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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 13 May 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 13 mai 2021

The House met at 1015.

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

Prayers/Prières.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Dave Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough–Kawartha has a point of order.

Mr. Dave Smith: I just want to wish a very happy birthday to my good friend the member from Markham–Stouffville today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Happy birthday. Now we know.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Wayne Gates: This week, I rose in the Legislature and told this government they must act to fix one of the biggest issues facing my community: housing. Since then, I've been inundated with messages from the people of Niagara telling me their stories, both those renting and looking to enter the housing market—heartbreaking stories of people leaving their families and the towns they were raised in because they can't afford housing.

There's no denying it: This is a crisis, and it's the responsibility of all levels of government to address it. It's not complicated. It takes political will and determination to present a policy solution.

We can take concrete steps today to ease this crisis and ensure communities like Niagara aren't torn apart by an unaffordable housing market. We can start by making renting more affordable and providing those who are renting with security, like ending unfair renovictions. We can help first-time home buyers get into the market by assisting with their down payments. Homeownership provides stability and financial security, and it shouldn't just be a dream for young people in this province.

Ultimately, we must take on greedy billionaires, speculators, flippers and bad developers to cool the completely unstable housing market.

Too many young families renting are going to bed at night wondering if they'll ever own a home of their own. Too many seniors are wondering if they will be the next victim of renovictions, struggling to find housing on a

fixed income. We can't let the current and past governments' failures drive us into even more of a housing crisis. If someone in our community is facing housing insecurity, that's a failure we must all address.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: An important project which has united local residents in Niagara West is the redevelopment of our West Niagara hospital, a campaign which has brought together neighbours, businesses, municipalities and front-line care providers in our community. I'm excited to provide my community with another update on an important step forward in building our new hospital.

Infrastructure Ontario and Hamilton Health Sciences recently announced the three teams pre-qualified to undertake the rehabilitation project. Selection criteria include design, construction capability, experience, qualified personnel and financial capacity to undertake a project of this size and scope. The pre-qualified teams for the hospital build are Amico Sacyr Alliance, EllisDon Infrastructure Healthcare, and Pomerleau Healthcare Partners. A request for proposals is expected to be issued to these pre-qualified teams in the summer of 2021. Once submissions are received, Infrastructure Ontario and Hamilton Health Sciences will evaluate the proposals, select a preferred team, and then negotiate a final contract. The successful team is expected to be announced in spring of 2022. A fairness monitor will oversee the entire procurement process. This is good news for the constituents of Niagara West.

1020

As we are eagerly awaiting the opening of our new hospital, I want to assure residents in Niagara that the government of Ontario remains committed to making sure this build is completed in a timely way. We will not stop fighting for this expedited build until the new doors of our hospital open.

I want to thank our provincial and municipal partners—including the leadership of Premier Ford on this important project—as well as the passionate volunteers and local front-line providers involved with the Save and Rebuild campaign. Together, we will build our new hospital.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: People are tired—front-line health care workers, essential workers, parents, teachers, students, children, and the list goes on. We're tired of this

government's shoot-from-the-hip policies and handling of the pandemic.

I got my vaccine last week thanks to VaxHunters. Someone happened to see the tweet and texted it to me. Luckily, I didn't have any more meetings, so I grabbed my kid, hopped into the car, drove 30 minutes and got into a line with about a thousand other people. So many things had to align, and still it took three hours.

Why is it that we have to go on a vaccine hunt? These are realities we didn't need to face in this pandemic.

As hard as it is, on top of that, this government makes life unnecessarily difficult by closing outdoor amenities for everyone. How did you come up with such an irrational policy? The science and the data don't support it. The people don't support it. Did the Premier just wake up one morning and think, "Let's close the only thing people can do safely during the pandemic"? Please, we'd like to hear the logic behind it. The chair of the science table himself said that closing outdoor amenities was not recommended—in fact, the opposite. Toronto Public Health is asking the province to open outdoor amenities and sports. It's low-risk and good for mental health.

Finally, Speaker, I want to say: We really want to see a plan for a safe return to in-person learning. I've given up for the rest of the school year, but come September, we want our kids back in school—no more last-minute announcements, no more just winging it. You've got plenty of time. Don't mess it up again.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll remind members to please make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor.

NURSES

Mr. Dave Smith: This week is National Nursing Week in Canada, and yesterday was International Nurses Day. In a normal year, many of us would talk about appreciating what a nurse does, or how a nurse made us feel when they helped us. This year is a little different, though.

