a \$2-billion investment on an annualized basis, creating 30,000 new spaces within our schools—last year alone, 16,000 more spaces were created—and in our most recent budget, a top-up to the child care tax credit, providing up to \$1,500 per child in the pockets of parents, with maximum flexibility, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all system does not work for moms and dads in all parts of this province. Yes, we're going to work with the federal government in collaboration to make life affordable, but we'll take no lessons from the Del Duca-Wynne Liberals—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I urge this government to take lessons from the experience of parents. I just talked to a mom of three, who has two toddlers under her arm and one school-aged child outside working online on his own. It is so unfortunate that this government cannot look past their own partisan agenda and govern, invest and support women in Ontario.

My riding of Scarborough–Guildwood faces an affordable child care crisis and a before- and after-school deficit. There simply aren't enough programs available in the riding. Without an expansion of child care and early learning and before- and after-school care, women cannot break the cycle of having to take lower-paying, part-time jobs.

The Ontario Liberal Party has committed to cutting the costs of before- and after-school care by 50%, which could help inject \$7 billion every year into our economy and increase women's participation in the labour market. Does the Premier want to invest in these programs or will he continue to transfer those costs to women in Ontario?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Through our government, we're going to continue to make life affordable for working moms and dads in this province, but we will not follow the approach and the policy program of the former Liberal government, under Steven Del Duca, where under their leadership child care became almost the most expensive program in the nation. That is not a metric you should be or any one of us should be proud of.

And so, what did we do in our first budget? We introduced a child care tax credit where up to 75% of eligible expenses are supporting 300,000 parents. We topped it up in the most recent budget under the Minister of Finance's leadership, a 20% top-up, now covering 90% of eligible costs. Last year, 16,000 more spaces were created, in contrast to their government, where we had 800 child care centres close over the last four years of their government and the most expensive child care system. It's obviously something most distressing. What parents deserve is choice, affordability and access, and our Premier will deliver it.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. The Auditor General's damning report on the government's COVID response illustrated a serious concern that long-term care and retirement homes are being used to warehouse alternative-level-of-care patients—patients like my constituent Jon, who was in hospital recovering from his second leg amputation.

When the minister gave the edict to clear patients out to create room for COVID patients, Jon was sent to a new ALC wing in a long-term-care home and his family was assured that he would have access to the same level of care that he received in the hospital. But he's been stuck in the ALC wing since August 2020. He is being billed \$1,034 a day. I have a bill here for nearly a quarter of a million dollars; \$241,956, to be exact.

This minister keeps saying that she takes full responsibility, but my question to the minister, through you, Mr.

Speaker, is: Can the minister explain how she has allowed this to happen to Jon and the tens of thousands of people who are waiting for a long-term-care bed in the province of Ontario?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I thank the honourable member for her question. I'm, of course, not familiar with the specifics of the case that she raises, but if she would like to send it over after question period, we'll certainly take a look.

BIRTH OF MEMBER'S NEPHEW

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my brother Andrew Hunter and his wife, Ildiko Horvath, on the birth of Jordan Isaac Oscar Hunter, who is five months old today.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that on the ballot list draw of November 4, 2019, Mr. Smith, Peterborough–Kawartha, assumes ballot item number 83, and on the ballot list draw of May 5, 2021, Ms. Fee assumes ballot item number 85.

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 the investigation into the Canadian Armed Forces report. This matter will be debated Tuesday, May 11, 2021, following private members' public business.

There being no further business at this time, the House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

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 a certain bill in her office.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Wong): The following is the title of the bill to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to amend the Executive Council Act in respect of attendance at Question Period / Loi modifiant la Loi sur

le Conseil exécutif à l'égard de la présence à la période des questions.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SKILLED TRADES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 OUVRANT DES PERSPECTIVES DANS LES MÉTIERS SPÉCIALISÉS

Mr. McNaughton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 288, An Act to enact the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 288, Loi édictant la Loi de 2021 ouvrant des perspectives dans les métiers spécialisés.

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): Would the Minister of Labour care to briefly explain his bill?

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government's mission is to get more people into the skilled trades. The Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act, 2021, will help us accomplish our mission.

PETITIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: Hi. Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of Fatima Islam. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Don't Increase Class Sizes or Cancel Full-Day Kindergarten.

"Whereas the vast majority of parents, students, and educators support smaller class sizes and the current model of full-day kindergarten and want the best education possible for the students of Ontario; and

"Whereas larger class sizes negatively impacts the quality of education, reduces access to teaching resources, and significantly diminishes teacher-student interactions; and

"Whereas the impact of larger class sizes will be particularly detrimental to students who need additional support; and

"Whereas Ontario has an internationally recognized public education system that requires careful attention and the investment to ensure all of our students can succeed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to commit to reducing class sizes, maintain the current model of full-day kindergarten, and make the necessary investments in public education to build the schools our students deserve."

I'm very happy to support this petition. I'm going to affix my signature and table it with the Clerks.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Jeff Burch: "Workers' Comp is a Right...."

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

I affix my signature.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by the good people of London West, and it is entitled "Protect Water as a Public Good.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, affix my signature and will send it to the table.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Michael Mantha: J'ai une pétition ici à titre « Interdire les frais d'EPP dans les maisons de retraite.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario sont en grande partie des entreprises privées; et

« Attendu que ces entreprises ont la responsabilité de fournir l'équipement de protection personnelle (EPP) à leurs employé(e)s; et

« Attendu que de nombreuses maisons de retraite ajoutent des frais d'EPP à la facture mensuelle des résident(e)s, mais l'EPP n'est pas pour les résident(e)s, mais pour les employé(e)s de la maison de retraite; et

« Attendu que les résident(e)s de certaines maisons de retraite de Sudbury ont organisé des campagnes de lettres pour que l'augmentation des frais pour les EPP ne soit pas refilée aux résident(e)s mais payée par les propriétaires des maisons de retraite;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de traiter les aîné(e)s de notre province avec respect et d'interdire les frais supplémentaires liés à la COVID, y compris l'EPP, aux résident(e)s des maisons de retraite. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition. Je mets ma signature et je la présente à la table des greffiers.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's retirement homes are largely privately owned corporations; and

"Whereas these businesses have a responsibility to provide personal protective equipment ... to their employees; and

"Whereas many retirement homes are adding PPE charges to the residents' monthly bill, but the PPE is not for the residents but for the employees of the retirement home; and

"Whereas residents of some Sudbury retirement homes have effectively organized letter-writing campaigns and actions to have the PPE charges to residents cancelled and recognized as a retirement home's cost of doing business;

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

"Treat our province's seniors with respect and ban any additional COVID-related fees, including PPE, to retirement home residents."

I certainly support this, will be affixing my signature and giving it to the Clerk.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} Marit Stiles: C'est un plaisir d'introduire cette pétition intitulée « Interdire les frais d'EPP dans les maisons de retraite.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario sont en grande partie des entreprises privées; et

« Attendu que ces entreprises ont la responsabilité de fournir l'équipement de protection personnelle (EPP) à leurs employé(e)s; et

« Attendu que de nombreuses maisons de retraite ajoutent des frais d'EPP à la facture mensuelle des résident(e)s, mais l'EPP n'est pas pour les résident(e)s, mais pour les employé(e)s de la maison de retraite; et

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« Attendu que les résident(e)s de certaines maisons de retraite de Sudbury ont organisé des campagnes de lettres pour que l'augmentation des frais pour les EPP ne soit pas refilée aux résident(e)s mais payée par les propriétaires des maisons de retraite;

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de traiter les aîné(e)s de notre province avec respect et d'interdire les frais supplémentaires liés à la COVID, y compris l'EPP, aux résident(e)s des maisons de retraite. »

Merci, et je vais affixer ma signature et prendre la—

The Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Merci. Très bien.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I have a petition entitled "Protect water as a public good."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and will affix my name.

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Workers' Comp is a Right."

"Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

"Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

"Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

"Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages and protection from discrimination;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

"Eliminate the practice of 'deeming' or 'determining,' which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

"Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

"Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on 'pre-existing conditions' that never affected the worker's ability to function prior to the work injury."

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

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M. Tom Rakocevic: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

« Attendu que les maisons de retraite de l'Ontario sont en grande partie des entreprises privées; et

« Attendu que ces entreprises ont la responsabilité de fournir l'équipement de protection personnelle (EPP) à leurs employé(e)s; et

« Attendu que de nombreuses maisons de retraite ajoutent des frais d'EPP à la facture mensuelle des résident(e)s, mais l'EPP n'est pas pour les résident(e)s, mais pour les employé(e)s de la maison de retraite; et

« Attendu que les résident(e)s de certaines maisons de retraite de Sudbury ont organisé des campagnes de lettres pour que l'augmentation des frais pour les EPP ne soit pas refilée aux résident(e)s mais payée par les propriétaires des maisons de retraite.

« Nous, soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de traiter les aîné(e)s de notre province avec respect et d'interdire les frais supplémentaires liés à la COVID, y compris l'EPP, aux résident(e)s des maisons de retraite. »

I will certainly be signing this and providing this to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, you'll find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice regarding the precedence of private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that Madame Collard assumes ballot item number 89 and Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item number 95 on the ballot list drawn on November 4, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader has moved that Madame Collard assumes ballot item number 89 and Mr. Gravelle assumes ballot item number 95 on the ballot list drawn on November 4, 2019. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order: In accordance with standing order 59, I'd just like to outline the order of business for next week.

On Monday morning, we will be dealing with private members' business standing in the name of the member for Peterborough–Kawartha, which is Bill 281, An Act to amend Christopher's Law, after which we will adjourn until members' statements.

In the afternoon, we will proceed with a bill that was just introduced by the Minister of Labour for the balance of the day.

On Tuesday, we will again, both in the morning and in the afternoon sessions, be dealing with a bill introduced by the Minister of Labour. That evening, we will move to PMB by the member for Toronto–St. Paul's, which is private member's notice of motion number 157.

On Wednesday, we will be again continuing on with a bill introduced by the Minister of Labour. In the evening, we will move to PMB by the member for Essex, which is Bill 272, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act with respect to the inclusion of advanced glucose monitoring devices in the Assistive Devices Program.

On Thursday, we will continue on with the Minister of Labour's bill, and in the evening there will be a PMB by the member for London North Centre, which is Bill 277, An Act to amend the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act with respect to assistive devices to support individuals with mental health needs in their homes and communities.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, should things change with respect to the length of debate on any of the bills that we brought forward, we will work with the House leaders'

offices to ensure that the schedule is updated for the table and for yourself.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAMIL GENOCIDE EDUCATION
WEEK ACT, 2021LOI DE 2021 SUR LA SEMAINE
DE SENSIBILISATION AU GÉNOCIDE
DES TAMOULS

Mr. Thanigasalam moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week / Projet de loi 104, Loi proclamant la Semaine de sensibilisation au génocide des Tamouls.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Thanigasalam has moved third reading of Bill 104, and I recognize him to lead off the debate.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I'm honoured to rise today in this Legislature to speak on third reading of my private member's bill, Tamil Genocide Education Week.

[Remarks in Tamil]

I will begin with a trigger warning: I'll be sharing stories about the horrors of the Mullivaikkal massacre and will mention aspects of and related to genocide and trauma.

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This year marks the 12th anniversary of the Mullivaikkal massacre, yet I can hear the cries and screams of the Tamil people as if it were just yesterday. War, violence and structural genocide have been ongoing for decades in Sri Lanka. However, in May 2009, widely commemorated as the May Massacre, the Sri Lankan government engaged in a heightened program of genocide marked by artillery shelling, abductions, rape, murder and denial of food and medicine to Tamils in Mullivaikkal. Those days were some of the toughest days. It was a living nightmare for the Tamil people. The radio that once played joyous Tamil songs now only spoke of the tragedies of our brothers and sisters being killed, raped and injured. With tears in our eyes, Tamils around the globe took to the streets, pleading for intervention with world governments. Yet despite our best attempts, just like that, in a span of a few weeks, we lost over 146,000 of our people.

The horrors of this time have, sadly, become a part of us. We carry it with us wherever we go, like a hundred-pound brick, unable to shed its weight.

I hear of people who cannot bear to turn on the radio once again, for fear of hearing the devastating news. I hear of people who do not visit the websites where they saw pictures of the devastation. I hear of people who stopped watching Tamil news on TV after seeing the graphic images of injured, mutilated and dead bodies. I hear of people who say they can taste the pain of our people when

they drink kanji, one of the foods that sustained Tamil people in Mullivaikkal in 2009. I hear of people who say they can smell the stench of rotting bodies after seeing the images of mass graves.

One of my constituents once shared that, after hearing a story of a young Tamil child attempting to feed on their dead mother's breasts, she could not feed her own child without tears streaming down her cheeks.

Others have shared stories about how even a Tim Hortons cup, a vadai or a newspaper all remind them of the time the community took to the streets in 2009 and trigger painful memories.

I, too, like my constituents, have unsuccessfully been able to wash away these memories. These are memories that follow around us, like a ghost. So I understand their pain, their grief. Sadly, I have tasted it myself.

There are more stories than I can ever tell.

I hear from business owners, public servants, health care workers, front-line care workers, essential workers, that they still hold a tremendous amount of pain and grief from the Tamil genocide.

Many Tamil youth played a key role in advocating for interventions and continue to share stories of how the traumas of the past continue to affect them today. Even today, as these youth share their stories on social media, there has been international interference trying to silence their voices. However, their stories matter and we must hear them.

These are the words of Mathura Ratnam, a trauma settlement counsellor. She says, "I am a Canadian-born Tamil woman who has never experienced war and genocide [first-hand]. How can I possibly understand what my people went through? It's generational trauma to be exact. I grew up hearing stories about my parents and family members escaping the war. Most of them were tortured and killed during the last days of the 2009 genocide. It hurts to this day that I will never get the chance to see them. I never imagined myself pursuing a social work degree and working with victims of torture and war. However, I realized that the stories and experiences my family members and my Tamil people have shared with me really impacted my life decisions."

Intergenerational and historic traumas run deep and continue for many years. Studies into the mental effects of the Rwandan genocide have found that even many years later, survivors and their families suffered from trauma, PTSD, and depressive and anxiety symptoms. Genocide affects an entire community of people and continues to hurt. We must help ease the pain.

Recognition is a key part of healing. The Sri Lankan state has not only denied the responsibility for the genocide; they have been actively working to erase the memory of the genocide. Even the memory of genocide and remembering it is being targeted. Recently, a memorial monument commemorating the Mullivaikkal massacre at the University of Jaffna was demolished. This has been widely condemned by the Tamil diaspora and many leaders across the world. These incidents continue to spark fear and reignite the trauma the Tamil community has been

experiencing due to the genocide. The suffering is ongoing and continues to this day.

Diaspora Tamils have strongly urged their respective governments to help acknowledge the pain and suffering they have endured and that have been endured by their kin. Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate, famously said, "For the dead and the living, we must bear witness." A Tamil Genocide Education Week provides an opportunity to reflect on and educate the public about the enduring lessons of the Tamil genocide and other crimes against humanity. We need to ensure safe spaces for people to discuss topics like this, and recognize that healing needs to take place. There is greater power in collective healing.

I have been receiving tremendous support for moving forward with this bill. There are so many Tamil youth in Ontario who came forward to share stories about their pain and suffering through the "I am Tamil" campaign. Thousands of people from Barrie, Sudbury, Windsor, Waterloo, Hamilton, across the GTA and all the way to Ottawa have been writing letters to their MPPs asking to pass this bill. I want to thank each and every one of these individuals for their tireless efforts in supporting this bill.

Most notably, I want to thank grassroots organizations such as the National Council of Canadian Tamils, the Canadian Tamil Youth Alliance and the Tamil Youth Organization for all your continuous efforts. We couldn't have come this far without the support of these organizations and the community at large.

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Last but not least, I want to thank my colleagues for taking the time to listen to your constituents regarding their trauma and for continuing to support this bill. Today, this assembly is making history. We stand together to denounce genocide and educate our future generations about the impacts of genocide. While we cannot bring back the lives that were lost, together, today, we can make a difference in the lives of many Tamil Canadians by acknowledging their pain and the loss of their family and friends.

We are giving space for the Tamil community to heal right here in Ontario. We stand together as a true example of democracy. We stand together for the people of this province.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Vanakkam. It's an honour to rise today to speak in support of Tamil Genocide Education Week, because this week will provide a space for Tamils, for Ontarians, for people across the board to learn about a grave, grave injustice against the Tamil people: a history of genocide and violence that has been carried out against the Tamil people by the Sri Lankan government.

The Sri Lankan government has a long history of persecuting the Tamil people. For decades, the Sri Lankan government has carried out a campaign of structural, direct and cultural violence and genocide against the Tamil people. We remember the organized genocide of Black July in 1983, where the Sri Lankan government provided voters lists and census data so that organized state mobs

could identify Tamil households, so organized state mobs could attack Tamils and kill Tamils in the thousands.

We remember the burning of the Jaffna library, where priceless artifacts and documents were robbed from the Tamil people. We remember the bombing of the orphanage in Sencholai, the mass graves of Chemmani. We remember the years in which Tamils were picked up in white vans to be tortured and disappeared, where their families, until today, are asking where are their loved ones who were picked up and killed by the Sri Lankan government. The Sri Lankan government has carried out a campaign of violence against the Tamil people, where Tamils have been disenfranchised socially, culturally and economically; have been denied basic freedoms in an attempt to eliminate the Tamil people, their culture and their way of life.

One of the most devastating attacks against the Tamil people was the 2009 Mullivaikkal genocide, or the Mullivaikkal massacre, where the Sri Lankan government carried out an attack that resulted in tens of thousands of Tamils being murdered and killed. Numbers as high as 150,000 Tamils were killed in a genocide carried out by the Sri Lankan government.

I remember 2009. I remember seeing Tamils organize protests across the board. I remember seeing Tamils in the thousands take to the streets here in Toronto. I remember seeing their protest sites in front of this very building of Queen's Park. I remember seeing their campsites. Day and night, through cold weather, through rain, they camped out on University Ave.

I remember a human chain of Tamils wrapping themselves around the core of downtown Toronto to bring awareness to this genocide being conducted against the Tamil people, and I'm sad to say that when the Tamil people were facing this injustice, world leaders did not answer, that at a time when Tamil people were facing so much death and destruction, they were not given the support, they were not given the awareness, they were not given the intervention that was needed.

This is a campaign of violence that continues today. We need only look at recent times to see the destruction of the Mullivaikkal monument at Jaffna university by the Sri Lankan government, where another attempt was made by the Sri Lankan government to eliminate the history of the Tamil people and this history of violence being carried out against them by the Sri Lankan government.

But what we also saw at that time was resilience. We saw the resilience of Tamil people across the world here in Brampton, in Ontario and Toronto, rise up and hold rallies to create awareness about the destruction and the erasure of Tamil history, something that happened only in 2009. From that we saw change. We saw Tamil people have an impact with their organizing.

With the passage of Tamil Genocide Education Week we are seeing the results of this organizing, of decades of Tamil people coming together to bring awareness to the injustices against the Tamil community, of rallies and organizing and youth meetings—a movement that is largely youth-led—that has resulted in this awareness being spread across the world.

Now, with the passage of Tamil Genocide Education Week, we are going to see an opportunity not just for Tamil communities to educate their next generations and their current generations about the Tamil genocide, but for non-Tamils—for Ontarians—to learn about their Tamil neighbours, to learn about the genocide, the inter-generational trauma, that continues to devastate the Tamil community.

It is an honour to rise today to stand in support of this very, very important bill, of a week for us to ensure that as Ontarians we commit ourselves to building a province where Tamil people can remember those lost in the genocide without intimidation and, further, where we can continue to organize to ensure that those who conducted this genocide are held to account. Because we must understand that to move forward is to make sure there is justice and accountability.

Let's continue to support our Tamil brothers and sisters, let's continue to fight for justice, and let's do that by immediately passing Tamil Genocide Education Week.

Thank you so much. Vanakkam.

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

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I'm standing with a heavy heart to talk about Bill 104, which is An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week.

Remarks in Tamil.

Article 1 of our Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Tamil people, as do all people, deserve to live in dignity and deserve to live freely, like their Sinhalese brothers and sisters.

Over the past 50 years Sri Lanka has committed serious human rights violations, from pre-colonial times to the post-colonial era, yet it has faced zero accountability for ethnic cleansing and genocide. This is not from a history book, Madam Speaker; I'm living proof, along with over 300,000 other Tamils who fled to Canada due to the fear of persecution.

While I was studying at the University of Jaffna over 37 years ago, my father sent a letter from my village warning me:

Remarks in Tamil.

"Son, don't come home."

He wanted me to flee the country to save my life. Since I was a student leader who fought against social injustice against all communities, including Tamil people, my life was at risk of execution.

Even after I left Sri Lanka I was worried about my family's safety in my village. In 1988, my brother was brutally stabbed and wounded by the Sri Lankan paramilitary forces. He also later escaped the country to save his life. He was a member of Parliament, and he had to leave the country in order to save his life.

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When I arrived to Canada as a war-torn refugee with a couple of hundred dollars and an almost empty bag, all I had left in me was hope and dreams. I never thought I'd be in this chamber one day to deliver this speech, to be the voice of the voiceless and the face of the faceless.

Every Tamil living in Canada has a story of why they are here—most not by choice. Unfortunately, there were many more left behind in Sri Lanka who were not able to escape and have the same fate like us.

Twelve years ago, on this day, May 18, 2009, the three-decade-long war for the Tamil Eelam ended with the massacre of the fighting forces of Eelam Tamils and innocent Tamil civilians in Mullivaikkal.

The war with weapons may have ended, but the battle for human rights and justice for genocide continues. The Sri Lankan government has won the war but hasn't won the peace with the Tamil-speaking nation.

During May 2009 alone, over 140,000 souls vanished from this earth. However, since the 1950s, approximately half a million innocents lost their lives on the beautiful island of Sri Lanka.

Madam Speaker, genocide never just happens. There is always a set of conditions, policies and practices which occur and are created to build the climate in which genocide can take place.

The passage of the Sinhala Only Act in 1956 recognized Sinhalese as the only official language, effectively barring Tamils from holding government positions. Tamils non-violently protested this structural violence, only to be met with a government-orchestrated anti-Tamil pogrom in the capital of Colombo, in the southern part of Sri Lanka.

In Canada, every citizen of our great nation has the right to express their opinion and dissatisfaction about their government or its treatment of the citizens. This is a unique quality of being Canadian. That is a value we carry each and every day. I'm proud to be a Canadian.

Every nation needs to value human life and human rights.

In Sri Lanka, Tamils were burned alive and harassed and Tamil businesses were vandalized during the anti-Tamil pogroms in 1958, 1977 and 1983. Different ruling parties and leaders were responsible for these mass atrocities over time, pointing to the responsibility of the Sri Lankan state.

One of the most emotional memories for our community was the act of cultural genocide: the destruction in 1981 of the Jaffna library, which was known for being the pinnacle of Tamil literature, culture and heritage. Seeing it burn to ashes was seen by Eelam Tamils as an act of genocide. Over 95,000 literally irreplaceable books, manuscripts and newspapers were destroyed through the command of the government—this history all because of being born and perceived as different.

Madam Speaker, in May 2009, the armed conflict ended, yet there are still-uninvestigated allegations of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Hundreds to thousands of Tamil—most of them were women and children, girls, were raped and sexually mutilated before their execution. Tamil men and women who were detained after crossing into government-controlled areas are still subjected to sexual violence today.

Speaker, what happened in Sri Lanka is genocide, by all means—the mass murder of Tamils, a well-planned modern-day genocide.

Today, we are here because of the recognition of truth. Today, people like me who were lucky to escape such a dark place finally have a voice to speak about the very grim history that we hoped never to have to relive. But it is our duty to be here and tell the world the truth of what happened in Sri Lanka.

Genocide is unfortunately part of my history. Genocide is unfortunately part of all the Tamil diaspora's history. And to move forward with peace, we must take a moment to recognize the wrongdoings so we can heal and ensure that history never repeats again. No country, no nation, no set of people should be targeted because they are different—they speak a different language or they maybe look different.

Neither any individual nor the Sri Lankan state has been held accountable for the mass atrocity committed against Tamils.

Madam Speaker, the United Nations always says, "never again," but in reality, the United Nations failed us over and over again. We can only move forward in Sri Lanka when the country fosters the norms and practices which institutions and all people are subject to. Political leaders and military officials can't simply curb these norms through political power. The rule of law must exist in Sri Lanka to build a sustainable future.

When Tamils fled Sri Lanka due to the war, 300,000 of them escaped to here, Ontario, as a safe haven. They fled because embracing their identity as a Tamil wasn't accepted over there. But here, today, we are showing that the Tamil Canadian community is rebuilding what we lost for half a century. Here in Ontario, we are able to speak our truth freely and openly. Here in Ontario, families decided to put down new roots and build a home for generations to come. Tamils in Ontario have played and continue to play an integral role to contribute to our social, economic, cultural and political fabric of this wonderful province.

Today, we are laying the foundation of healing that is needed in our society from a long history of generational trauma. The voiceless and lives that have vanished will be heard. Their story will be told. It has been my life purpose to do so. By recognizing the Tamil genocide, we affirm our collective desire to maintain awareness of this genocide and other genocides that have occurred in world history in order to prevent such a crime against humanity from happening again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you, Speaker. Vanakkam. It is an honour rise on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest—a riding that represents a large population of Tamil Canadians living and working in Scarborough, contributing to the social, economic and political fabric of our community, locally in Scarborough and across Ontario—to speak to this bill, Bill 104, the Tamil Genocide Education Week Act.

Ontario and, notably, the GTA, has one of the largest concentrations of Tamils outside southeast Asia. Tamil Canadians have families still suffering in their homeland as a result of the state-led genocide perpetrated against Tamil people between 1983 and 2009, with the peak of this brutal violence during the month of May 2009. Tamil Canadians continue to carry the pain and suffering from the loss of loved ones and the physical and mental trauma they themselves have experienced.

The United Nations defines genocide as “any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

“(a) killing members of the group;

“(b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

“(c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

“(d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

“(e) forcefully transferring children of the group to another group.”

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According to the United Nations, in May 2009 alone, about 40,000 to 75,000 Tamil civilians were brutally killed. Other estimates have placed the death toll at 146,679 civilians. These figures only reflect the death toll in 2009 leading up to May 18, the day on which the civil war ended. The loss of Tamil civilian lives during the genocide, which continued for decades in Sri Lanka, is much higher.

In addition, the Sri Lankan state has systematically excluded the Tamil population from their right to vote and to maintain their language, religion and culture, ignoring the significant population whose primary language was Tamil, thereby putting them at a serious disadvantage for participating in the public service of Sri Lanka.

That is why the awareness week bill must be a tool to not just acknowledge the horror, but honour the lives of those who were lost—as well as a step towards reconciliation, recognizing the outcry of the Tamil community to maintain awareness of this genocide and other genocides that have occurred around the world in order to prevent such crimes against humanity from happening again.

As a Bangladeshi Canadian, I understand the importance of this recognition and the work towards healing and justice. Bangladeshis have lived through their own struggle during the 1952 language movement and the brutal nine months of killing in 1971 in an attempt to erase a group's identity, their language and their culture.

As we speak of education of this genocide, it is also important to recognize the continued struggle of the people years after. My colleague the MPP for Beaches–East York conducted numerous interviews with Tamil Canadians about their experiences during this dark period of time in their lives. Today, I'd like to share some of these stories, those who have given permission to share.

She shared a story of a young family. His family had been in Colombo during the riots, and his wife had been nine months pregnant. She had had to escape from the mobs over a stone wall, and they were hidden in the basement of Sinhalese friends. It was terrifying. His wife and unborn baby were almost killed, and there were times when people came knocking at the door and checked the house, looking for them. Had they been found, it wouldn't just have been them who were killed; the family that was hiding them would have also been killed.

Another story: “A lot of houses of people we knew were bombed. My cousins were tortured and captured by the Sri Lankan government, and one of my cousins is still missing. These were my first cousins. My father's siblings live in Colombo and a couple of years ago we visited with them at a wedding in London and somehow the photos of that event got out, maybe from Facebook, and my cousin's family was taken in and interrogated. They were questioned and threatened. So now we can have no connection with anyone back home anymore.”

These stories of horror, of pain, need to be remembered. However, in recent days, we are continuing to see attempts to erase history with the dehumanization of genocide commemorations. Last year's destruction of the Mullivaikkal memorial at Jaffna university, a monument to pay tribute to the tens of thousands of Tamils massacred, is an example of the continued attempt to not only erase the shameful legacy of the state-led massacre, but also to continue the marginalization of the Tamil people in Sri Lanka. With so many deaths and the enormous loss, these destructions are some of the shameful ways to deny Tamil people the space for mourning and healing.

I would like to thank the Tamil Canadian community across Ontario, who have organized and worked tirelessly to advocate for this bill, for all of the work they do in their communities and outside of it. I want to take a moment to recognize the hundreds of thousands of people who participated in email campaigns, social media campaigns and took every opportunity to raise awareness of this important issue. Your work and your passion makes this world a better place, and it is an honour to stand here and speak to this bill and support the Tamil Canadian community across Scarborough and Ontario.

Speaker, every single one of these stories carries the immense weight of the injustices that the Tamil diaspora has experienced at the hands of the Sri Lankan government, and continue to experience to this day. The path to healing and reconciliation requires us to tell these stories, recognize the trauma and work towards justice.

I thank you for this time, and I thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for bringing this bill forward.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: My colleagues described the entire Tamil genocide in very graphic details. I'm going to focus on why it is important that this House recognizes the genocide and what is the relevancy of Bill 104 for this House, for the people of Ontario and for the people of Canada.

Madam Speaker, it is my honour to stand up in this august House to speak on an important issue dear to my heart. First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague Vijay Thanigasalam on this important milestone in his family and in the lives of those in the Tamil community.

I'm so proud that this House is acknowledging the trauma and the persecution the Tamil community in Sri Lanka faced in 2009 and onwards. It is essential to call a spade a spade. What happened to the Tamil people was a genocide. It is also essential to stand up for the truth and bring justice to the victims, their families and the survivors.

Madam Speaker, we stand up here today to acknowledge the past, not to cast blame. It is important to address the Tamil genocide issue for two reasons. First, to bring closure and healing to the wounds of the past: Without healing and closure to the victims, individually and collectively, there can be no reconciliation. Furthermore, the systematic denial policy is the final stage of genocide, as renowned genocide scholar Gregory Stanton stated. In addition to the victim, the denial policy traumatizes and victimizes the future of generations of the victim nation.

As the grandson of a survivor and third generation of the Armenian genocide survivors, I live the trauma every time the perpetrator questions or denies my grandfather's inhumane treatment, his survival story and the loss of entire generations of our family. Therefore, it is critical for us to send a message to the denialists that we will not bow down to their revisionist history and disgraceful spin.

The second reason, Madam Speaker, why we need to address this thorny issue head-on is because we owe it to humanity to learn from the mistakes of the past so that we will not repeat these atrocities again.

The 20th century is called the century of tears because over 60 million people were killed due to heinous acts of genocide. Regrettably, no society is immune from the scourge of genocide and crimes against humanity. You just need one firebrand individual to mobilize a society and turn one against each other, us versus them.

We have seen how Talaat Pasha masterminded the genocide of Armenians, Greeks, Pontians, Assyrians and Chaldeans in the Ottoman Empire. We have seen how Stalin caused the Ukrainian Holodomor. We have seen how Hitler initiated the Holocaust. We have seen how Pol Pot instigated the Cambodian genocide. We have seen how Paul Kagame triggered the Rwandan genocide. And so on, Madam Speaker. I can go on for the rest of the day.

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Therefore, it is imperative to sensitize the future generations and educate them of the importance of peaceful coexistence and respect for our diverse makeup and to protect the vulnerable in our society. By doing so, we will be able to make the 21st century a better century and a more human century than the 20th century.

"Never again" should mean never again and be our compass to leave a better world for future generations. This should be our generation's legacy. Madam Speaker, I stand up here in solidarity with the Tamil people and for the importance of adopting this bill.

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

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Vanakkam. I rise today in support of this important bill to recognize Tamil Genocide Education Week here in Ontario, and I would like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park for bringing it forward.

Speaker, I will never forget the 10th annual commemoration event of the Mullivaikkal massacre held in Scarborough some years back. And, Speaker, I will also never forget the member from Scarborough–Rouge Park's passionate and intensely personal speech that day. Though it was delivered in Tamil and I could not understand the words, the passion he showed us could tell a story in itself, and I have told him this many times over the years. I will never forget seeing that powerful side of him.

I was proud to stand alongside my NDP colleagues then, and also all members of this House in supporting this bill during second reading. I'm proud to support this important legislation today at its third reading. It is my hope that this bill passes unanimously and is written into law as soon as possible. We must pass this legislation as soon as possible to show the Tamil community that Ontario stands with them.

My community of Humber River–Black Creek is home to a strong and vibrant Tamil community. May 8 will mark 12 years since the Mullivaikkal massacre, when thousands of Tamils were murdered by the Sri Lankan government at the end of a decades-long war in Sri Lanka. Every year since then, we recognize May 18 as Tamil Genocide Remembrance Day, to remember and honour all those who were lost during the Tamil genocide.

This important legislation acknowledges, recognizes and educates all Ontarians about the atrocities the Tamil people have had to endure, including a state-sponsored campaign of genocide carried out by the Sri Lankan government. From Black July in 1983 where thousands of Tamils were murdered, to the Mullivaikkal massacre in 2009, the Tamil people were forced to endure a state-sponsored campaign of genocide. During this period, tens of thousands of Tamil men, women and children were abducted by the Sri Lankan government and were never heard from again. In many cases, when worried families went in search of their loved ones, they too were also murdered.

Many were dumped into mass graves containing hundreds of bodies that have been found throughout Sri Lanka. It was reported that had one village alone had 300 to 400 bodies buried in mass graves. Many have been forced to endure horrific campaigns of sexual violence. Speaker, I have spoken to many members of the Tamil community who have told me stories of the horrors that they or their loved ones have had to endure. We must all stand together to denounce such unspeakable atrocities, and we must do everything we can to educate others to ensure that they never happen again.

The trauma caused by the Tamil genocide is intergenerational. Tamil youth growing up today continue to face the pain endured by their parents and grandparents. We must

name and recognize the Tamil genocide and we must continue to remember all those who have been lost. We must provide a platform for the Tamil people to tell their stories and share the memories of all of those lives that were lost and to educate others so that this genocide shall never be forgotten and shall never be repeated.

It is important that Tamil Genocide Education Week be recognized by all Ontarians and all Canadians. Even those of us who are not Tamil need to recognize and offer solidarity so that we can better understand the injustices the Tamil people have gone through and continue to experience. This bill is an important step so that the Tamil community can move towards reconciliation and healing.

I stand with the Tamil community in their quest for justice and in recognition of the Tamil genocide, and I am proud to support this legislation.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm honoured to be here with my colleagues in the chamber to debate the third reading of this bill and hopefully see it passed. I want to start by thanking the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park for introducing this bill, I think, a couple of years ago now; maybe two years or so ago.

I'm not going to take a lot of time to repeat what has been said. I did come into the Legislature while the member for Scarborough—Agincourt was speaking so powerfully and, of course, my own colleague from Humber Creek—

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: River.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Humber River—Black Creek. Do I do that every time, Tom? I do it every time.

Their words were very powerful. The death and the violence and the trauma, not only throughout the years but that's carried with every person, every survivor, every relative, not only currently but that will sit with them for generations to come, are unspeakable, and I think we all realize that.

But I am proud to be here at this moment in time to speak in favour, of course, of the bill, the Tamil Genocide Education Week Act, Bill 104. We know that the Tamil community has been advocating for recognition of the Tamil genocide at all levels of government for some time now—for a very long time. I also know that New Democrats have been standing shoulder to shoulder with the Tamil community in that effort for the entire time. I can remember myself, when the Tamil community here in Toronto and the GTA largely, took to the streets, a youth-led protest that brought thousands upon thousands upon thousands of Tamil community members to University Avenue and to the Gardiner Expressway, literally shutting down the Gardiner Expressway in their pain and outrage to try to bring the world's attention—not just Toronto's attention, not Ontario, not Canada, but the world's attention to what was happening in Sri Lanka. I was proud to go out a couple of times and sit with people and chat with them and provide support and understanding, but particularly, to share in the pain and anguish that the community was feeling, and that the community, frankly, continues to feel.

We took the opportunity a couple of years back in 2016 to host the very first Mullivaikkal memorial here at Queen's Park, and we were proud to do that. It was a time to, once again, recommit our passion and our determination to work with the Tamil community and to support the Tamil community in their drive to have the genocide acknowledged, as well as to establish exactly this kind of action that we're hopefully establishing today.

We are here, really, because of the hard work of the Tamil community members, the work and the commitment of those activists and community members, their passion, their determination, their imperative to make sure that we take every action possible to support them in their struggles and to ensure that their desires to deal with not only the education week but the acknowledgement are supported in every way possible. It is their work and it's their drive that has brought us here today.