Speaker, Joyce Patterson was my mother's youngest sister, the godmother of my daughter, and a nurse at PRHC in Peterborough, right up until she was diagnosed with glioblastoma. In fact, they discovered the brain tumour while she was working. That's how much she loved her job. A section of PRHC has been named after her because of the care she provided.

My sister started as a PSW, became an RPN, and then went to OUIT while nursing full-time and became an RN. She has been an RN for a number of years now, at PRHC, the CCAC, the LHIN, and returning back to PRHC. Because of COVID-19, she has been redeployed to a GTA hospital and is currently nursing patients with COVID-19. I haven't seen my sister since last summer because of COVID-19, but we talk frequently on the phone, and I hear the pain in her voice. Like other nurses, she's doing everything possible so those patients can go home.

If we want to show our appreciation to nurses this week, follow the health guidelines so that no nurse has to watch someone fight to breathe.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Throughout the pandemic, we've been told to stay home. But what about those who are struggling to keep a roof over their head or who have no home at all?

According to the London housing stability report, there is no available vacant rental housing that is affordable for Londoners with low-to-moderate incomes. This means that more and more London families are being pushed out of their housing with nowhere else to go.

Tragically, London lost four people in just four days due to chronic homelessness earlier this month. These are our neighbours, and they should still be with us today. We simply can't afford to lose one more person to homelessness.

London programs like the WISH coalition have stepped up and have done phenomenal work trying to ensure Londoners are safe, supported and housed during the pandemic, but they can't do it alone.

For decades, successive governments have made the housing crisis worse and worse by cutting and capping funding from municipal homelessness prevention programs. No one in Ontario should be denied the basic human right of a safe place to live, especially during a pandemic.

It's time the provincial government invested in affordable housing again so that people can find housing that meets their needs. The time to act is now.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

Mr. John Fraser: Friday, May 14 is Children and Youth in Care Day. There are approximately 12,000 children and youth in care in Ontario. They're living with extended family, in group homes, foster homes. They're amongst the most vulnerable groups in Ontario. Many are survivors of violence and abuse. Some are refugees, some have developmental disabilities.

These kids, they're our responsibility as legislators. You've probably heard me say a few times in this chamber, my dad used to work in the Family Court when I was young. He looked out for kids who came from broken homes, who got into trouble with the law or who were truants, and he always made sure that none of them got left behind. He took his responsibility for these kids just like he took his responsibility for the three of us at the time, my sisters and I. That's the same thing that we have to do with these kids. They're our responsibility. That's the mantle that we take up when we come here.

Today, we celebrate their strength and their resilience, while also pledging to protect and support their growth and help them thrive. I want to just say thank you to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies for your ongoing advocacy and unwavering support for our children and youth in care.

EVENTS IN PERTH–WELLINGTON

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, the sign wars are raging. Trevor Cork, owner of Speedy Glass in Listowel,

fired the first shot. His target: the Dairy Queen next door. Trevor wrote on his business marquee sign, “Hey DQ, wanna have a sign war?” It didn’t take long for Amy Hamilton, owner of the DQ, to fire back: “You bet your glass we do.” In Listowel and surrounding communities throughout Perth–Wellington, hundreds of businesses, churches, charities and other organizations soon joined in. Atwood Presbyterian took aim at DQ: “Hey, DQ, our Sundays are the best.” In Millbank, Anna Mae’s didn’t mince words: “Are you too chicken to get broasted by an outta-towner?”

The war is heating up, and the world is taking notice. The BBC and the Washington Post have covered it. The BBC quoted Trevor of Speedy Glass: “There’s businesses that compete against each other that are poking fun at each other and people are laughing together again and smiling at each other. It’s brought our community very close in the last seven days.” And he’s right.

This is still a stressful time for people and a tough time for local businesses. We need reasons to come together. We need reasons to smile. In the sign wars, there are no losers. Even so, I want to remind everyone that the stay-at-home order is still in effect, so please stick to inside jokes

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: Tomorrow is youth in care day, a day where we recognize the challenges youth in care face and honour their resilience. It is also a day for us legislators to remember our obligation to the 12,000 youth in care in Ontario.

We all know these youth have had a difficult time during this pandemic. This government cancelled safety regulations like in-person home inspections and police checks, and they increased the limits of kids per foster home. These young people also lost their child advocate to the government’s cuts.