So I just want to say that I'm really proud to be here, and I know that, if it wasn't COVID-19, the galleries would be packed, there would be people in everyone's offices, and we would have an amazing celebration of the determination and the victory of the Tamil community in the passing of this legislation, because, really, this is their moment. I just regret that we're not able to have the community here in great numbers, as we know they would be, in seeing the passing of this legislation happen.

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The opposition has supported this legislation from day one, since its introduction. We've pushed many times for the government to pass the bill as soon as possible, and we're finally here, and I think we're all very, very happy about that. It's good to see that the government is making good on their promise to the Tamil community after two years of work to get us to this particular spot.

I want to just end by saying that the community knows that New Democrats will always stand with you. I can remember Jack Layton, our former federal leader, who passed away several years ago now, being a very passionate supporter of the Tamil community. Much of what I became aware of in terms of Tamil history came from Jack, from some of the people he introduced me to, as well as some of the knowledge and experience that he shared with me as the leader that he was.

I just want to send one last message, which is that we will never stop standing with you, standing by your side through the continued journey of healing, of growth and of the next generations and the generations after that. There needs to be justice. Justice comes with acknowledgement and with commitment, and I want you to know that the NDP, the Ontario NDP, is with you every step of the way.

Congratulations today for this bill finally being passed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member from Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, and good afternoon, Speaker. Vanakkam. It's a great honour to join the debate today on Bill 104, the Tamil Genocide Education Week Act, and to stand with Tamil Canadians in honouring and remembering the thousands of innocent civilians who

were killed during the Tamil genocide, as well as the ongoing and systemic violence and repression against Tamil people by the Sri Lankan government.

I'm also pleased to support this bill and speak on behalf of the Tamil community in Davenport, and to thank the member from Scarborough—Rouge Park for bringing this forward, and all of the Tamil community and community organizations who have helped bring this forward. We are proud in Davenport to be the home of a strong Tamil community, but also to the Tamil co-op, a community hub at Lansdowne and Bloor since the 1980s established to provide housing for Tamil refugees who came to Canada after the violence targeting Tamil people during Black July. The co-op is a tremendous example of what can be done when governments work together on housing, but beyond being a place to call home, the co-op has created an anchor for Tamil Canadians in the west end and has allowed the Tamil culture to thrive, the community to grow and trauma to heal.

Today, that co-op is a thriving home to people from many communities, including Burmese, Vietnamese, Filipino and Ethiopian heritage. Its board recently elected a majority of young members who were raised in the co-op as children, adding to the diversity of voices that are represented there. I wanted to mention that the Tamil co-op is also home to the first Tamil languages library in Canada, Madam Speaker, and I think that points to the significance of education and of language in the preservation of culture, especially when people are uprooted or seek refuge in a new country. It is in stark contrast, I would add, to the burning of the public library in Jaffna, the destruction of the Tamil people's history and their aspirations, and ultimately the attempt to annihilate them.

My first meeting, actually, of Tamil refugees goes back to growing up in Newfoundland, when 155 Tamil refugees were left adrift near St. Shott's. They had been dumped off of a cargo ship, and it was a reminder of the trauma that continues when people leave their home and the really dangerous and often violent journeys they have to embark on. When they were found off the coast of St. Shott's, it was by a skipper named Gus Dalton, who just passed away a few years ago. They were dumped about 300 kilometres in the brutal, icy cold of the Atlantic Ocean. They were found three days after they had been set adrift, dehydrated and starving. Many of those people survived and they went on to live in Ontario and in Quebec, but their trauma, of course, endured far beyond that experience.

We in the official opposition NDP stand with Tamil Canadians, as our leader has already said, in remembering the thousands of those killed during the Tamil genocide. This has been a long-standing position of the NDP, and it will continue, as this community will continue, to fight for justice for victims.

However, for justice and reconciliation to take place, there needs to be formal recognition and accountability for the Tamil genocide. This is a step toward that, an acknowledgement of the lives lost and the importance of justice and reconciliation.

I want to be clear to my Tamil friends across Ontario and in my riding: We stand with you; we will always stand

with you. Thank you for your extraordinary and ongoing contributions to our province.

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

Mr. Thanigasalam has moved third reading of Bill 104, An Act to proclaim Tamil Genocide Education Week. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

RECOVERY MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DU RÉTABLISSEMENT

Mr. Ke moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 250, An Act to proclaim Recovery Month / Projet de loi 250, Loi proclamant le Mois du rétablissement.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am humbled to stand before you today to revisit a very important topic as I present the third reading of my private member's bill, Bill 250, the Recovery Month Act, 2021. This bill will proclaim the month of September in each year as Recovery Month.

Karen Waddell, executive director of the House of Sophrosyne, stated, "This bill, if passed, would support ongoing efforts to eliminate stigma and raise public awareness. Ontarians who are impacted by mental illness, and more specifically, addictions need to know they can access the help they require without shame."

No one understands the importance of recovery more than the people who have been through the process. The confidence and joy discovered through recovery re-purposed Sara's life. As she explained in her story, "Today my distress level of tolerance is strong and I am coping well with the epidemic. I am a strong healthy woman who is able to sustain myself and have a purpose. I am now able to pay it forward."

Speaker, individuals and families across the province too often face challenges related to addictions and mental health while feeling alone. They too often suffer in silence, shrouded by stigma and shame. Today, we can choose to break the silence, speak up to slay the stigma and stand out from the shadows with those affected by mental health and addictions in the absence of shame. Today, with Bill 250, the Recovery Month Act, we remind them that they are not alone: We see them. We hear them. We are here to support them in their courageous recovery efforts. We care.

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The subject of mental health and addictions is difficult for us to acknowledge as a society. I ask you to imagine the sense of helplessness and how much more painful it is for those affected directly by these kinds of serious health challenges. Individuals and families who are caught in the cycle of addiction, compulsion and cravings often find that

their strength betrays them. Substance use and mental health affects every aspect of their lives, including their work, school and personal relationships. They need to know that there are resources and supports available to help them recover so they can lead productive lives in their communities, just like Sara. Recovery is real, and it is life-changing.

Speaker, we must use our collective voices to inspire real change in the public's perception of those afflicted with addictions and mental health challenges. Feelings of shame and stigma associated with mental health and addictions are unfortunately common and may prevent people from finding the courage to seek help or accept it when offered.

The power of shame and stigma is a major impediment to progress in the area of mental health and addictions and must be confronted. Let's strive to replace shame with empathy. Let's work to end the associated stigma and replace it with admiration for the courage it takes to seek and accept help. Anyone can be touched by mental health and addictions struggles, and it should never be shameful. Bill 250, the Recovery Month Act, will fortify the message that there is no room for stigma and shame.

While it is critical to acknowledge the realities and the consequences of untreated addictions, trauma and mental health crises, the purpose of Bill 250 will inspire people to see a brighter future that they cannot always see and to choose that and health over death and despair. In communities all over Ontario, we see the success stories of survivors who accepted the lifeline offered to them and are now thriving, healthy and hopeful. They not only lived to tell their tale; they give us hope that recovery is possible.

Sara is just one example among many whose story inspired true hope. There is nothing more powerful to someone in crisis than the true life experience of a real human being who has walked in your shoes on their road to recovery. People need to trust that recovery is definitely possible with help.

Speaker, Bill 250 and Recovery Month in September will act as a public call about the need for awareness surrounding mental health and addictions issues and the hope of recovery and transformation. Bill 250 may be to some a symbolic gesture. I assert that this bill gives us a prime opportunity to bring about change by taking the first step toward emphasizing the possibility of recovery, which begins with awareness. Every successful recovery journey begins with the first step.

We know that since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for mental health and addictions services has increased. Overdoses are on the rise as people, sadly, surrender to their addictions, sometimes by accident, and tragically, others die by suicide because they cannot see in the moment that they have another choice. In fact, during the pandemic, when Ontario's health care system is overwhelmed with caring for COVID-19 patients, it is also dealing with an increase in the number of people in crisis presenting to hospital due to substance use, mental health situations and associated deaths.

According to Addictions and Mental Health Ontario, 22% of Canadians will be affected by addiction in their

lifetime. In Ontario, we are blessed to have a variety of mental health and addictions resources and organizations who provide help to those in need. CAMH is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital and a world-leading research center. CAMH combines clinical care, research, education, policy development and health promotion to help transform the lives of people affected by mental illness and addiction. With a dedicated staff of more than 3,000 physicians, clinicians, researchers, educators and support staff, CAMH provides clinical care to more than 34,000 patients each year. As an organization, they want to do for mental illness what others have done for epilepsy, heart disease and cancer. They want to help people see mental health for what it really is: health.

There are many more terrific organizations that I have communicated with in my outreach to better inform myself while preparing to bring Bill 250 before you. Addictions and Mental Ontario represents over 200 organizations that provide front-line substance use, addiction and mental health support and services. Every year, local mental health and addiction providers in Ontario help more than 300,000 Ontarians on their road to recovery.

AMHO CEO Adrienne Spafford recently stated, "There was a mental health and addiction crisis in Ontario before COVID-19 and the pandemic has only put additional pressures on the people of Ontario and our health care system.

"There is no recovery from this pandemic without both the physical and mental health of Ontarians. We need to work together to ensure supports and services are available to people when and where they need them most."

Speaker, founded in 1918 with 30 branches in Ontario, the Canadian Mental Health Association provides services and supports to over 1.3 million people across Canada through the combined efforts of more than 5,000 staff and 11,000 volunteers. This week, between May 3 and May 9, marks the Canadian Mental Health Association's 70th annual Mental Health Week, with this year's theme focusing on understanding our emotions as a way to promote mental health.

Speaker, I feel especially privileged to present my third reading of Bill 250, Recovery Month Act, during this significant week that is intended to encourage us all to recognize, understand and express our emotions, even when they make us uncomfortable. It is so important to establish and connect with a support system that can make us feel better and help us get through these challenging times.

Speaker, our government remains fully committed to ensuring Ontarians of all ages, in every corner of the province, have access to the highest-quality mental health and addictions supports, where and when they need them. Through this year's budget, we are making record-breaking investments in mental health and addictions care, with a total of \$525 million in net new annualized funding in this year alone.

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Our government has also invested \$194 million to immediately expand access to safe and effective mental

health and addictions supports during the COVID-19 pandemic to address the increased need for these supports.

Not only this week, but often, I encourage people to reach out to a family member, friend or colleague and ask them how they are really feeling.

For those who are experiencing a mental health or addiction challenge during these difficult times, or any time, help is always available.

Speaker, I would like to thank each mental health, addictions and counselling organization and their professional staff and teams of volunteers for the incredible work they do to assist those in need to engage in the process of recovery every day. Unfortunately, I cannot name all the dedicated people who help save lives and restore the quality of life for many people in need, but I do want to take this opportunity to recognize their work and thank them all for it.

This Sunday, we will celebrate Mother's Day. It is a time to honour the special women who give us life and nurture us all throughout our lives. I think of the mothers who will not receive a card from their beloved son or daughter, and the only flowers they will see will be those lovingly placed at their child's graveside. Death due to overdose or suicide is the cruel legacy of addiction and mental health crises that go untreated. My heart goes out to the mothers who live with unspeakable grief and who will be missing their child not only on Mother's Day, but every day for the rest of their lives.

Speaker, while death is the ultimate tragic consequence of untreated addiction, overdose and mental health crises, there are many other heartbreaking losses endured by people who struggle with these issues and by the family and friends who love them. People with untreated addictions and mental illnesses lose their dignity, self-worth, confidence and sense of security. Their family and friends contend with feelings of anxiety, frustration and hopelessness as they try desperately to convince their loved one to accept help. Sometimes, despite their best efforts, their loving guidance is refused.

The truth is, no one can save another person. For recovery to succeed, the person affected by an addiction or mental health crisis must accept help. Accepting help requires a measure of personal responsibility that is not always possible when a person is in trauma or crisis situation, but if they receive the appropriate intervention in time to get them through the crisis, they will often be in a better frame of mind to accept the help offered.

Turning to substance use as a way of self-medicating for mental health symptoms is merely a temporary solution and can easily spiral into a state of dysfunction. With help, the mask can be removed and the pain one is dealing with can be worked on to find healthy coping strategies. There is hope, and there is help.

While some people survive to share their stories, others do not, and this must change. Recovery Month will emphasize the hope of recovery with help.

Speaker, at the second reading of this bill, I shared with you a story about the life of a young man named David, whose life ended suddenly by suicide. He had been dealing

with a number of mental health issues, trauma and addiction. Like many people in similar situations, he tried to manage his pain by self-medicating with alcohol and substance use. David's parents are devastated by the loss of their only child, their beautiful son. Their shared dreams for his future are now buried with him, but their dearest hope is that his story will inspire others to seek another solution before it is too late, so they will find the courage to embrace the hard journey of recovery. They want David's memory to spare other individuals and families from experiencing such a heartbreaking loss.

Speaker, Recovery Month emphasizes the value of prevention and the hope of recovery with help. My heartfelt thanks to the Honourable Minister Michael Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, for his incredible work, leadership, and support of this bill. By proclaiming September as Recovery Month in Ontario, Bill 250 will awaken public awareness about mental health, addictions, overdose and suicide. It is up to us all to stay awake, alert and aware.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Speaker—

Applause.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, thank you, my friend; my enthusiastic fans are here.

What an honour to get up and talk about Recovery Month, and I want to thank the member for bringing this issue forward. I just want to start off my comments by acknowledging two champions who have been working on mental health and addiction issues for a very long time: our member from Parkdale-High Park and our present critic, the member from Hamilton Mountain. Ms. Karpoche and Mrs. Taylor, we are going to look to you next week as this cohort is sitting at home watching you hold the fort down for us here. But again, my heart goes out to both of you for the immense amount of work and the knowledge that you've provided to our caucus. You are two real champions.

I want to talk about a few other champions from our caucus who have been quite outspoken on the experience of what mental health and the opioid crisis have been bringing to us across northern Ontario. A lot of the comments—maybe some of the comments—are going to make people feel a little bit uncomfortable in the House today, but that's the point. That's the point of having Recovery Month: having those challenging discussions, to take away that stigma.

I will start with myself. Just a few months ago, I found myself in a very challenging position as a father. I always relate things back to family for myself, and not many of you know—some of my colleagues here in my caucus know—that I went through a really challenging time with one of my family members. It was because of the position that I had that I was successful in October, and a lot of you didn't even notice that I wasn't here for October and November. I went back home, and I had to go back home. I had to be a dad. That was a priority. I had to go attend to my son, who was in a challenging time.

It was only because I pushed and pushed the issues—when you become a dad, you put that MPP hat on the counter, in the closet, and you become Dad. The claws, the spit, the anger, the frustration and the doors and the windows—everything opens, and you find a crack to get in, to make sure that your loved one gets the services and the help that they need. I was fortunate enough to know the levers and know the places and know the contacts and get the help that was required. I have to say that it's been a struggle—it's always been a struggle—but well on the way to the right path. I'm so proud, so proud, so proud of my son. He's doing exceptionally well.

Matthieu, tu ne peux pas croire comment Dad est très fier de toi et le chemin que t'es en train de prendre. Je t'aime à mort. Ton père va tout le temps être là pour toi, mon petit gars.

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I want to also bring up the other champions that I was talking about earlier. We have the members for Nickel Belt, Timmins, Mushkegowuk—James Bay, Kiiwetinoong, Thunder Bay—Atikokan, Timiskaming—Cochrane and Sudbury, who have all been outspoken about the challenges of the opioid crisis that is going on throughout northern Ontario. I see my friend the associate minister for mental health. He and I have had some good conversations about the challenges that are in my region in Algoma—Manitoulin, and I'll be touching on those a little bit later in my comments.

I want to raise a letter that we had written as northern colleagues to the Premier; I won't go through the entire letter, but I do want to raise a few points. In Thunder Bay, the regional health sciences centre reported that it had 262 patients who were treated for opioid overdoses last year, and many of these instances have not been reported. Similarly, Timmins had 29 opioid-related deaths in 2020, and from January 2020 to August 2020, at least 60 in Sudbury and Manitoulin district have died due to opioid-related overdoses. I think we've heard many times the member from Sudbury, Mr. West, talk about the white crosses that we find on the lawns in Sudbury, and he has talked personally about the stories that he has brought to the floor of this House.

In the letter that we sent to the Premier, here are some of the suggestions that we wanted him to take. These are concrete steps that we could move forward:

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

To my understanding—I checked with our offices today—we have not received a response or an acknowledgement from the Premier's office on this.

Again, we need to have these discussions, because they're meant to make us feel uncomfortable, because we try to shy away from these. It's not what we want to bring to either the floor or it's not what you want to have over a coffee cup.

I'll tell of you another incident that I just experienced in the community of Sagamok First Nation. I went to the community; I was invited to do a prayer walk. Some of you might have been in the House, because I talked about this a few weeks ago. The prayer walk was led by the grandfather of a young girl who had succumbed to an opioid overdose—27 years old; beautiful young lady. Her name was Charisse. She had four children, ages ranging from two years old to 10 years old.

The community was filled with anger—a lot of sadness, but a lot of anger. The point of the walk was to reclaim the streets of the community. What we did is, we gathered at the lower part of the community and walked through the entire community, stopped at one of the uncles' home who had a sacred fire going on in the backyard. Everybody deposited their tobacco, continued on with the walk to the local church, and then, from there, we finished off our walk down to the baseball field where there was this beautiful plaque with a picture of Charisse with a message that people were going to reclaim their streets.

When we started the walk, I have never felt that much pain coming from someone else. When you looked at Charisse's grandfather—Charisse's grandfather was presented with the community eagle staff, and he was the one who led the walk. Just to hear her grandfather, his words, it just was—I can't describe it. When you feel the amount of hurt that is there with him—and it wasn't just him, because he was carrying that hurt for the entire family; that's what a grandfather does, right? And the mother who was there, the sisters, the cousins, the aunts and the uncles—we just walked through town. It was a subtle walk, but I was happy but not happy to be there, Speaker, if you understand.

Once we got down to the baseball field, that's where my anger came out. I carried my tobacco—we were all presented with small pods of tobacco for the walk, and I carried mine. I carried it for the grandfather, and at the end of the walk, I gave it to the grandfather. The reason why I carried it was because the grandfather was elderly and, unfortunately, there were some quite steep hills to go through the community and he wasn't able to do the entire walk. At the end of the walk, I said, "Here. I carried this for you and for Charisse." The purpose of it was to grab the tobacco and to get rid of some of those feelings that you had inside, and return it to the sacred fire and just drop those feelings to provide some type of a closure.

There are many communities that do different things, with the opioid crisis, when you lose a loved one. The thing that we need to talk about even more is the individual—there are two things. When I talked to the community then, there are two things you need to do. When the person

identifies and cries out for help, we have to do our damndest best to make sure that those services are there right away—not six months down the road, not 18 months down the road, not “Put your name on the list.” We have to make sure that those services are accessible to that person right away, and that we wrap that person and hold them in a safe place and provide them with the avenue and the environment and the places to go so that we can provide the care and help that they so require.

But at the same token, we can’t forget about the family and the community either, because it is not only the individual affected by the opioid crisis or the decisions that they’re making, good or bad; it’s the family. The family is also affected. The mom who is looking at their child, their daughter, who is struggling with the drugs and the mental health—they don’t know what to do, either. They’re trying their best. There’s no instructions that came out to being a parent. You try your best, you try what you do, but if those services aren’t readily available to you, you don’t know where to turn. So we need to make sure that not only are we talking about a Recovery Month Act, but that we act and we make sure that there are services and that they’re provided to the community and the community members when they’re in need of them.

I want to shift gears a little bit and talk about some of the good that has come out. I personally witnessed this good. I want to talk a little bit about the Oaks Centre in Elliot Lake. They have some fantastic counsellors there who are empathetic, caring, knowledgeable. I’ve actually been to the centre, visited it and seen how the facility works. Unfortunately, right now, due to COVID restrictions, they’re restricted with the amount of clients that they can have within the facility; I’m hoping that we can increase that amount of individuals who do need the help.

But the work that they do there is fabulous. It is so nice to see a person come under a light. When they walk into the centre, they’re kind of hidden. They’ve got their hoodies on and they’re under their hats. They’re bundled up, afraid of what the next step is. But I tell you, once you participate and you open yourself up to participating in that program, and you find out that you’re not the only one who is going through your trauma, you’re not the only one who has experienced what you have, and you listen to the other clients who are there from the stories being shared, it just builds you up. It just gives you a shot of adrenaline, and you say, “I’m not the only one; there’s somebody else.” The networking that goes on between these clients—they become long-time friends. And yes, Speaker, some of them might slip and come back, but the services are there.

The other thing that is quite interesting is that there are two things that happen there: There’s a send-off, and then there’s another program. Unfortunately, right now, they just don’t have the funds—I’m glad you’re here and you’re listening—to have the family after-care program. But before you get to the family after-care program, there’s the send-off. You complete the entire period that you’re there—it’s a 30-day, almost a four-week period. After you expose yourself, you write it down. You put all of your skeletons away, you deal with this stuff. You go through

an entire process, and they have a send-off process where new clients come in and watch graduating clients leave—and you see the transition.

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It is remarkable to see the life come back into a person when they have the ability to go through that program. We need more of that. We need to find a way to bring that to every part of this province and to make sure that we can support those individuals.

But the other important part is, after you leave and you’re full of energy—it’s like a shot of adrenaline when you leave this place—you go home. You’re stuck back in the same place, unless you have those wraparound services that are there to support you, to continue on with that journey that you have, the path that you’ve chosen to recovery, and if those are not there, and you continue to go back into that same circle that was there before, the chances are that you’re going to bounce back over to the centre.

The family after-care programs are not just for the individual but, as I said earlier, the families affected by individuals with mental health and substance addictions. We need to make sure that the family is aware of those problems, because they need to be educated too; we don’t know how to respond when there’s a sudden burst of anger coming. Why is that happening? So the family—the mom, the dad, the sisters, the relatives—need to understand how to respond and know that the response and the challenges and how the person is conducting themselves are actually normal.

What is not normal is when you punish it or you deny that it’s happening. You have to use your tools, and this is what some of these programs provide you with: coping tools. Again, those wraparound services that we need in order to help our loved ones in care.

I just want to end off—I don’t have much time left, but I do want to talk about a group in Sault Ste. Marie. They are called Citizens Helping Addicts and Alcoholics Get Treatment. Their purpose statement is, “We are an active, caring and compassionate citizens’ group in Sault Ste. Marie.... The lack of facilities and care for people suffering from mental health illness” and substance abuse disorder “has led to a crisis in our community. We are here to lobby for the proper” attention and “infrastructure to treat our fellow citizens.”

They’ve got a fantastic report here. The details are frightening, and I just want to take you through a couple of them, Speaker. Did you know that, in Algoma region, per capita, we have the highest-confirmed opioid poisoning fatalities? The Algoma northeast region is projected, six months after this data was collected, to set a record for opioid poisoning emergency room visits. In 2020, we were over double the rate that Ontario as a whole had been facing. Homicides, robberies, assaults, break-and-enters were all part of what we were seeing in the streets.

Now, what’s missing in Sault Ste. Marie is, two years ago, their addictions facility burned down. I know the Sault-area hospitals are looking at providing a level 3 facility as well—I believe so. Right?

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Yes. It's moving forward, to my understanding, but not fast enough. We're looking at two, maybe three years down the road, if not further. There are presently facilities that potentially could accommodate some care in Sault Ste. Marie, because if we don't do something right now, the region will just continue adding opioid-related deaths, continuing on and on and on, and we won't be able to do anything. I don't think that's what anybody in this chamber wants to see happen or to see continue. The group is steadfast, very passionate. The group is led by, I believe, Dr. Jeff Broadbent.

Again, we just want to see that issue move, as well, and see the Algoma region rightfully get the services they need. We just can't continue, in northern Ontario, seeing our loved ones—I don't want to go to any more community prayer walks. I don't want to go to any more funerals. I will—that's the unfortunate part of it—because it's taking too long for these services to get to northern Ontario and to those communities. It is gut-wrenching to see a mother or a father standing by a grave or over a coffin or over a picture of their child when we know damn well that we could have and we should have, but we didn't. I just don't want to use that as an excuse anymore.

I want to make sure that we have the ability to save and reach out to those kids, those mothers, those fathers, and make sure that we have the proper level of care and the help they need, and make sure that we have those wrap-around services and supportive care so that we can get rid of the stigma, and so that we could once again—and I look forward to talking about this in the months to come, once this becomes law—that in September next year, that it's not just an afternoon; that we use the entire month, and we make sure we take the actions we need to take.

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

Hon. Michael A. Tibollo: It certainly is an honour for me to rise today in the House and speak about Bill 250, the Recovery Month Act, 2021.

I want to begin by commenting on the member from Algoma-Manitoulin—his story and his courage, as well, for telling us in the House what his experience was.

I know, having had friends lose their sons, that it's not the same as your own son, but it certainly does change your life, when you get an opportunity to look at what exactly we have as a system and what needs to be done and how desperate it is.

Many of your comments are right on the money, there's no question, about the continuum of care and the things that we need to do and the wrap-around services. But I think it's really important that this piece of legislation move forward. The reason that it's important—as the minister responsible for mental health and addictions, we have to do something to ensure that people feel comfortable talking, as you did today, about circumstances, because all of us have examples in our own personal lives, whether it's an addiction or a mental health issue.

When the member came forward, wanting to bring this bill forward, I was extremely happy to support it. Again, every opportunity we get to speak about recovery, to speak

about the system and how broken the system has been, gives us opportunities to look at ways of fixing it.

For all of the people who have supported this legislation moving forward—I want to say thank you to all of you, because, again, we have to speak about this issue. We can't leave it in the back rooms and in the closets. It has to be something that's spoken about openly so that we can bring about change and help the people when they need the help, where they need the help. This bill is a chance for us to show many people who are struggling with addiction challenges in Ontario that we care and that the entire province is here to support them in their journey towards mental wellness.

This bill will also show Ontario's support for the many mental health and addictions workers who have made countless personal sacrifices to support the many Ontarians impacted by mental health and addictions and the challenges we've had during this pandemic.

To the many front-line mental health and addictions workers, the volunteers, the administration staff: Our government certainly applauds your ongoing commitment to your clients and patients during these most unprecedented times. Our government knows of the many long days and sleepless nights that you've experienced over the past year to help protect our most vulnerable. You are all true heroes and show us all the meaning of Ontario spirit every single day.

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In a year unlike any other, Ontarians of all ages have been forced to adapt to the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. As COVID-19 has spread through our communities, across the country and around the world, it truly has tested our collective resilience.

Without a doubt, this global pandemic has had an impact on the lives of millions of Ontarians, including significant impacts on their mental health. With prolonged physical isolation, financial challenges and uncertainty about the future, we know this has resulted in so many more and complex challenges that we've never seen before. For example, we know that youth are experiencing increased anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation, eating disorders, as well as more substance use. We see new research and data almost every single day that indicates Ontarians' mental health has been impacted negatively by this terrible pandemic.

I know that all of us have been extremely concerned about these impacts, and I am very glad our government acted quickly to respond to them. First, we invested an additional \$194 million in emergency funding to immediately expand mental health and addiction services to people in need. We did this because we know that no one patient is the same. The small business owner struggling to get by in the face of a global pandemic; the long-haul truck driver feeling isolated and without his friends and family around him; and the student who is increasingly slipping in his or her studies: Each of these individuals has unique needs, but by matching them with the most appropriate supports, we know that we can make a real difference in their lives.

That's why I was so proud to see that our \$194-million investment included support for community-based health and addictions services, interprofessional primary care teams, mental health supports for health care workers and expanded virtual mental health and addictions supports for Ontarians of all ages. These virtual supports are being accessed by over 67,000 people right now from every walk of life, with over 6,000 front-line health care workers accessing the specialized supports we introduced through a partnership with hospitals and organizations across the mental health and addictions sector.

Once we recover from this pandemic—and I assure all Ontarians that we will get there—we can expect that the mental health and addictions impacts are likely to extend beyond a return to normal. I'm committed to working with mental health leaders, providers and people with lived experience to address the challenges that may lie ahead.

C'est pourquoi j'étais si fier de voir que notre investissement de 194 millions de dollars comprenait un soutien aux services communautaires de santé mentale et de lutte contre les dépendances, des équipes interprofessionnelles de soins primaires, des soutiens en santé mentale pour les travailleurs de la santé et un élargissement du soutien virtuel en santé mentale et en toxicomanie pour les Ontariens de tous âges.

Plus de 67 000 Ontariennes et Ontariens ont accès à ces soutiens virtuels, et plus de 6 000 travailleurs de la santé de première ligne ont accès aux soutiens spécialisés que nous avons mis en place grâce à un partenariat avec des hôpitaux et des organisations du secteur de la santé mentale et des dépendances.

Une fois que nous nous serons remis de cette pandémie—et j'assure à tous les Ontariens que nous y arriverons—nous pouvons nous attendre à ce que la toxicomanie se prolonge au-delà d'un retour à la normale. Madame la Présidente, je peux vous assurer que je m'engage à travailler avec les leaders de la santé mentale, les prestataires et les personnes ayant une expérience vécue, afin de relever les défis qui peuvent nous attendre.

For such a long time our society has stigmatized those struggling with addictions or mental health challenges. Now, with the COVID-19 pandemic, I'm very encouraged to see a growing awareness and improved support across Ontario for people experiencing and living with mental health and addictions challenges. More and more, we're addressing the stigma attached to the mental health issues. We're seeing people coming forward to talk about their own struggles or to raise their voices in support of friends, families and neighbours who may be dealing with a mental illness. Thankfully, we've come a long way. But, based on what I see and what I hear, including here in the House, we still have a long way to go.

Madam Speaker, a key part of the recovery process and the future of mental health and addictions care is, importantly, about building a more inclusive space. It's about establishing a more patient-centred system of care that can better meet the diverse needs of the different populations that make up the province of Ontario. This is an important priority for our government as we move

forward with building a more comprehensive and connected mental health and addictions system that works for all Ontarians.

This commitment is also reflected in where we are making additional investments in mental health and addictions services. As part of the \$194 million in pandemic-related funding for mental health and addiction services that we've invested so far, \$51.5 million was allocated towards a cross-sectoral approach to support vulnerable populations. These included First Nations communities, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous peoples, Black youth, children and youth in care, LGBTQ2 youth, people with developmental disabilities and victims of gender-based violence.

Another example is our government's commitment to listen to and work closely with Indigenous communities and leaders, to collaborate on mental health and addiction services that meet the needs of Indigenous people that are culturally appropriate. Indigenous peoples have faced long-standing barriers to accessing effective and culturally safe mental health and addictions care.

It's critical to make these investments, Madam Speaker. As such, more than \$12.8 million in base funding was made available last year to immediately expand and enhance culturally safe and appropriate mental health and addictions services for Indigenous peoples, families and communities.

It is critical that our most recent investment of an additional \$175 million in funding for mental health and addictions announced through this year's budget includes funding for four new mobile mental health clinics to help serve remote, rural, northern and underserved communities. The recent provincial budget also highlights broader mental health and addictions supports, such as a crisis call diversion program to offer immediate support for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis and on-campus and virtual mental health supports for post-secondary students.

These investments are part of the Roadmap to Wellness, an action-oriented plan to build a connected and comprehensive mental health and addictions system which our government put forward just over a year ago. We're also continuing to focus on integrating the mental health and addictions sector with justice services, investing in supportive housing and targeting supports that are for the vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous communities. Madam Speaker, we're focused on building a connected care continuum for Ontarians of all ages, where community services, primary care and acute care support collaborate to meet the needs of patients and clients everywhere in the province of Ontario.

Another important priority under our Roadmap to Wellness is to address gaps in care by implementing innovative solutions, such as Ontario's new Structured Psychotherapy Program. Madam Speaker, this program provides access to evidence-based publicly funded treatment that offers such services as cognitive behavioural therapy, using a stepped care model for people living with depression, anxiety and anxiety-related conditions, the most common mental health issues that impact Ontarians.

This new program is being implemented by the Mental Health and Addictions Centre of Excellence within Ontario Health and currently offered through four pilot region projects: the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, Ontario Shores for mental health and Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care. Work continues to expand the program beyond these four networks and to tailor supports and access points to those who often face barriers to mental health and addictions care, such as people of colour and Indigenous peoples.

1510

Mental health and addictions is clearly one of the pressing health issues in our province and was pre-pandemic, is during the pandemic and will continue after the pandemic. Half of the population will have or have experienced a mental health challenge by age 40. This is significant and needs to be addressed. And we know that over one million Ontarians experience mental health or addictions challenges each year, which has only increased during this pandemic.

Madam Speaker, we're seeing important progress in how we approach and treat mental health and addictions in the province, and we're delivering real and profound change to the system.

I have spent time in the sector. Prior to coming to government, I worked as an addictions counsellor as a volunteer. I had the opportunity to work with young men from all walks of life that wanted and were crying out for help. As a result of the work that I did there, I found myself constantly coming down here and dealing with a government that just didn't understand or didn't care.

After 10 years of listening to the previous government talk about their inability to help or the fact that there was nothing they could do, I decided that I wanted to run and I wanted to show the previous government and the people that were sitting in this House that change can be brought about, and that change comes about by having individuals work together to create and to build a system.

I am very proud of the Roadmap to Wellness. It took us a good year of consultations around the province—over 600 different groups and individuals I met with, Minister Elliott met with, and my colleague Robin Martin met with as well. We had numerous conversations with the critic for mental health, with the member from Nickel Belt, and all of that information fed into what became the Roadmap to Wellness. Much of the work that was done in 2010 by the member from Nickel Belt and by our Minister of Health at that time was incorporated into the creation of a foundational document that will shape and change the future of mental health in the province of Ontario. And today, listening to my colleague my friend from across the way here, listening to your words and having worked with several of the members, I encourage you to work with us, to work with me in building this foundational document into a living reality that will make a difference in the lives of the people of Ontario.

When we talk about the Roadmap to Wellness, it's not one-size-fits-all. You've had the experience, the member

from Algoma–Manitoulin. You can't just walk into a place and find what you need. You get bounced around in the system, because the system, from an access standpoint, needs work in terms of establishing how you deal with the problem. And then, of course, there are the gaps.

I'm reminded of the organization that I started working with; it was started by a priest. A mother came to him saying, "I need help." How appropriate that Mother's Day is on Sunday. Imagine the pain a mother feels who has a son who has an addiction and doesn't know what to do with him. Imagine calling a priest because you know it's your only line of communication; you don't know where else to go—especially an immigrant mother who only spoke Italian.

She reached out to the priest; the priest made some calls. The first call got him to someone who said, "You know what? I can't help you, but I'll give you a number." Well, that process was repeated seven times. The seventh time, the person gave him the number of the first person that he had contacted, meaning there was no help. So what did he do? He did what a lot of other organizations have done in the province: They did it themselves.

Thankfully, we have organically grown organizations that are grassroots, that have done the heavy lifting in this province of helping the mothers and their kids when it comes to addictions. I applaud all of them and I continue to applaud them, because many of them are using fundraised dollars, and today, under this economy and with the pandemic, it's very difficult to raise money. They continue to cry out for help. Well, this government did not forget them and the investments that are being made are looking to these organizations because they are using best practices, they are providing us with solutions that work, that previous governments refused to listen to and refused to support, and we've lost lives as a result of that.

I will not stand for that. Our government will not stand for that. And I invite all of you to work together with the organizations that you've spoken about up north. Let's work together to unite these into a system of not just a framework, not just an idea; let's unite them into a working system that will help an individual and pass that individual from one organization to the next when the next has the skill set to deal with the complex issues that are there. That's what we need to do.

I am very proud to stand in this House today as a member of this government and say that the Premier has my back, and caucus and cabinet has my back from the standpoint of ensuring that the investments are made. The \$3.8 billion that is being invested is being invested exactly to build that system, to ensure that future governments will have to follow the plan that was laid by this House, by this government and, hopefully, in collaboration with the NDP, with the opposition.

Because, again, this isn't about politics. This isn't about "I win, you lose." This is about creating a system for the people of the province of Ontario that's going to be there to help them where and when they need it, that's going to ensure supports. Regardless of where you are in the province of Ontario, you're going to get the support you

need and not have to fly to another part of the province alone, desperate, not knowing if you can make it back.

This is a system that has to be built that ensures that the people who end up in our corrections facilities get the help they need and are able to reintegrate into society and to continue their lives productively the way it was meant to be.

I want to thank the member from Don Valley North for bringing this matter forward. I hope that this bill passes and I hope that we will work together to celebrate Recovery Month forever.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today to participate in the debate on Bill 250, An Act to proclaim Recovery Month. This is a very simple bill, Speaker. What it does is proclaim the month of September every year as Recovery Month. We have been informally recognizing September as Recovery Month in the province of Ontario; this bill makes it official.