Despite these challenges that they face, young people with lived experience have stepped up to push for better. They fought to put a moratorium on youth aging out of care during the pandemic and they won. They’ve been pushing for a readiness-based system for leaving care, and they finally have the government’s ear. Kudos to Cheyanne Ratnam and to the Ontario Children’s Advancement Coalition for their great work on that issue. Some groups like Youth Empowering Youth are stepping in to fill the void left by the cut to the child advocate’s office.

1030

I am encouraged by these young people who are pushing for change. I’ve met so many of them in my past 10 years as the critic for children’s services and I’ve watched them grow up. I want them to know that New Democrats are with you, and I am so proud to honour you today and every day.

AUDREY JOHNSTONE

Ms. Donna Skelly: I would like to extend birthday greetings to Ms. Audrey Johnstone, who celebrates her

104th birthday this week. Audrey is currently living at Bethany Lodge in Unionville, but she lived in Capreol until she retired to move to southern Ontario to be closer to her family.

Audrey worked with my mother in administration for National Steel at the Moose Mountain mine outside of Capreol. While a resident of the town, she could be found volunteering at any number of community events. Her sense of civic duty continued after retirement, as she was a hospital volunteer at her local hospital in southern Ontario. She retired from volunteering at the age of 100—that’s also when she gave up her driver’s licence—because she said she was getting a little tired. But then she started volunteering at the nursing home. Before she retired, she received her 50-year volunteer pin for her years of service.

We should all aspire to be like Audrey. Even through times of tragedy, such as the loss of her very young daughter, Audrey Anne, she is a picture of calm, of grace and of class. She has worked hard and has always given back to her community.

So, on behalf of the Ontario Legislature, all your neighbours and friends in Capreol and your friends and family: Audrey, a very happy 104th birthday.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As many people in the Legislature know, the second Tuesday of May every year marks the Provincial Day of Action on Litter. It’s our government’s way of continuing its strong effort to reduce the amount of waste going into our landfills and making sure that we reduce litter in our waterways, including our lakes and rivers. We know that by bringing awareness to the impacts of waste on our environment and encouraging people to take action at home and in their communities, this work will ensure we keep our environment clean and healthy for future generations.

Meaningful change happens when we individually become more aware of our own actions. When we all work together, even the smallest individual acts of change have substantial benefits and our communities prosper socially and environmentally. The provincial day of action may be just one day, but every day must be considered an opportunity for us to make impacts and improvements to reduce our impact on the environment. That is why the day of action on litter is so important, because we all know that improving our environment starts at home.

In my own riding of Barrie–Innisfil, I’m proud to see so many dedicated individuals and organizations that have taken the initiative to clean up litter around our lakes and green spaces, not just on the day of action on litter but throughout the whole year.

In 2020, Youth for Lake Simcoe founder Zoe completed six cleanups, collecting nine recycling bags and 8.5 garbage bags, and they continue to advocate for and promote the day of action on litter by encouraging all Ontarians to get involved and get outside and help be the change. Local charity group Barrie Families Unite has also done cleanups with Clean Up Barrie, and they’re tackling

the 10 worst places in Barrie to clean up. I want to thank all of them for taking action on litter.

MEMBERS' BIRTHDAYS

Hon. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me this morning. I just wanted to point out that a very important person in the Legislature was born on this day, May 13, 1970. I'm not sure if it was a Friday or not. He is our government House leader and he only wants one thing for his birthday: Paul Calandra would like to answer as many opposition questions as he could today during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): In a moment, he'll get his chance.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The leader of the official opposition has a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to wish congratulations and a happy birthday to the government House leader, but also to Gurratan Singh, the MPP for Brampton East. It's his birthday today as well, so happy birthday to both of you.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Happy birthday.

COVID-19 DEATHS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Point of order.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a more solemn point of order, I seek unanimous consent for the House to observe a moment of silence for the 187 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 have a moment of silence for the 187 Ontarians who succumbed to COVID-19 over 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. Members will please take their seats.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This morning, my first question is to the Minister of Health. We know now that the Minister of Long-Term Care was writing notes about what was happening in long-term care. On April 17, her note was, "Military plan needed, get them in within 24-48 hours."

That was on April 17. April 17 is when Quebec had the military come in to their province, and yet Ontario waited

five full days before contacting the CAF—the Canadian Armed Forces—to come and help in long-term care. It's clear that the Minister of Health, the Ministry of Health, was part of the selection process, part of the decision-making process around which homes would get military aid.

So my question to the Minister of Health is: When did she first learn that people in long-term care were dying from neglect and dehydration and that military intervention was required?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): To reply on behalf of the government, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition. As I mentioned yesterday, we, of course, very much appreciate the work of the Canadian Armed Forces in helping out those homes that required assistance.