I want to acknowledge the comments that were offered by the member for Don Valley North, the MPP who introduced this bill, when he talked about the importance of proclaiming Recovery Month as a way of normalizing seeking support for mental health and addiction challenges, a way of reducing the stigma that can be associated with mental health and addictions, because as we all know, Speaker, mental health challenges and addiction issues are health conditions. These are health challenges; they are not moral failings.

I want to take the opportunity to share with this House some of the work that is being done in my community to support Londoners with mental health and addictions issues. Just last month, in April, there was the formal announcement of the integration of Addiction Services of Thames Valley with the Canadian Mental Health Association of Elgin Middlesex, as well as CMHA of Oxford. Integrating these three agencies into one organization will really help ensure the ease of navigation for people who live in the London area who are seeking support for mental health or addiction challenges.

Just recently, Speaker, also last month, I met with Beth Mitchell, the CEO of the newly merged organization. Beth had been with CMHA Middlesex prior to the integration. She had also worked at London Health Sciences Centre before she assumed the position of executive director at CMHA Middlesex, so she has a broad familiarity with the mental health system, both in the acute care setting in a hospital setting as well as at the community level.

Of course, Speaker, we talked about the significant impact of the pandemic on the mental health needs of Londoners. As we all hear from the constituents we represent, people are really struggling with mental health. We see it in our own families. We see it in our co-workers. The surveys have indicated that 40% of Canadians say that their mental health has deteriorated as a result of the pandemic. There's financial stress, there is increased family stress, there is anxiety about the future, there is isolation, and all of these factors contribute to a worsening of people's mental health.

But Beth Mitchell, in my conversation with her, really emphasized the huge and ongoing discrepancy between the funding that is available from the government for overall health care through the Ministry of Health versus the funding that is allocated for community mental health and addictions. Basically, it is a fraction. Community mental health and addictions receives a tiny fraction of the amount that is overall allocated for health care, and that's both at the base-funding level as well as in terms of the relief funding that has been flowed during the pandemic.

Speaker, that is a concern, because we know that when we can support people through the community mental health and addictions sector, we can prevent acute care episodes, and that's why diversion programs are so important. I acknowledge that this government has moved in that direction, which is welcome, but there are also a number of other funding concerns that this government has not yet addressed that would really help support that community mental health and addictions sector and enable them to better serve the people who live in our communities.

I want to give a shout-out to CMHA Elgin and Middlesex for rising to the challenge that the pandemic has posed to mental health and addiction agencies. Like agencies across the province, in London they were able to maintain almost their entire directory of programs and services. In fact, in some cases they expanded or even introduced new programs because of the very unique needs of Londoners during COVID-19. They pivoted very quickly and were able to provide online services, even in some cases maintaining some face-to-face, but they did it because of the vital importance of these services to people in the community.

Of course, this pivoting in the face of these incredibly high needs has also increased the pressures on staff in the CMHA agency. Just as I said that the community mental health and addictions sector, in terms of overall funding, has received a pittance compared to the hospital sector—the same holds true for staff. We have mental health and addictions workers who have historically been undervalued by ministry funding formulas in comparison to health care providers who do very similar work in health care settings. That's one of the reasons why, in its pre-budget submission to this government, CMHA Ontario called for a 3% base budget increase so they could raise those levels of compensation for the staff in that sector to more appropriately reflect the work they do.

It has been almost 10 years, almost a decade, that community mental health agencies have been trying to meet the demands of the communities they serve without any significant increase in base budget funding.

That should be a very high priority for this government. It should be a high priority in terms of recognizing Recovery Month. If we don't have the staff available in community mental health agencies, we won't be able to provide the services and supports that people need. Those low levels of compensation have a direct effect on the ability to recruit and, in particular, to retain staff, who are working so hard to support Ontarians on their recovery journey.

CMHA Ontario also called for an expansion of harm reduction services, including safer supply, to prevent deaths due to opioid addiction and toxic drug supply. I suspect we've all heard about problems with fentanyl, street drugs, in our communities.

It's interesting that we are actually having the debate on this bill today, because the coroner's report—the Office of the Chief Coroner—was just released, with some new data about opioid overdose deaths in Ontario. There were 1,516 deaths in 2019. In 2020, it skyrocketed to 2,426 deaths. That's an increase of 60%, just in that last year. And we know that there was another 40% increase in opioid deaths just in the first three months of the pandemic alone.

Opioid addiction is taking a heavy, tragic toll on all of our communities. In London, the number of deaths increased from 60 last year to 101 this year, which is an increase of 66% just in one year. December was the worst month ever for opioid overdose deaths in Ontario: 249 deaths in just that single month. The coroner has suggested that these high rates of opioid overdose deaths are going to be continuing into 2021.

Speaker, what has particularly galvanized my community, in the wake of the coroner's report, is what happened over the weekend in London. In London, four people died of opioid addiction in four days, just in this last weekend.

I want to read into the record the words of some of the people who work with agencies that serve Londoners who are struggling with opioid addiction and homelessness.

1530

Dr. Andrea Sereda is a family physician at the London InterCommunity Health Centre and has really been a leader across Canada in terms of safer supply programs. Dr. Sereda said that “the past three to four weeks have been ‘horrendous. Our team feels like we are dealing with loss every other day.

“So often now I will have somebody from the community come into my office and say, “Everybody I know is dead.” That's what it feels like to people and that's what it feels like to us. We have real gaps where human beings used to be, and their absence is profoundly felt.”

Sonja Burke, who is the director of harm reduction at Regional HIV/AIDS Connection London, said that they have also had a devastating increase in cases, and she notes, “The hard piece, too, is we're seeing younger and younger people.”

Sarah Campbell, who works at the Ark Aid Street Mission, said that she has seen nothing like the past few months. There has been a greater impact of opioid deaths in just the past two or three months compared to any other time in the past year. So we need to do more than simply declare September as Recovery Month.

I want to again talk about some of the leadership that London has shown in terms of effective programs to prevent deaths through opioid addiction. There has been the Safer Opioid Supply Program, as I said, that was founded by Dr. Sereda, and the research into that program has really shown how effective it is in building trust between people who are struggling with addiction and health care professionals and others who can help make

those connections to the community services that people need.

There is naloxone distribution, needle exchange programs and supervised consumption facilities. These are all critical harm-reduction measures that are necessary to assist people who use drugs and are struggling with addiction.

London has actually been—it has become the site of a federal pilot project for a new way of dispensing drugs called MySafe. MySafe is a machine that dispenses hydromorphone tablets to those who have prescriptions for that opioid to help people better manage and access their supply. Four cities across Canada have been selected to pilot this program with this machine called MySafe. Users scan their hand print and then they can access their drugs. London is the only Ontario city that is participating in that pilot, and its participation was because we have one of the largest safer supply programs and have established that credibility for the leadership in dealing with the opioid crisis.

I just want to conclude by urging this government to look at all of the measures that are necessary to support a strong community-based mental health and addictions sector, but also to take those effective harm reduction measures that have been validated by research and evidence that will prevent deaths, that will save so many lives.

I want to just conclude with some comments that were made in response to that awful story about the four deaths in four days on the weekend in London from housing manager Kevin Dickins, who is with the city of London. He says that as “we look at how we create a system response” to these tragic deaths and the pressures of the opioid crisis, “It's not a municipal response, not a non-profit response, not a hospital response, it's a system response.”

I think that's what this government really has to keep in mind when they are making decisions in their budget; for example, the \$330 million that was cut from mental health funding as soon as they took office. They have to really ensure that it is a system response that supports community mental health and addiction agencies and enables Ontarians to feel confident that they'll be able to access the services and supports that they need.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? The member for Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Madame Speaker, usually when I come here and I start my speech by saying it is a pleasure to rise in the House today—you can see actually I have much more of a glow today, and the reason for that is I actually got vaccinated today.

Interjections.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you for the claps.

I just want to say that I got vaccinated today at the International Centre because I want to overcome COVID-19 and get back to the new normal. I want to thank #ThisIsOurShotCA, and I would encourage everybody to join the #ThisIsOurShotCA challenge and tag your friends and family to get vaccinated. Let's all get the shot and get

back to doing the things we love. Help yourself, your family and the community by taking the shot. And if you want to know more, you can go to the campaign website, which is very simple: www.thisisourshot.ca. I want to give a shout-out to my good friend Paul Chana, who had connected me with Dr. Anju Anand, who is doing an incredible job for this cause. Thank you so much.

Now, over to what we're here for: to talk about the bill which my good friend the member from Don Valley North has brought forward. As you know, Madam Speaker, any and every focus on mental health and well-being as a society is welcome, given that, as per the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, in any given year, one in five Canadians experience a mental health illness or addiction problem. And it has become a bigger issue during COVID-19. I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, I see a lot of tired people, and I am one of them. I'm usually not a complainer, but I have started seeing that, in the last few weeks, I have started complaining.

Mr. Mike Harris: I don't believe it.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Oh, you don't believe it, but I'll tell you.

Mental health is our health, and that is why it is important to talk about it. I want to say thank you to my friend for bringing this awareness. I actually want to say thank you to our associate minister who is doing an incredible job. I was listening to him. We cannot be more blessed to have a champion better than you, so thank you so much, Minister.

Having said that, the statistics that I talked about do not capture how an addiction cripples someone's life or the far-reaching and long-term impacts of an addiction on a family, on our public health system, on our society or on an economy. It also does not measure the stigma that continues to surround addiction. Many of us know someone who has been personally impacted by addiction or addiction-related illness. I hope many of us also know that for those who have been able to overcome their addiction, the journey of recovery is a highly personal one. It is a lonely one many times but, most importantly, it is a challenging but, at the end, very rewarding one.

Bill 250 seeks to proclaim September as Recovery Month to help those who are on this journey and to support them and celebrate them. Again, I want to say thank you to the member. It also helps to promote the societal benefits of prevention, treatment and recovery for mental health and substance use disorders and to laud the contributions of treatment and service providers. This is a great step in the right direction. Public awareness campaigns around mental health and addiction have proven to be a very effective way of changing minds and hearts, and a great example is Bell's Let's Talk campaign.

Madam Speaker, let's be very clear: We need to remove the stigma. I always tell everybody that reaching out to the support network is not a sign of weakness; it is in fact a sign of strength. Addiction is not caused by a lack of will-power. It is not caused by moral failure. It is a complicated, long-term issue caused by factors that oftentimes are out of people's control.

1540

Why do people engage in substances in the first place? For some, but not all, it is to provide some temporary solace to suffering. They may be suffering from trauma or abuse, mental illness, low self-esteem, poverty, relationship problems, the loss of loved ones, stress, chronic pain or a medical condition. So for some, the initial decision is voluntary—only for some, and even then, the circumstances surrounding this voluntary decision may only make it a “voluntary” decision. And then you're swept into a cycle of addiction and the pathways in your brain actually change.

I want to give a shout-out to the drug awareness societies from Peel and Toronto, who have been championing their Alcohol-Free April Challenge for the last decade. I have personally seen the positive impact this campaign has had on our community.

Last year, Madam Speaker, I also hosted a mental health and addictions round table with more than 15 community organizations to discuss their work and challenges in this field. I want to thank Minister Tibollo, Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, for joining us and supporting our community.

This commitment is clearly exemplified in our government's Roadmap to Wellness, an investment of \$3.8 billion over 10 years to expand existing programs and fill gaps in care with innovative solutions and services. One of the hallmarks of Ontario's new mental health and addictions plan is that it will provide better access to high-quality, evidence-based services and supports across a person's entire lifespan, from young children to adults and seniors.

It is important to supplement such a historic investment with a public awareness campaign that promotes the message that recovery in all its form is possible, and that's exactly what Bill 250 does. It is important for people of all ages to know that prevention works, treatment is effective and people can and do recover.

Madam Speaker, I want to take some time to recognize some of the organizations in Peel region that are providing excellent service in the field of mental health and addictions support. Many of these organizations actually joined me in a mental health round table in July 2020.

Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin: I want to say thank you to the CEO, Sharon Devine, who said, “Declaring Recovery Month in September is a brilliant idea. People think of alcohol and other substances, but they also forget about other addictive behaviours during COVID-19, such as Netflix bingeing, or going on social media too often. To be able to break the shame around addictive behaviours, to bring it out of the shadows, is very important. In declaring Recovery Month, it allows us to take that first step to provide a compassionate response.”

Madam Speaker, I want to say thank you to the wonderful people at EveryMind. They are the lead agency for child and youth mental health for the Peel service area. They have served over 5,500 children and youth with mental health services, 60% of whom are female. They do exceptional work, and I'm proud to highlight them when debating this bill.

I talked about Hope 24/7. I want to give a shout-out to Laura Zilney, the CEO, who said, “Survivors of sexual violence often experience post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance misuse, suicidality, sleeping disturbances, and eating disorders, to name a few. These issues do not resolve without professional support. Hope 24/7 is proud to support efforts that bring attention to the issue of sexual violence and mental health.”

The Peel Addiction Assessment and Referral Centre: The organization provides a community treatment experience that includes group and individual counselling, and I'm proud to say that they have served over 2,900 members in the last year alone with over 20 excellent programs.

I want to bring a quote from Superintendent Hiltz of the community safety and well-being services of Peel Regional Police. Superintendent Hiltz was quoted: “Peel Regional Police is committed to continually reviewing and improving how we respond to mental health and addiction-related needs of community members and our employees. A comprehensive mental health and addiction strategy is currently being developed in collaboration with several internal and external partners to help achieve this.

“An example of our commitment is our partnership with CHMA’s Peel-Dufferin Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Team ... focusing on de-escalation, decriminalization with the goal of zero harm in supporting those experiencing a mental health crisis.”

Of course, Madam Speaker, this is not an exhaustive list. There are many more organizations who are doing wonderful work in this area, for example, the East Mississauga Community Health Centre, Services and Housing in the Province, or SHIP, the community safety and well-being services division of Peel Regional Police, the Mississauga Halton LHIN, WellFort and the Bramalea Community Health Centre, Peel CAS, Nexus Youth Services and CAMH medical withdrawal management services. All of these organizations and many more would surely appreciate how this private member’s bill is making a concrete, concentrated effort to focus on mental health and addictions awareness, so I want to say thank you to the member again.

Recovery Month is already being celebrated by various organizations. As for Addictions and Mental Health Ontario, their first annual Recovery Month campaign was hosted in the province by the members of AMHO in 2006. Since then, the movement has spread and gained momentum, so you can see the benefit of awareness. The Canadian Mental Health Association also recognizes September as Recovery Month. There is also a motion in the House of Commons to designate the month of September as National Recovery Awareness Month. Both the US and the UK recognize September as Recovery Month, in addition to many other countries across the world.

Madam Speaker, many times when we look at these things, a lot of work goes into it, so I want to give a shout-out to all the staff members of the member for putting this together. One of them, Christina, is somebody who I know is very hard-working, so I want to give a shout-out to all the staff members again.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I strongly support this bill. This is a non-partisan, good-news bill. I'm looking forward to all members supporting this bill. Let's bring awareness.

In conclusion, to quote my wonderful colleague the MPP from Don Valley North, “Shame and stigma are impediments to mental health,” and “Everyone and anyone can be affected by mental health.” So let's declare September as Recovery Month to bring this issue out from the shadows and bring it to the forefront.

I also want to state very clearly that reaching out to your friends and family is not a sign of weakness. It is real strength. Let's support awareness.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wasn't planning on speaking this afternoon until I read some articles in the Windsor Star this morning. I compliment the member from Don Valley North on his bill for Recovery Month. I remind us all that we still have so many people struggling to overcome their mental health and their addictions. There is no health without mental health and, as the member from Mississauga–Malton has just reminded us again, we have to lift the veil and do away with the stigma associated with mental health.

A Windsor Star headline: “‘Extreme’ Overdose Alert Issued for Windsor-Essex after 16 ODs in One Week.”

“A high number of opioid overdoses in Windsor-Essex has again prompted an ‘extreme’ alert from a local agency tasked with addressing widespread substance abuse.

“Eight opioid overdoses occurred between April 30 and May 2 ... seven of which involved fentanyl, according to the Windsor-Essex Community Opioid and Substance Strategy....

“This is the fourth opioid overdose alert issued within the past month, with at least 34 overdose-related emergency department visits since April 5. At least 28 of them involved fentanyl.

“Sixteen of those overdoses happened in one week.”

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Speaker, I'll just skip through some of that and remind the House that we don't have a supervised consumption site in Windsor, although various agencies and non-profits have been lobbying for one.

I thank the minister for thanking the non-profits in his speech, because we just couldn't do what we want to do with mental health and addictions without so many non-profit agencies struggling to keep up with the demand in our communities.

I don't know how many non-profits we have now. A few years ago, I know we had 60,000, to bring a lot of the services that we require in our community: everything from women's shelters, food banks, supervised playtime, tutoring, mentoring for low-income children, shelters, groups who raise money so the underprivileged can play sports—the list goes on and on, including those working with people with issues of mental health and addictions.

I wouldn't want to disappoint you, while I have the floor, by not reading a bit of poetry. I came across a poem

written by Amy Rich. I know some of you like me to read poetry because it helps you nod off for your afternoon nap. This poem was submitted for—poems from people working in the non-profit sector, and it was saying, “When you submit your poem, keep it down to 1,000 characters or less.” Amy writes:

Whisper the world to us
in one thousand characters or less.
Tell us how our five thousand dollars
will make all the difference as you show the little girl
whose floured fingers dance cakey snowflakes above
her salt dough snowman
that her mind works in beautiful ways.
Tell us about the boy who shoves the fistful of winter
dandelions
into the hands of the children’s program director as he
says,
“I brought you a gift from the neighborhood.”
Tell us how our four thousand dollars will help
tutor him and teach him more words to share his
generosity with the world.
Tell us how our two thousand dollars will keep
the water on for the man so grateful for a quiet place to
shower
that he gives the gift of a shower curtain
scoured clean with the jets of the car wash.
Tell us about the woman with a bag of groceries from
the food pantry
who stands at the edge of the garden,
intrigued by the children digging there, and says,
“I’ve never seen where potatoes come from before.”
Tell us how we made this happen.
Do not tell us how you struggle to find the last forty-
five hundred dollars
to meet your budget, how every toilet in the building is
broken,
how the toilet paper was stolen yesterday,
how the copier’s pickup wheels are so worn and
smoothed by a hundred thousand sheets
that they can no longer copy two-sided without a
prayer.
Do not tell us how you are unsure
of how you will afford health insurance for yourself
as you spend three hours on hold, negotiating
with Medicaid, health insurance companies, and
doctors
on behalf of a surly, hurting man who needs a specialist
and angrily broke the pharmacist’s phone earlier in the
day.
Do not tell us how you went home last night
and cried because of all the things you cannot say.
Cried until your lover held you and reminded you,
“Because of you, something beautiful still exists in this
world.”
Whisper the world to us,
but choose what to leave out.
One thousand characters are not many.