As I've mentioned on a number of occasions, we were clearly on the defensive for the better part of a year when it came to fighting COVID. Part of the reason we were on the defence for so long is because there had been such a lack of investment before we had taken office: a lack of investment in staffing, a lack of investment with respect to the build of new homes. There was a lack of investment in refurbishing old and outdated homes.

We're addressing that now, obviously, with hiring an additional over 27,000 new PSWs, a massive build-out of long-term-care homes across the province of Ontario and four hours of care. We're grateful for all the work that the Canadian Armed Forces did, but we're well on our way to putting this behind us.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It should have been addressed over a year ago. That's when it should have been addressed.

The minister, unfortunately, has decided to avoid questions, but she is responsible. She is responsible for the timing of the deployment of the Canadian Armed Forces to those homes that were in crisis, where people were literally losing their lives to neglect and dehydration. Yet the owners of these homes—the private, for-profit owners—deny that this happened.

My question is: Does the minister accept reports from the Canadian Armed Forces that 26 people—at least—died of dehydration and neglect in long-term-care homes in our province, or does she believe, as the owners of these for-profit homes do, that the Armed Forces were simply making it up?

1040

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, that is, of course, one of the reasons why the Premier requested and ensured that there was a commission to investigate some of the initial problems we saw in long-term-care homes. Obviously, as I mentioned earlier on in the week, the coroner has been engaged on the file as well.

But ultimately, the Leader of the Opposition is correct: We have to make changes. And that is why, before the pandemic hit, we started to make those changes, whether

it was increasing the amount of homes that were constructed—you know, in the years previous, in the decades previous, I think it was something like 600 new beds were built in the province of Ontario. That, obviously, was not something that could be sustained. That's why we invested in thousands of new beds. We're investing in four hours of care—a North American-leading level of care for our residents of long-term care—and thousands of new beds.

So there was a lot of work that was done before, during and certainly after the pandemic so that we never see something like this happen again and we can finally put COVID behind us.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is back to the Minister of Health, Speaker. I think she has some responsibility here that she needs to address. People lost their lives in long-term care, as we know, and families lost their loved ones in horrifying conditions.

Myrelyn Daley lost her sister Daisy at Downsview Long Term Care last year, and here's what she told the press—in fact, I'm going to ask this page to bring this press clipping over to the Minister of Health so she can see it. Myrelyn says this: “She called me three days before she passed—oh my God, she cried, she cried, she said, ‘I am hungry. I am hungry!’” This is what happened to Daisy. She died on April 14. The CAF, the Canadian Armed Forces, wouldn't arrive in that home until June 1.

The family is still looking for justice. They're still looking for accountability. The minister knew there were horrors that were unfolding in the long-term-care system in these homes. Why is she allowing her government—this government, the Conservative government—to deny those families the justice and accountability that they were promised?

Hon. Paul Calandra: The government is doing no such thing, Mr. Speaker. Of course we understand how difficult it was for Ontarians across this province, especially during that first and second wave. We saw that in all of our ridings. We saw how difficult it was for families. We saw how difficult it was for those people who were working inside these long-term-care homes.

As I've said on a number of occasions, we were put on the defence during the first and second waves in the province of Ontario because for generations before, for a decade and a half before, there were no investments made in long-term care. When you have a system that was understaffed, that had only had 600 new beds built in the 10 years preceding a pandemic, of course there were going to be challenges.

That's why we moved quickly before the election to address these challenges with respect to staffing, with respect to building new homes. Thousands of new homes are being built. We brought in thousands of new people during the pandemic, and we were starting that before the pandemic. We're building thousands of additional spaces. This is something that we want to fix, that we will fix and put this behind us once and for all.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. This government's vaccine rollout has been convoluted and confusing, to say the least. We've just heard, of course, that the government is now cancelling its commitment to increasing help for the hot spots, even though they're still smoldering. There's no plan for the second dose. There's no details for parents around when or if their children can get vaccinated before school starts in September. There are no answers for folks who got their first shot of AstraZeneca.

The question is pretty clear: When will this government, when will this Premier get their act together?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you to the leader of the official opposition for the question. There is a plan; the plan was formulated months ago prior to the delivery of the vaccines. It's being rolled out in three phases. We are now in phase 2.

I can advise the House that we have now administered vaccines to 6.6 million people—over 50% of the adults in Ontario over age 18. We also have 4.8 million vaccines already booked. We are also proceeding with daily vaccines. Yesterday, we administered virtually 138,000 vaccines. We are well on track to our target of administering vaccines to 65% of adults over age 18 in Ontario by the end of May.