Speaker, as I said, the non-profits work with mental health and addictions, helping people to recover.

I know it’s a bit of a downer when you hear poems like this, so I’ll leave you with a little bit of levity from—I found it funny—Robyn Urback in the *Globe and Mail*:

“For one day in mid-April, the province of Ontario turned toddlers into scofflaws. Loitering on the jungle gyms in brazen defiance of public health orders, these pint-sized delinquents openly flouted schedule 3 of the reopening Ontario act, which prohibited the use of outdoor playgrounds, play structures and play equipment. Police didn’t dare intervene, however, since these particular offenders can occasionally get violent—especially when they go without their afternoon naps.”

I know my friends across the aisle, going without your afternoon naps this afternoon—I don’t expect you to get violent. I do expect you to join us as we join the member from Don Valley North in supporting this wonderful bill, declaring Recovery Month, and don’t let us forget all those who haven’t yet recovered and still need the help from both sides of the aisle.

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

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I know it will crush the assembly, but there will be no night sitting tonight.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. I’m sure that you have full agreement of the House.

SAFER SCHOOL BUSES ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 POUR DES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES PLUS SÉCURITAIRES

Mr. Harris moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 246, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 246, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure, as always, to join you and my colleagues here this afternoon in the Ontario Legislature.

Before I kick off third reading of my private member’s bill, the Safer School Buses Act, I want to thank everyone who has had a hand in making this bill possible, in particular, Pierre Ranger and his family, along with the members of Let’s Remember Adam; School Bus Ontario and the school bus operators I met with this year; the police forces who have vocalized their support; of course,

legislative counsel; the members of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and, in particular, a shout-out to a very hard-working staff member in my office, Emily McLaughlin, who helped to craft this bill.

Speaker, there are over 800,000 students in Ontario who rely on a bus to get them to and from school every day. While those children are learning remotely right now I, like many other parents, am hopeful that they will return to the classroom very soon once community transmission decreases. Keeping our kids safe is the number one priority of our Minister of Education, and I'm proud to be part of a government that is making the largest investment in public education in Ontario's history, which includes record spending on school transportation. Building a better province for my five children is what made me decide to run in the 2018 election, and I made a commitment to the people of Kitchener–Conestoga that I'd put the protection of their children at the centre of all that I do.

Two years ago, I sat down with Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region and learned about the amber-red warning system. I was completely floored when I found out that not only is the amber-red colour combination more effective at slowing down traffic and reducing stopping violations for vehicles, but, Madam Speaker, this is the part that blew me away: It is used everywhere else in North America except here in Ontario. So I began to speak with my local school bus operators and it turns out that they not only are supportive of this change, but that they've been asking for it and expecting it for many years.

After those informative discussions, I made it a priority to bring forward the necessary legislative changes to get amber lights onto school buses, which is why I introduced the Safer School Buses Act. There are over 18,000 school buses on the roads here in the province of Ontario, 18,000 buses that, by some estimates, are passed illegally 30,000—30,000—times a day. To hit that home for my fellow members and anyone watching at home, I want to share a quote from Debbie Ranger, who lost her five-year-old son, Adam. While he was getting off a bus, he was struck by a car that blew past that school bus, Madam Speaker: "If you run a school bus light, you can be 100% certain there's a pedestrian there, and not only a pedestrian there but a child." It could be your son, your daughter, your grandchild, your niece, your nephew or your friend.

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It's not only as a legislator but as a father I have the obligation to do something about this. Ontario has the second-highest incident rate per 100,000 in Canada when it comes to illegal school bus passes. In Waterloo region, it happens over 100 times a day. And the worst part is, the overwhelming majority of these drivers do not get charged. "Why does that happen so frequently in Ontario?" you might ask. In part it has to do with the all-red system itself.

Like I said, this province is the only place in North America where you will find school buses with an eight-red-lamp system. In every other province or state there are two red lamps and two amber lamps on the front and back of the bus. In some states it's been this way since the

1970s. Here in Canada, Manitoba started using this system in 1985 and, according to information from the fantastic team at the legislative library, a section of Prince Edward Island's Highway Traffic Act mandates using the dual-lamp system back to 1964. Twenty years ago, Transport Canada did a study and recommended that all provinces adopt the amber-red system. For over five years, every province except Ontario has done this.

Like I said when this bill was first brought for second reading, I don't have the answer as to why Ontario has not adopted this common-sense change. School bus operators are overwhelmingly in favour of it. To quote John Chapman, president of Newry bus lines, an independent school bus operator, "This change is long overdue and will go a long way in making the loading and unloading of our school children safer."

It has been talked about for years, but my bill is the first time it has been brought forward to this chamber, Madam Speaker. At committee, we even heard about an operator in Mattawa who has already purchased the lens caps needed to retrofit their entire fleet, because that is all the change is, for the most part: It's just changing simple lens covers on a light and swapping those out with the inner red lights for a red one and the outers for the amber.

In all, the cost is roughly about \$100 per bus to change this. Like Bill Sharp, the president of Sharp Bus Lines, said, "We further consider any barriers to the implementation to be diminutive in comparison to the possibility of lives saved and the increased chance that" all "students are delivered to and from school safely each day." Like he says, Madam Speaker, it's a small price to pay for the safety of our students.

Speaker, we can't wait another 20 years to make this change. The school buses on our roads today are practically the same as the ones that were around when I was in school. The only major difference is that in 2005, two more red lights were added to the front and the back. But, rather than making buses safer, those red lights have been adding an extra level of confusion for motorists.

Red is supposed to mean stop. Technically speaking, school buses are an exemption to that rule, because under the Highway Traffic Act, you can legally pass a school bus with its red lights flashing as long as it's not stopped. The act also requires bus drivers to use the red signals to give drivers notice that they are approaching a stop. The idea is that drivers who cannot come to a full and complete stop will have time to cautiously pass before the bus stops. But as we all know, and I'm going to use the words from the illustrious Randy Travis, from his song Three Wooden Crosses, "Eighteen-wheelers can't stop on a dime."

So we know that the warning period makes sense. But you tell me, Madam Speaker: If you're in a car with a transport truck behind you, can you quickly tell me certainly from 200 metres away whether that school bus is stopped or not? Can you tell whether it has those flashing lights on? Truthfully, I don't know that I have the confidence that I could. So what do drivers do, knowing that red, again, is supposed to mean stop? They slam on the brakes, creating a dangerous domino effect, with that

transport behind them. But even after those drivers barely avoid an accident, the school bus with the flashing red lights casually drives by because that stop with those two oncoming cars was just a little bit further up the road.

Now, this entire situation can be avoided if we pass this bill here today, Madam Speaker. Take a look at a stop light, for example. You can clearly see when the light is about to change, because in between the green and the red, you have yellow and amber. Red means stop and yellow means caution. We can use that same logic for school buses. Instead of using flashing red lights to indicate they are approaching a stop, a school bus driver would use their amber lights, giving a clear indication to any other drivers on the road that they can still pass with caution—with caution, Madam Speaker. And vice versa, they would also know that when the red lights are on, they absolutely, 100% need to stop because there could be a child getting on or off the bus.

It might only be some \$100 lens caps, but like I've said before, and as the member from Humber River–Black Creek also said during the second reading of this bill, it will save lives. I want to thank him and his colleagues in the opposition benches for supporting this bill at debate and providing some really great input during the committee process.

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy held public hearings back in March. I'm going to recognize a few of the presenters this afternoon, but I want to get into Hansard that I am grateful to everyone who appeared before the committee. We got to hear from Pierre Ranger and the Let's Remember Adam campaign, which started in 2004 in memory of his brother Adam. The entire Ranger family, including Pierre and Debbie, who I mentioned earlier, deserve recognition for all the work that they have done in the face of every parent's worst nightmare. No family should ever have to say goodbye to their five-year-old. I should mention, actually, while we're on this topic, that my daughter, Gemma, just turned five a couple of weeks ago, so this might hit a little close to home for me over the next little bit.

To turn that tragedy into an advocacy campaign to make school buses safer takes an incredible amount of strength that very few of us, quite frankly, can muster. I'm going to quote some of Pierre's presentation that I think will send a really powerful message to any members who are still maybe on the fence about this change: "The red lights on the bus ... are a danger. It's confusing. Anything we can do to make that bus safer for children is Let's Remember Adam's goal, and these amber lights and Bill 246, the Safer School Buses Act, is a massive change that would benefit children all across Ontario." Maybe on February 11, 2000, "if that bus would have had amber lights on it, maybe the driver would have noticed something else and stopped, and Adam would still be here today, but we'll never know that."

Pierre, as the chair of Let's Remember Adam, was also instrumental in getting all of the school buses in Mattawa outfitted with stop-arm cameras, something I full-heartedly support. I hope to see more municipalities

getting on board to adopt those projects soon. But at the end of the day, stop-arm cameras don't get more people to stop. Adding amber lights will, as Transport Canada and other jurisdictions have demonstrated, do just that. As Pierre said to the committee, together, both will make school buses 100% safer.

Like I mentioned, it is perfectly legal to pass a school bus with red flashing lights as long as that bus is still moving. But where that gets murky is when drivers who have been charged with that claim that the bus was moving when they passed it. Not only is the all-red system confusing for drivers who are trying to follow the law, but those who put our children at risk by illegally passing buses are, as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin and I had discussed previously during second reading of this bill, using that very same clause to actually get out of those charges, which I find perplexing, Madam Speaker.

Bruce Chapman, president of the Police Association of Ontario, also presented before the committee. He said that the amber-red system would make it easier for an officer to lay charges, since there is a clear distinction between a bus that is slowing down and one that is, indeed, stopped: "This would eliminate ... doubt on anybody's part, including the judicial system."

I recently spoke with a bus driver from Waterloo who expressed frustration with how few charges actually get laid against drivers who blow by these buses. I have a tremendous amount of respect and gratitude for all of the drivers of Ontario's 18,000 school buses. Their job isn't easy even at the best of times. They have the responsibility of getting kids to school and back home to mom and dad at the end of the day. In some of our rural and northern communities, a school bus driver might pick up a child on their first day of kindergarten and drop them off on their last day of graduation at grade 12. These drivers, Madam Speaker, as I'm sure you'll be well aware as a former teacher yourself, get very attached to some of these kids.

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Tony Giverin, a school bus driver, described to the committee what it is like to watch a driver come close to hitting one of his students he picks up every day: "The first response is anger. You're in disbelief.... We would lose our minds when we witnessed somebody blowing through our stop sign. And you can anticipate it.... You're sitting in the driver's seat, you see a car approaching, and you ... know this person's not going to stop." Tony experiences this three out of five days when he's driving a bus.

I'll repeat that staggering statistic that I talked about earlier: Nearly 30,000 drivers illegally pass a school bus every day here in the province of Ontario. I've been working on this bill for over a year and a half now, and that number still shocks me every time I repeat it.

School bus drivers rely on us as legislators to make the vehicles that they drive safe and up to modern standards. The plain truth of it is that they aren't right now. Right now, bus drivers are relying on a red light warning system for advance notice to drivers that they are approaching a stop.

A warning system is important. As several presenters explained to us during committee, the school bus driver

could activate the warning lights earlier if they are on a highway or see an approaching vehicle that might take a little longer to stop, like that transport truck that I talked about earlier. But when the warning system is confusing, like the all-red one, it results in safety risks if, for example, a driver makes a panicked stop.

As I said, School Bus Ontario is very supportive of this bill, Madam Speaker, but they also came to committee with some suggestions on how the bill could be enhanced. The first was a change to the signage on the back of a bus. Currently, the rear of a school bus says, “Do not pass when signals flashing.” Now, I’ll admit I hadn’t thought much about that and how confusing that message really is. But the word “signal” can mean many different things—like a turn signal or maybe even a brake light—so we’re changing that if this bill passes. The back of the bus will clearly say, “Do not pass when red lights flashing” if the bus in particular does indeed have amber lights, a clear message that tells you exactly what not to do: Don’t pass that bus when the red lights are flashing.

Another change that industry requested was the implementation date. We moved that to July 2022 to allow for operators to retrofit their buses over the summer but still be able to use them. The Ministry of Transportation has promised a soft implementation period to allow for operators to make the change ahead of the 2022-23 school year.

I had the pleasure of having the support of the Minister of Transportation, the associate minister and the parliamentary assistant while putting this bill together. Their teams have worked closely with my office and supported us in this journey to make this change. They are committed to working with industry on an implementation plan should this bill receive royal assent.

The Minister of Education has had a chance to speak in support of this bill during second reading. As he put it, while Ontario leads the country in student transportation funding, every other province is leaps and bounds ahead of us when it comes to the adoption of the amber-red system. Even if we make this change on July 1, 2022, every other jurisdiction will have been using the amber-red light system for nearly a decade. It is absolutely unacceptable that Ontario is playing catch-up when it comes to keeping our children safe, and I can’t help but wonder how many accidents or near misses could have been prevented if our school buses already had these amber lights installed.

I have spoken about how this bill will make our buses safer, but I do want to acknowledge that school buses are indeed even still the safest way for a child to get to school. Just because they’re safe, doesn’t mean they can’t be safer. We shouldn’t compromise on student safety just because we aren’t having accidents every day. I won’t accept that, as an MPP or a parent, because accidents do happen, Madam Speaker.

I’m still struck by the story the Associate Minister of Children and Women’s Issues shared with this House during second reading. When I’m on the highway near Mattawa, I see the billboards that Adam’s family has put

up, and that story resonates with me every time. In my riding, when I’m travelling down Erbs Road by St. Agatha, where in 2012 a 12-year-old girl was hit getting off the bus, I’m always a little extra cautious going through that area. We will never know if amber lights would have made a difference in any of those accidents, but what we do know is that the amber-red system is far safer. In fact, it reduces the speed of approaching traffic by 60% in some cases.

It’s clear, and it’s long overdue here in Ontario. As a parent, the number one responsibility you have is protecting your kids. But even if you aren’t a parent, I am confident that the deeper meaning of this bill will connect with you.

I’ve heard from quite a few members on both sides of the House about this bill, and I’m looking forward to hearing from my colleagues again this afternoon. This change, quite frankly, should have been made a long time ago, but it’s not too late. Hopefully, today will be that day.

Let’s not wait another 20 years, Madam Speaker. Today is the day for Ontario to finally commit to making the switch to amber-red lights. Let’s make our school buses even safer.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It is an honour to rise and join the debate on Bill 246, the Safer School Buses Act, put forward by the member for Kitchener–Conestoga. It’s always a privilege to stand on behalf of my constituents in the great riding of Davenport. I’d like to start by thanking the member opposite for bringing this issue forward, and by stating our support, as the NDP official opposition, for this bill.

School bus safety, along with safety in our schools, has been top of mind for me not only during this pandemic, but since I arrived at the Legislature and, of course, since my years as a school board trustee and a mom. Student safety is essential, and the NDP official opposition has always and will always support anyone calling for increased safety in school transportation systems, like the Ranger family and the Ontario School Bus Association.

This bill brings forward an important and long-overdue policy change that’s going to make our roads safer for the children who use our school bus system. The amber light system is a good step. With Ontario being the only jurisdiction in North America without the amber light system in place, there should be no question that this change is something we need.

However, I do want to note that this bill also sheds light on the more significant issue of funding structures within our school transportation system. Like with so many things, I think the COVID-19 pandemic has really shone a light on some of those systemic issues, which also contribute to the safety of our students.

Since this pandemic started, even in the middle of the pandemic, students have had to take overcrowded buses to overcrowded classrooms, risking their safety and causing infections to spread throughout our school system. We’ve seen, unfortunately, the impact of this failure of the

government to keep our children and our communities safe, as Ontarians now survive a third lockdown. This has really exposed some of those extraordinary issues around lack of funding and initiatives, both from this government but also from the previous Liberal government.

We have to support the students; we also have to support the drivers. It is our responsibility to do so, to protect those caring adults that the member opposite talked about, whom we entrust with our most precious, precious packages.

I want to quickly share something that a school bus driver actually shared with me just today, by coincidence. She said, “We need to stop jamming kids onto buses. When you have anything over 42 kids, on my bus, that means some seats have three kids. I drop 50 kids. That’s eight triple seats.” Her partner had two elementary runs with 53 with 11 triple seats, and 57 with 15 triple seats. And that’s not just little kids; that’s older kids.

She also told me how frightened she felt, driving the buses right now, being forced to wear substandard masks provided by the school board, being required by the government to wear the school-board-supplied masks that were substandard. She actually asked me to urge the government to please do better in that regard.

In Ontario, school transportation funding is not needs-based; it’s based on historical data and information for each board. That means that the funding model doesn’t account for important factors such as enrolment and geography, or the number of special-needs students, or safety hazards that are related to transportation.

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I would say that the government would do well to listen to some of our northern members, for example, to understand a bit better some of the specific challenges faced by students travelling on school buses in the north.

The funding that we have in place for our schools and our school transportation systems is stretched so thin, and that’s ultimately a safety issue. It’s dangerous for our students. It’s dangerous for our communities. Indeed, to really keep our students safe, we should be looking at the whole picture; not taking a piecemeal, stopgap approach—and I would say that to all governments.

That said, the official opposition NDP, as I mentioned, will support any piece of legislation that increases safety for our students; we just want to see more of the same. That’s why I’m going to call on the government again today to please cap capacity on our buses, not just during this pandemic, but going forward. Surely we have learned that we can do better.

These policy changes are an important step. They need to be backed up with a commitment to funding increases, to real safety and to good PPE for our school bus drivers. And they need to be implemented without compromise.

Again, to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, thank you for bringing forward this legislation. It’s a good piece.

Let’s continue to support our remarkable students.

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: It is an honour to rise this afternoon and speak in support of Bill 246, the Safer School Buses Act, brought forward by my colleague and friend the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

I would like to first thank my colleague for bringing this important bill forward to improve the safety of school buses on our roads. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I’m especially pleased to support this measure to improve road safety for our students.

Ontario has some of the safest roads in North America, and we must take the necessary steps to protect this record and improve safety wherever possible.

As legislators, we must do whatever it takes to protect the safety of our children—the future of our province—as they get to and from school.

Speaker, over 830,000 students across Ontario take a school bus every day. We must give their parents and guardians the confidence that when they get on the bus in the morning, they will also arrive home in the afternoon. Bill 246 does that by requiring all school buses to be upgraded with a safer warning light system.

This bill, if passed, would amend section 175 of the Highway Traffic Act so that it would require all school buses manufactured after 2005 to be equipped with the eight-lamp amber-red warning system.

This bill also outlines new requirements for drivers to complete when they are facilitating the boarding of children onto the school bus.

Under the proposed amendments, as the bus driver slows down the bus, they will activate the amber lights to give advance warning that the bus is slowing down and is intending to stop. When the school bus comes to a stop, the driver will activate the red lights and deploy the stop arm.

This change will improve road safety by bringing greater clarity as to when road users need to slow down and when to stop for a school bus.

Madam Speaker, the changes outlined have been long-awaited by school bus operators as well as by the road safety community. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in North America that has this outdated red warning light system, a shocking fact to anyone who is not aware of this already. It’s time to modernize this regulation and keep our kids safe on school buses.

The data is so clear on the effectiveness of the amber-red-light warning system. In 2002, Transport Canada compared the red and amber-red warning lamp systems to measure which system was the most effective at slowing down road users. The study found that the amber-red system led to an 11% reduction in vehicle speeds in all road conditions. Among roads with two lanes of traffic, the amber-red system reduced the speed of those vehicles by 64%, significantly higher than the red light system at 48%. In that same year, Transport Canada recommended that all provinces adopt the amber-red-light warning system to improve safety.

As the member for Kitchener–Conestoga has previously highlighted, there has been significant stakeholder

support for this bill from organizations like law enforcement officials, school bus associations, municipalities and education partners. For instance, law enforcement officials have said that Bill 246 will eliminate the confusion around the current red-lamp system, which will make it easier to catch those who pass a school bus illegally, once these changes are implemented.

The Temiskaming OPP detachment detailed in a submission to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga that, “The current all-red system is extremely confusing for motorists and does not work. Most drivers struggle to understand their requirement when approaching a school bus with the red lights activated.” The amber light system “would help avoid the ongoing confusion.”

Today, the third reading debate has been a long time coming for these groups who, for years, have been advocating for this change to protect our children who take the school bus each and every day.

I will also highlight to this House that I had a meeting with Mr. Tony Giverin, a constituent of mine who is a retired staff member of the Legislative Assembly who worked in the broadcast and recording division for 30 years and later found himself working as a school bus driver in York region afterwards.

In the fall of 2020, Tony reached out to my office to discuss his concerns with the eight-lamp red warning system, speaking to his perspective from years of work as a school bus driver. It was a productive discussion, and I valued Tony’s insights on what needed to be changed to improve safety on all school buses.

Tony went on to present to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, where he presented to the committee during the public hearings. Tony said, “By simply implementing amber lamps as an early warning indicator, it is my belief that red-light runners will decrease in numbers, drivers will be better prepared when following or approaching a school bus, and student safety as a whole will improve immediately.”

Tony also went on to describe the effectiveness of the amber-light warning system with this analogy: “The green-amber-red configuration is found on traffic lights around the world. Amber is provided to simply warn about what is about to occur next: a red light. A red light—this is understood universally—is stop.” Let’s get this change done for safety.

Madam Speaker, once again, I want to thank my colleague and friend the member for Kitchener–Conestoga for bringing this important change forward to this House and for his fierce advocacy on road safety. I encourage all members of this House to support the bill at third reading. We must do whatever it takes to improve the safety of our roads for our children.

1630

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I thought about a number of things that I was going to talk about today. As the discussion has gone on, the approach that I’m going to take has changed. I can talk about some of the statistics; I’ll touch on one

right off the bat, and that’s that in 2002, Transport Canada did a study on this. They found that 64% of vehicles slowed down when they had the amber lights, but only 48% of vehicles slowed down when it was just red lights. It’s not really a huge difference between 48% and 64%—16%—but how many kids died because of that 16%? That’s the question that I have to ask on this.

As legislators, as people who are elected here, we’re brought in here to represent our communities, and we all want to do something that’s going to make a difference in the province. We all want to have something that is going to be our legacy. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga has put forward something that should pass today. It should become law. It’s such a simple thing, such a simple change, but it’s going to make such a big difference—not just a difference today, but a difference moving forward. How often can any of us stand up and say, “I actually made that kind of a difference. I saved somebody’s life”?

We’re not going to be able to measure how many people will live because of this. We’re not going to be able to go back and say this child or that child is alive today because of that change, but this is a piece of legislation that will make a measurable difference in the lives of so many people who we’ll never meet and we’ll never know. We won’t be able to say, “I saved that person’s life because of this,” but this legislation, this small change—and it’s an insignificant change. It really is. We’re not talking about redesigning a bus. We’re not talking about changing the way we’re going to move students from home to school. We’re not talking about reinventing something. We’re taking four lenses and changing the colour.

Think about that: It’s four lenses on a bus. That’s all it is, and it makes the difference of 16% of the vehicles: 16% more will slow down; 16% more will not blow by a school bus. I can’t tell you how many kids are going to live because of this, but I can tell you that kids will live because of this.

My one constituency assistant was a school bus driver before she started to work for me, and she has talked about this a number of times. She said that on her route, it was at least twice a week that somebody blew by them. In one case, it was a transport, and it almost hit her daughters getting off the bus. One of the things that was brought up is that when the lights are flashing, if the bus is still moving, you can pass. That transport driver could have had an argument that he thought the bus was still moving, and he probably would have gotten off on it.

When I first heard about that, that that was a defence, I talked to a good friend of mine who lives near me. He’s a lawyer, and I said to him, “Why would you use that as a defence?” He kind of chuckled, and he said, “Well, first off, Dave, I get paid to do that. My job is to make sure that I help people who come in to see me. It’s no different than your job; you are supposed to help people as well.” I said, “Okay, but if you know the guy is guilty, if you know that they’ve done harm, if you know that the bus was stopped, why would you use that as a defence?” And he smiled at me and he said, “My job is to make sure that you do your

job right. Do your job right, and then I don't have that as a defence." I thought, as a lawyer, he's right. His job is to make sure that we do our job right, and this small change is one of those things that makes sure that we're doing the job right.

There have been some suggestions that there will be pushback from some of the bus operators, so I reached out to some of the operators in my riding. James, who owns Ellwood-Hamilton Bus Lines, said to me that if I get the chance today to thank the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, to thank him on behalf of all of the bus drivers that he employs, because they recognize this is a change that's going to make a big difference for them. He said to me, "Everybody else is doing this. Every other jurisdiction is doing it, so what's taking us so long to do it? I'm glad that you're doing it now. I'm glad that it has been brought forward, but it should have been done a long time ago." And he's right: It should have been done a long time ago.

It's not a huge expense. What we're talking about is buses that were built after 2005. We're going to change four lenses. Why are we doing buses that were built after 2005? Why aren't we doing buses that were built before 2005? Well, after 2005, all buses had to have four lights on the back and four lights on the front. Any bus that was built in 2005 is going to be more than 18 years old when this comes into play, and the average life span of a school bus is only 12 years, so we're not going to be missing any of those buses. They won't be school buses. They might be activity buses. Activity buses are old school buses that are now painted green instead of orange. But those aren't school buses; they're not picking up kids and taking them to school. We're not talking about the same type of thing. They're picking up a group of people in a parking lot and then taking them back to another parking lot.

This is a change that is long overdue, and it's a change that is going to make a positive difference for a lot of people in a very, very small way. I want to thank the member for Kitchener-Conestoga for this, because this actually is one of those legacy things. You have made a lasting impression, and you have done something that is good for so many people in Ontario.

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

Mr. Deepak Anand: I'm so blessed to rise for the second time today, and this time to support my colleague, a wonderful colleague, a family man, a proud father and a five-star heckler—

Mr. Mike Harris: I'll take that.

Mr. Deepak Anand: —the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, in regard to the Safer School Buses Act. As a father of two children, I truly want to thank you. Thank you for proposing ways to make our children and our communities safer.

As we heard the member say in his remarks, our school buses are the safest mode of transport for our children, but we should always work to make it even more safe, so thank you.

Through Bill 246, we are introducing a dual red-amber system, which has been used by all jurisdictions in North

America, with the exception of Ontario. Wisconsin was the last state to adopt this system, way back in 2016, and I'm happy to say that we are joining in and saving lives thanks to you, member. I really appreciate it.

On a personal level, Madam Speaker, when I got elected as the member for Mississauga-Malton, I made a commitment to my constituents that I would always look out for their safety and security. I always appreciate every effort made in this House for the safety and the security of our residents, and that is exactly what Bill 246 is doing.

As you know, with a population reaching close to 800,000—and if you have been to Mississauga, you would know it; if you haven't been to Mississauga, please come to Mississauga, and you'll know it—Mississauga is a very busy city. There are many, many busy roads and there are many, many busy drivers. So when I was drafting the speech for this bill, I thought of the high school nearest to my house, where my daughter, Suvidhi Anand, goes, which is sandwiched in between a busy road and a very busy highway. I thought, "This is the right step to protect and save our children." So again, I'm proud to support this bill.

1640

Before I even begin, Madam Speaker, I want to briefly address what a private member's bill is, because a lot of my constituents ask me, "What is a PMB?" PMBs are bills brought by private members, members like us—in other words, non-cabinet members, and they allow us to address the very important issues that impact our community and our province.

The first stage is ideation, where MPPs look at areas where we could bring change through policy. Then, a bill is drafted, and then we go to caucus and we discuss with each other. Subsequently, we bring it to first reading. If passed, it goes to second reading, where we all debate. Once it goes to second reading, it goes to the committee stage. Once we have the opportunity at the committee stage, then it goes to be reported to the House. In the final stage, we come here again, discuss lessons learned from the committee and lessons learned from the community, and bring those changes into the bill, and we have a third reading. I'm sure, with the intentions you brought forward, that this bill is going to go through. With that, it's going to come to royal assent, when the bill becomes an act.

These bills bring matters that concern private members and our constituents to the attention of the House, the ministries, the media and the public. They have an impact on government policy or indicate policy directions a future government might take.

I want to give you an example: One pressing issue which we talked about as we talked about Bill 246, which is going to save lives, is the problem of gas-and-dash, which I'm personally advocating about through Bill 231. With that bill, it will prevent the problem by introducing mandatory pre-payment across the province for gas and save lives of Ontarians at the pump. That bill, just like this one we're discussing in front of us today, Bill 246, has very simple goals: the goal of community safety, the goal of making sure our children are safe. We are introducing these PMBs to protect our children, our neighbours'

children, and not only them, but those drivers and the people who, by mistake sometimes, get into those issues, so that they don't have to have guilt forever.

Let me reiterate for all members what this bill is about: It amends section 175 of the Highway Traffic Act to state that buses manufactured on or after January 1, 2005, will be equipped with four overhead amber signal lights and four overhead red signal lights—correct?

Mr. Mike Harris: Correct.

Mr. Deepak Anand: For these same buses, the old, confusing message will be replaced with one clear, precise, straightforward message: Do not pass when the red lights are flashing. In other words, take care of our children. They're precious. Let's save them.

The Ministry of Transportation has also promised a soft implementation period to allow for the operators to make the necessary retrofits.

Now, let's look at the data showcasing the current as well as the concrete benefits of adopting the amber-red warning system. The data is very clear. As the president of the Ontario Association of School Business Officials, OASBO, said, the current four-lamp system is "confusing for motorists, resulting in unnecessary safety risks." For one, my colleagues have already mentioned that there are 30,000 drivers who pass by school buses every day across the province. There are 18,000 school buses on the road, and keep in mind that there are 833,000 students in Ontario who rely on these buses to get them to and from school every day.

It is estimated that by switching to the amber-red warning system, 3,300 of these vehicles would be slower when approaching a school bus. Based on Transport Canada's data, this bill could also prevent 450 drivers from illegally passing, including some of those who do it by mistake. In 2000, Transport Canada found that amber warning lights resulted in an 11% reduction in speed compared to all-red lights, as well as fewer stopping violations. In other words, it's a win-win situation for all of us.

Let me also say that this is a very easy and simple change—a change that cannot and should not wait. A simple swap of the inner red cap for an amber one probably costs \$100 or \$200. It's a very, very small price to pay for the safety of our children.

As my colleague said not too long ago, let's get these changes done for our safety. Let's get them done because the bus drivers and Transport Canada have been asking for them. Let's get them done for common sense. Let's get them done for our children, our neighbours' children, our Ontarians. Changing four lenses can impact tens of thousands of lives, and I'm looking forward to everybody joining hands and getting this bill passed.

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

Mr. Harris has moved third reading of Bill 246, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Orders of the day? I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. I think, if you seek it, you will find I have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Ms. Khanjin is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Is it agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

INHERENT RIGHT TO SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT, 2021 LOI DE 2021 SUR LE DROIT INHÉRENT À DE L'EAU POTABLE SAIN

Mr. Mamakwa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 286, An Act to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 to require specified actions with respect to safe drinking water for Ontarians living and working on reserves / Projet de loi 286, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur la salubrité de l'eau potable pour exiger des mesures spécifiées à l'égard de la salubrité de l'eau potable des Ontariens et Ontariennes qui vivent et travaillent dans des réserves.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: Speaker, meegwetch. I rise today to speak on Bill 286, An Act to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 to require specified actions with respect to safe drinking water for Ontarians living and working on reserves. I am raising this issue here today because the lack of access to clean drinking water for First Nations is a profound crisis.

Today, 25 First Nations in Ontario are under long-term boil-water advisories. Sixteen of these First Nations are in Kiiwetinoong, Speaker; 14 are long-term, two short-term: Eabametoong, 20 years; Muskrat Dam, 18 years; Neskantaga, 26 years; Sandy Lake, 19 years.

1650

Speaker, these are just numbers, but as the MPP for Kiiwetinoong, I am privileged to represent people from across the best part of Ontario. We are rich not only in land, but also in our way of life. But families in many of these places cannot access clean, safe drinking water in their homes. Can you imagine that, Speaker, being a young person who has never, ever known what it's like to be able to drink water from the tap? For young people in Neskantaga like Lyndon Sakanee, like Bedahbun Moonias, this is their reality.

Imagine living with bathwater that could make your little one sick or tap water that isn't safe enough to use to make dinner for your family. In many places across

Kiiwetinoong and in First Nations across Ontario, this is a reality. We should not have two Ontarios, one where clean water is guaranteed and another Ontario where people are forced to live without.

Access to safe drinking water has been an issue for First Nations as long as there has been running water. These infrastructure systems were not set up properly, correctly. They have always been underfunded and have always not taken the needs of First Nations into account when they were being designed. Since that time, governments have played jurisdictional Ping-Pong to avoid having to invest in resources and clean, safe water for First Nations. Madam Speaker, this is structural racism. It is racism, period. And all levels of government have not adequately addressed this issue. I see this bill as a starting point for work that needs to be done here in Ontario.

Currently, Ontario has two pieces of legislation that address clean drinking water access for Ontarians: the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 and the Clean Water Act, 2006. And yet, First Nations go year after year without access to clean water. We have to address this inequity, Speaker, by making sure people who live and work in First Nations have the same access to safe, clean drinking water as everyone else.

Can you imagine if we had to say that the water in Toronto, the water in Sudbury, the water in Ottawa was not consistent with the provincial standards? Speaker, this is a complete failure to uphold one of the most basic human rights for anybody living in Ontario. Treating people who live and work on First Nations as second-class citizens is unacceptable in this day and age.

The second part of the Walkerton inquiry has a very good definition of what safe drinking water is. The report says that Ontario should “deliver water with a level of risk so” small “that a reasonable and informed person would feel safe drinking the water.”

Speaker, I stand here and tell you that no one in Neskantaga, no one in Sandy Lake feels safe drinking the water that comes out of the tap. In fact, this has gone on for so long that our First Nation communities normalize the dysfunction. When you live it on a daily basis, it becomes normal and acceptable. Young people grow up without expectation of clean drinking water. It is a privilege to the rest of us in Ontario that we take this for granted.

This lack of clean drinking water takes its toll on our physical health, causing many illnesses to those who drink the water. It has also many, many implications for the mental health, the mental wellness, the general well-being of those who live and work in First Nations with no clean drinking water. In 2008, the Chief Coroner of Ontario stated that children and youth in fly-in First Nations often live under conditions that lead resiliency to be “stretched beyond human limits.”

I've said this before multiple times, that there is an ongoing mental health crisis in communities across Kiiwetinoong and it disproportionately affects the children and youth. The same report from the chief coroner from 2008 said that “the mental health and well-being of these children and youth is a ... response to many factors in their lives, including social determinants of health.”

In Pikangikum, in 2018, there had been a boil-water advisory for 10 years. Since then, it has been lifted, but there are other issues that prevent everyone from having access to clean drinking water. Just 109 of the 500 homes in Pikangikum have running water. The rest must go to one of the six lift stations to get water. But then again, these are just numbers and don't reflect the truth of young people who continue to be affected by these conditions.

I got an opportunity to spend some time with the evacuees from Neskantaga in October, November and December 2020, when they got evacuated. It is a total failure, and we must do better. I got to attend this rally with these children at one point, in November 2020. If you don't want to listen to me, take some time to listen to the words of these young people:

Lyndon Sakanee, 12 years old, Neskantaga: “We're not animals. We're not things. We're human just like you.”

Bedahbun Moonias: “I feel like we don't exist and that nobody would care. We are suffering to get clean water. Go live there; you'll see how it feels getting no clean water.”

Renita Moonias: “I have two children, who are 1 and 3. It is painful to keep going through this, for me ... and them. I don't want them to grow up without clean drinking water like me. I don't want them to have to bathe in the dangerous water back home. They deserve clean water. All the children in Neskantaga deserve clean water.”

Marilyn from Neskantaga: “On January 9, we needed to bathe, so I went to get the water at the water treatment facility with my two youngest children, who are 7 and 9. When we returned, my 7-year-old found her sister in the closet. She had taken her life. Now, my youngest are 11 and 15. I don't know what answers to give them anymore. The water crisis reminds me every day how I lost my child and will never see her again. We need clean water.”

1700

Speaker, water is life. It is the lifeblood of the earth; it is the lifeblood of creation. We must honour that. This is why I'm here asking for the support of my colleagues to make sure this bill goes to third reading. We must ensure that everyone in Ontario can access safe, clean drinking water. No more talk; we need action. Meegwetch.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I appreciate this opportunity to speak in support of the private member's bill introduced by the honourable member, and it's entitled the Inherent Right to Safe Drinking Water Act.