I would say that this is a resounding success, and that people know how to receive and book their vaccines because over 4.8 million already have them booked.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier and now this minister have been bragging for months that this province's scavenger hunt of a vaccine rollout has been effective when we all know it hasn't. In fact, it's volunteer vax hunters who have been hooking folks up to their vaccines; that's what's happening in our province every single day. It's not the Premier; it's vaccine hunters who are getting people their shots.

People who can't get through the government's confusing and convoluted vaccine system are left scrambling. What does it say, Speaker? What does it say when a group of volunteers working part-time is doing a better job of getting people their vaccines in the province of Ontario than this Premier and his ministers?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, I would say to the Leader of the Opposition, through you, that what you're suggesting is simply not the case. We have people who are receiving their second dose administration. Their second doses are booked through the booking tool or through the phone administration that we have already.

I'm not sure how the leader of the official opposition would define success, but I would say at this point, already having over half of the adults in Ontario over age 18 receiving their first dose is a success. We're on course for 65% by the end of the month.

We also have a plan that we've been developing with the Ministry of Education to vaccinate young people

between ages 12 and 17. Further details of that will be available imminently. But we are well on track to achieving our goal of making sure that everyone who wants to receive a vaccine in Ontario will be able to do so in very short order.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, while Ontarians are forced to play the vaccine Hunger Games, here's what's going on in other provinces: In Alberta today, everyone over the age of 12 can book their vaccine. In Saskatchewan and Manitoba, everyone has been told that they're getting their second doses in July.

But here, it's all still a mystery. If you're over 12, maybe June, maybe not. If you're waiting for a second dose, your guess is as good as anyone's. Ontarians deserve so much better than this.

When is the government going to get their act together and give Ontarians certainty about how the rest of this vaccine rollout is going to go?

Hon. Christine Elliott: There is certainty about how this vaccine rollout is going to go, and it has been clearly explained to the people of Ontario. We know that as of the week of May 24, people over the age of 18 will be able to book across the entire province.

We also know that our vaccine rollout in the communities that are hot spots has been very successful, such that people of most ages in the hot spot communities are already receiving 5% more of the vaccines than the people in the non-hot spot communities, which is why we set this program up in the first place. It is clearly working; the statistics demonstrate that very clearly.

As for second doses, anyone who has booked through our vaccine booking tool already has their second dose booked. We've also indicated to pharmacies that they should be booking second doses, and in situations where they're finding that difficult, we're working with them to make sure that they can do that.

Everybody is in our system, everybody is in the COVax system, and people will be—

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

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question to the Acting Premier. Last night, CTV reported that the PCs are doing everything they can to “protect the king.” It seems they're more worried about building an iron ring to protect the king than they ever were about protecting those in long-term care.

On top of that, the Premier has been ducking public press conferences for about two weeks. But alas, we know where to find him. Tonight, he is hosting a \$1,000-a-ticket—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Stop the clock. The Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) will come to

order. The member for Northumberland–Peterborough South will come to order.

Start the clock. The member for Essex has the floor.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. We know where to find the Premier because tonight, he's hosting a \$1,000-a-ticket Zoom call.

My question to the government: Why is it that if you're a PC Party insider with deep pockets, you can have access to the Premier while he dodges questions about his record from the media?

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

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Hon. Paul Calandra: It's strange, coming from the NDP. We've been in this House since February, and when we came back in February, the NDP was upset that the Premier was too available. He was doing news conferences too often, and they didn't like the fact that he was on TV at 1 o'clock every day, updating the people of the province of Ontario—

Interjection.

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

The government House leader has the floor.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, I touched a nerve with the Leader of the Opposition, because even when the Premier is not going out every single day, more people want to hear from him than they do the Leader of the Opposition. I think that speaks for itself.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You know, I kind of feel sorry for the government House leader. He's been carrying the load for this Premier for quite some time. I want to give him a hand: Congratulations. You're showing leadership where there is obviously a vacuum in this House.

Speaker, while the PCs are worried about their fundraising to protect their king, Ontarians are trying to grapple with the realities of this ongoing pandemic. The government failed to protect 3,700 seniors who died in long-term care, some of whom died without even a glass of water. Our esteemed military, our Canadian Armed Forces, called that criminal. It boggles the mind why the Premier has no time to answer media questions, but all the time in the world to drum up cash from his deep-pocketed developer friends.

We all know the adage: If you can't take the heat, you get out of the kitchen. This Premier has left the restaurant completely. Why has this Premier found the time in his schedule to host expensive fundraisers instead of letting Ontarians hold him to account?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Obviously, there is nobody that believes anything that is coming from that side of the House. This is a Premier who has been in front of this right from the beginning. Whether it was leading into the pandemic—even before the pandemic, one of the things that this Premier ran on was ending hallway health care because of the lack of investments made by the previous

Liberal government. We were well on our way to doing that, to increasing ICU capacity.

He identified the fact that we needed to put more money into long-term care. That's why we're hiring an additional 27,000 PSWs and building thousands of homes, new homes, and refurbishing old ones.

He knew that we had to put the fiscal situation of this province back on sustainable footing. We started to do that. He knew that we had to make it more affordable for the people of the province of Ontario, for our small, medium and large job creators to do business here, to live here. We are in the process of doing that, and we'll continue to do that.

Before the pandemic, we led the nation in job creation and, as it ends, we will do the same.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. David Piccini: We know that stricter border measures helped stop the spread of COVID-19 and the deadly variants. The reality is backed up by hard evidence and data. In fact, many of our fellow G7 nations around the world have implemented strict border measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 and variants of concern. We also know it isn't just about our international borders. It matters to interprovincial travel and COVID entering from our provinces as well.

When we push the federal government to do their part, it's important that Ontarians know that their government is doing their part as well. Can the Solicitor General remind the House what our government is doing to protect our borders?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you very much to the member from Northumberland–Peterborough South. I know this is an important issue for him personally and for his constituents, but also for people across Ontario. That's why our government took an important step this spring and issued an emergency order restricting travel into Ontario through land and water crossings from Manitoba and Quebec.

We continue to ask, compel, beg the federal government to restrict air travel. It's time for the Prime Minister to do his job—as we are. He needs to address the border issue by implementing COVID testing requirements for domestic flights, just as he has done for international travel.

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

Mr. David Piccini: I know it's reassuring for constituents of mine and Ontarians to know that this province is making an effort and doing its part.

I just spoke to a constituent of mine, Mike, this morning. We spoke about a very concerning article that I read in the CBC, where it mentioned that luxury and private executive jets are flying into this country with impunity. I think most Ontarians presume that after a year of this pandemic, our Prime Minister and our federal government would do something to secure our borders. Be it luxury

jets, be it private executives, we know there are loopholes—be it the cabbies and the industry at Niagara and Ogdensburg that are fuelling a mass exodus of people walking across our border, completely flaunting these rules. Speaker, more needs to be done.

Back to the minister: Can she provide any more specific examples of what our government is doing, specifically the emergency orders, to help stop the spread?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: The member is absolutely right. We know that the new variants did not originate in Ontario. They are coming here from other parts of the world and, in fact, other parts of Canada. The OPP alone have turned away over 4,500 travellers attempting to come into Ontario.

While Ontarians are being asked to stay at home, some travellers have wanted to travel to Ontario for, frankly, very trivial reasons. Some travellers have been turned away, as they were out for a drive and going to play pool. One individual suggested that bringing empty beer cans into Ontario to get a refund is essential travel. To be clear, it's not. Another risked bringing COVID in from another province to go grab a cup of coffee.

Ontario is taking all the steps it can to stop the spread of COVID-19. It's time for the federal government to do their job.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday I questioned the Premier about what evidence was used to close outdoor recreational activities. According to the science table, the example the Premier shared with us was “not at all” what they said.

The Premier said he had a yes/no chart of what you can do and what you can't do. In fact, what the chart showed is that as long as you have two of the three criteria, like staying two metres apart, wearing a mask, staying outside—this is what the science table has said—then your activity should be considered low risk.

I'll give the Premier another chance—or anyone on that side: Can you please explain to the people of this province what scientific evidence was used to close outdoor recreational activities? They deserve an answer.

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for that question. We certainly do encourage people to be outdoors, especially with the weather getting much nicer. We want people to be able to spend time outdoors. For children, especially, it's important. People can go out, they can go for a walk, can go for a bike ride, walk the dog, all of those activities. We know that it is important for people to be outdoors.

There are some situations, though, where people are in closer contact. For that, we encourage people—and ask people, actually—to continue to follow the public health measures that we know work. If you can't maintain the physical distancing, please wear a mask. Do the physical distancing wherever you can. Frequent hand washing and

all the measures that we've talked about since the beginning of the pandemic remain in effect.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, the chart that the Premier referred to yesterday clearly states in big letters at the