Speaker, I know all members of this House will agree that all Ontarians, including those who live in First Nations communities, have the right to clean drinking water. Ontario has played an important role in supporting First Nations communities to improve drinking water quality on reserves. However, there is still a lot of work to be done.

We believe that all Ontarians deserve this access, without exception. Speaker, all members of this House know drinking water on reserves is a federal responsibility. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and

Parks recognizes that there are systemic challenges in the existing drinking water protection framework for First Nations communities. This is why we continue to call on the federal Liberal government to end the rhetoric and the photo ops, do the right thing and start delivering real action for First Nations communities. This includes ending boil-water advisories for all First Nations reserves and making the necessary investments to resolve this issue now and for future generations.

Speaker, due to the failure of the Trudeau government when it comes to following through on their commitments, Ontario has stepped up to the plate. Unlike them, we will not be playing jurisdictional Ping-Pong. Ontario has stepped up and is supporting First Nations communities to improve water quality on reserves and will continue to work in partnership with the communities to address this issue.

For example, in November 2020, Neskantaga First Nations requested support from this government through the Ontario Clean Water Agency to assist in commissioning its new water treatment plant. We provided the support, and the plant went online in December 2020 and is producing safe drinking water to the community residents.

Our work in this regard is carried out through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks' Indigenous Drinking Water Projects Office, which also provides First Nations communities with access to provincial expertise in the design, construction, operation and maintenance of drinking water systems, as well as operator training and certification requirements.

Speaker, we're also working with political territorial organizations, tribal councils and First Nations communities to support initiatives that promote sustainability for future community needs. As of December 2020, a total of 63 water and 17 waste-water assessments and site visits have been completed in 59 communities across the province.

We're also working with First Nations partners through the Walkerton Clean Water Centre. Through the centre, we made a commitment of \$1.85 million to help develop and provide training and education for operators. The training is tailored to reflect the learning needs of participants, and content is related more closely to the experiences of operators in First Nations communities. Last year, in-classroom sessions of entry-level training for drinking water operators were interrupted by COVID-19, but they resumed in August 2020. As of December 2020, 128 individuals had successfully completed their entry-level training for drinking water operators, approximately half of whom are from northern Ontario.

Speaker, we're taking a whole-of-government approach to ensuring that First Nations communities have access to clean drinking water. For example, Ontario's Ministry of Infrastructure has partnered with Infrastructure Canada to administer clean water and waste-water funds to municipalities and First Nations in Ontario.

Our government also recognizes the transportation challenges faced by First Nations communities such as

those in the Far North, so we've collaborated with the Aboriginal Water and Wastewater Association of Ontario to provide practical on-site exams for operators who may not be able to leave their community.

I also want to mention that the Great Lakes Guardians' Council, which is co-chaired by Minister Yurek and Grand Council Chief Glen Hare, are also finding solutions to protecting drinking water sources for First Nations communities, and we did meet not that long ago with Chief Glen Hare.

Speaker, this brings me to the legislation introduced by the honourable member. Let me be clear: The fact that all Ontarians deserve access to clean drinking water is not up for debate. Everyone and every member in this House agrees on that. While the Inherent Right to Safe Drinking Water Act aligns with our government's commitment to protecting the health and safety of all Ontarians, we believe it does not do enough to acknowledge the federal government's responsibility and lack of action on this issue.

With all due respect to the member opposite, the bill does not account for the complex jurisdictional and technical challenges that would result in Ontario adopting the proposed bill into provincial law: for instance, what we could legally compel the federal government to do and how they propose the federal government would integrate the recommended standards and its own enforcement into their legislation. With that in mind, I think it's important to note that the federal government could adopt the Ontario standards or incorporate them by referencing these particular standards anytime they want, and would then be able to enforce them.

Another concern is that this bill doesn't take into account the ongoing First-Nations-led process to address drinking water issues in their communities and their work to ask the federal government to repeal the federal act.

We believe that there is a place for Ontario to offer its water expertise in the development and implementation of standards, and we have provided that support and will continue to do so upon request by the federal government and First Nations. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks can continue to play an advisory role, in collaboration with its agencies, federal partners and First Nations, in order to support First Nations efforts to resolve drinking water issues on reserves, and we can support the development of a provincial strategy to support the long-term sustainability of drinking water systems.

Our government is aware of and supports the ongoing First-Nations-led process, such as the Canada-wide engagement sessions that are currently under way and being led by the Assembly of First Nations. We take this issue very seriously and are committed to continuing to support and to advocate for safe drinking water for First Nations living and working on reserves. Our government agrees that addressing this issue is long overdue, and we can call on the Trudeau government to take immediate action to ensure First Nations communities have access to the same quality of drinking water as anyone else here in Ontario.

While we have some initial concerns with the lack of detail with this bill, we will continue to carefully review it, and we welcome further discussions and opportunities to work with all members of this House on this particular issue.

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

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's an honour to rise today and speak in support of this really important bill. I deeply want to thank the member from Kiiwetinoong for bringing it forward.

Speaker, access to clean drinking water is a human right—there's no other way to put it—but as of December 2020, there were 43 long-term drinking water advisories impacting 26 First Nations in Ontario. This is the highest number of long-term drinking water advisories in the country, and it's shameful.

In many of these nations, there are young adults in Ontario who have never known what it's like to be able to drink the water that comes out of your tap. The residents of Neskantaga First Nation have lived with a water advisory for 25 years. Young adults who grew up without access to clean water are now having their own children. Generation after generation are being denied their fundamental human rights in one of the wealthiest provinces in Canada and one of the wealthiest countries in the world. It's shameful. I want every member of this House to imagine what it's like living with bathwater that could make your baby sick, or tap water that isn't safe enough to cook dinner with. Think about what it would be like to not trust, or even to fear, the water that comes out of your tap for more than two decades.

1710

To not have access to clean drinking water affects your whole health, to say the least: your mental health, your spiritual health, your emotional health, your physical health. Without clean drinking water in these communities, their economies can't grow, and families grow sick and fall into poverty. Excessive advisories lead to mold that deteriorates housing, which leads to overcrowding in many communities. Buying water—having to go and buy water—takes away from money that can and should be better spent on food and other necessities. Evacuations displace and separate families and friends. Ceremonies, fishing and hunting practices and ways that teach children and share in traditional knowledge are all impacted when the water is contaminated.

It's caregivers, often women, who shoulder the burden of work and worry to ensure that children, elders and people with disabilities and illnesses are cared for, and to help them avoid exposure to unsafe water. My teachings about women's responsibilities to the water are that we're the water carriers—we have a sacred responsibility to caretake the water, to heal it. When we say, "Water is life," it's because it's the water that comes from women. It's that first thing that comes before we bring life into this world. So as life givers, as life creators with that intricate connection to creation, we are responsible, as women, to the water.

Women's connection with water is sacred. It's heart-breaking to know that in many communities, it's women who are now having to carry the burden of protecting people from being hurt by the very water that we're responsible for. In 2016, Human Rights Watch spoke to Roxanne, a young mother from Neskantaga who described the hours-long process of securing water for her infant. To secure safe water took two hours every other day, and the process of washing her baby's bottles to avoid contamination took an hour every day.

For decades, Liberal and Conservative governments have played jurisdictional Ping-Pong to avoid having to spend the money that it will take to fix the clean drinking water crisis in this province. It has to stop today. The days of different levels of government playing the blame game of who is responsible for fixing decades of broken promises on clean drinking water have to stop. The buck has to stop somewhere, and it needs to start today.

Governments have broken promises, betrayed trust and sent a clear message that Indigenous people simply don't matter. This denial of responsibility is racist, Speaker. As my colleague said, we should not have two Ontarios, one where clean water is guaranteed and one where people are forced to live without it. If this government is truly committed to working towards reconciliation, if they have any respect for the treaties, they need to step up and eliminate all boil-water advisories in every First Nation in this province. I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this bill. We need to take action to end the water crisis in First Nations today.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise today to speak in support of Bill 286, the Inherent Right to Safe Drinking Water Act. I want to thank the member from Kiiwetinoong for introducing this bill and for his steadfast commitment to clean drinking water for everyone, especially in the communities in his riding.

It is so shameful—no, Speaker; it's actually more than shameful—that there are still so many boil-water advisories in Ontario. It's a stain on Canada that, in 2021, we even have to stand here and debate a bill to provide the inherent right to safe drinking water for those living on reserves.

Water is a human right. Water is life. And that is not up for debate.

We know the Prime Minister has failed in his commitment to eliminate all long-term drinking water advisories on public water systems on First Nations reserves by March 31 of this year, but that does not absolve the province from speaking out on this issue. The federal government's new date is in 2023, 608 days from now—608 days too long. Imagine, Speaker, if the city of Toronto, as the member from Kiiwetinoong so eloquently said, was facing a boil-water advisory. It would not take 608 days to fix it, let alone the 20 to 25 years that many communities in the member's riding have been without clean drinking water.

There are Indigenous children and young adults who have never lived in a home with clean drinking water. This

is what colonialism looks like. This is what systemic discrimination and racism looks like.

It's sad to say that we are all complicit in allowing Indigenous people on reserves to live without safe water. We are all complicit in allowing children to grow up in homes without safe drinking water, without water they can bathe in, without water they can wash their hands in. We are all complicit in allowing Indigenous people to become sick because they don't have access to clean drinking water.

We all have a responsibility to rectify this wrong. We cannot pass the buck. We cannot be silent or avoid responsibility, over jurisdictional disputes.

That is why this bill is important. This bill makes a commitment to Ontarians living and working on reserves that they have the same right to safe drinking water as anybody else in Ontario. It commits the province—specifically, the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks—to submit a set of recommendations respecting the provision of safe drinking water on reserves in Ontario to the Minister of Indigenous Services of Canada. I would say, respectfully, it does what the member opposite asked for: us, here in Ontario, through the minister, putting pressure on the federal government to deliver on its commitment for safe drinking water.

I've often said that if the federal government isn't going to act, the province should just do it and then send the bill to Ottawa. I was reminded of this the other day, in a Zoom meeting, when I met with land defenders from 1492 Land Back Lane, who pointed out to me that the province just spent \$16 million policing Indigenous land defenders. Many of those land defenders live on Six Nations not that far from Toronto—who don't have access to clean drinking water. The people asked me a good question. They asked me how many people could have access to clean drinking water if \$16 million was spent on water systems instead of on policing Indigenous land defenders. These are the kinds of questions we need to confront ourselves with. These are the kinds of questions that we need to be asking. We're all treaty people, and we have an obligation.

This bill says that the province of Ontario will go to the federal government and demand what is right: safe and clean drinking water for all Ontarians.

Speaker, I urge everyone in this House, from all sides of this House, to stand up today and vote in favour of Bill 286.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I want to thank the member for Kiiwetinoong for bringing this bill forward because it gives a great opportunity for proper discussion, proper consultation on this. I appreciate the opportunity that I have today to speak to this on behalf of Minister Rickford. I want to thank the member from Barrie–Innisfil, the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, for her remarks on this, as well.

Speaker, anyone who lives in Ontario deserves clean drinking water. I don't think there's a single person who

would say that is not the case. It is the most basic of needs for all of us. There is no dispute about that; that's not in question at all.

In 2021, 43 outstanding drinking water advisories across 25 different First Nations existed. I know that the member from Kiiwetinoong has mentioned jurisdictional Ping-Pong a number of times, but I do have to put this in: I was really disappointed yesterday when Prime Minister Trudeau made the statement that he was extending his promise on clean drinking water for First Nations for another five years—because he was elected in 2015, saying that it was going to end, and it was going to end this year. They have really done nothing on it. That is very disappointing.

One of the things that I have a little bit of a challenge with personally on this bill is because of my own personal experience representing the people of Kawartha. I'm not 100% sure that all First Nations want Ontario to step up to the plate to do this. The reason I say this is, I have gone to Curve Lake numerous times and I have said, "Give me the opportunity to advocate for you for the money." I asked them to apply to the ICIP, the green stream, because they have a boil-water advisory, and they have had for a number of years. They're on wells, and not all of the wells provide good water; some of it is contaminated. Curve Lake came back to me and said, "It's the federal government's job to do this. You shouldn't be putting up any money." I was prepared to stand here in this chamber, advocate on their behalf and get our Ministry of Infrastructure to approve it, to give them the money to start the process of a water treatment plant in Curve Lake; and Curve Lake said no to me because it's a federal responsibility.

We should all be standing here saying that clean drinking water is something that should be across all of Ontario; there is no question about that. This bill is a great starting point for it, and I believe it is something that we can support to get to committee so that we can refine it to give Ontario that direction to go to the federal government and say, "Do your job. You've promised, you've promised, you've promised, and you continually fail to deliver. Make it happen, because it's the right thing to do."

I've said a number of times—it has been my expression long before I got involved in politics; it was something that was part of my professional career—do it right the first time, because you only have to do it once. If you do it quickly, you're going to have to go back and do it again. We see this in Ontario right now with some of the promises that were made by the federal government on clean drinking water. They built a plant, and in November, it wasn't producing clean drinking water for Neskantaga. We had to go back and make some changes to it because they didn't do it right. Do it right the first time, and then you only have to do it once. That's what we should be doing.

I thank the member profusely for bringing this forward, because it gives us an opportunity, then, to stand up as a provincial government and say we believe this is right. We believe everyone should have clean drinking water. We're

going to fight on behalf of the all of the people in Ontario to make sure that the federal government does what they're supposed to do.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: It's an honour to rise here today and support our colleague's bill to ensure that First Nations people have access to clean drinking water.

I'm really honoured to stand here today and support this bill. The member from Kiiwetinoong and I often have conversations about the injustices that First Nations people continue to face, the structural racism, the impacts of colonialism. We see this here with access to drinking water—a fundamental human right that, across the world, people are trying to have recognized, but here in Canada, in the province of Ontario, generations of First Nations are growing up without access to this basic human right.

Speaker, in my early twenties, I actually started volunteering with an organization that was raising funds and raising awareness about clean drinking water and access to sanitation and access to water globally. I have a background in international development studies. I was shocked and horrified to learn that this wasn't some issue that was relegated to Third World countries, that this was happening right here in a place that I called home, and yet not once through the education system did I ever learn about what was happening to First Nations here in Ontario. Not once were we ever told that 25 communities were under boil-water advisories. Not once did anyone bring this to the attention—through our education system.

I find it astonishing that we're still having these conversations about whose responsibility it is to provide access to clean drinking water when clearly the province has a role to play and clearly the federal government does as well, but this Ping-Pong, the political games that keep happening, continue to put lives in jeopardy.

As settlers on Turtle Island, access to clean drinking water is a right that we all enjoy. As our colleague indicated, there are real disparities in what this access looks like. If a Karen in Forest Hill didn't have access to clean drinking water when she turned on her tap, people would be up in arms about this. Yet there are children who are bathing in water that is giving them rashes, mothers who are having to spend hours on end trying to access clean drinking water for their children. How, in 2021, is this still happening in the province of Ontario?

We heard about a community—people from Neskantaga had to flee their homes in order to have action actually taken. I'm grateful that I had the opportunity to connect with many of those community leaders and hear from them directly.

Speaker, my time is very limited, and there's a lot that I would love to be able to say, but I think that we all need to understand that we in this House all have a responsibility to ensure that no child, no person, in the province of Ontario goes without access to clean drinking water.

Water is a human right. Water is life. I urge every member of this House to support this bill and to continue to advocate that all people have access to clean drinking water in Ontario.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: We're coming to the end of the day, and we're almost ready to go home, but before we go home, we're talking about the right of individuals to have clean drinking water.

I enjoy the conversations that I've had with the member from Kiiwetinoong. He and I over the past couple of days have had a couple of smudges in my office. Unbeknownst to me, I've been asking for some type of guidance in regard to bringing some powerful words to this debate today. They didn't come, but they came to me as he showed me his eagle feather that he carries with him so proudly within the contents of his folder that he has there. He was gifted with that from elders, and it guides him. It tells him, "You go out and you do your job to make sure that you're defending and you're looking out for the interests of our community. You go speak on behalf of our people."

When he rises in this House, there is no denying this place goes quiet. There's no heckling, because he's educating us. That's his role. That's what he does. He comes here with powerful words that make us all feel uncomfortable. He talks about colonialism and about how it's impacting his community and his members. He says words like "structural racism" and uses the example of responsibility that is being thrown from the federal government to the province and how that is affecting his community. It makes us all feel that queasiness. Well, good. I hope he continues doing that until we get some water to his communities.

We just heard from the federal government yesterday that now they're going to wait until 2026. I want to remind the province that you, too, are signatory to Treaty 9. You have the responsibility. You need to step up. This government needs to step up. The previous government for 15 years and for the decades they were there didn't do it. Step into your role. Own it. Work with the member, and let's get this done. Let's not have to have another afternoon talking about the rightful entitlement to and the basic need of water for a community in this province. Let's be bigger.

But I'm going to tell you something: I'm going to stand here every single day with this member, and I hope he continues to make us all feel uncomfortable until we get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member, who has two minutes to reply. The member from Kiiwetinoong.

Mr. Sol Mamakwa: I'd like to say kitchi meegwetch for anyone that provided words of debate: members from Algoma-Manitoulin, Toronto Centre, Brampton Centre, Guelph, Barrie-Innisfil, Peterborough-Kawartha.

I received a lot of feedback today from people, and many have asked why it's something that we have to

create a bill on. Why are we here to debate it? Why is it that I stand up here and ask for something so basic? I've said it many times in this room, in this place, that access to clean drinking water is a basic human right.

Back in 1994-95 is when I got running water in my home. The federal government had invested in infrastructure, the main lines of the water and sewer system, but they wanted the First Nations to pay for the in-house plumbing, the water lines in the homes. Do you know who paid for it? The province of Ontario. There is nothing stopping you. It just needs political will. We cannot let people's health continue to suffer.

Speaker, no one in this House can know what it's like to live in a First Nation under a boil-water advisory. No one in this House can know the toll that it takes on your mental health, on your physical health, spiritual health to live in this way for such a long period of time, but we do. Generations of women, men, children and elders have lived under these conditions. Enough talk. Time for action. Meegwetch.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Mamakwa has moved second reading of Bill 286, An Act to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002 to require specified actions with respect to safe drinking water for Ontarians living and working on reserves. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded division being required, the vote on this item of private members' public business will be deferred until the next proceeding of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, May 10, 2021, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1734.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioc Lim, William Short,
Peter Sibenik, William Wong
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (IND)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP)	Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Stan (PC)	Willowdale	
Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé
Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)	Nipissing	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce
Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Rod (PC)	Ajax	
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	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	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

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Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
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Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
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Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith
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Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
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Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
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Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
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Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
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Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
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Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutila Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
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John Fraser, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell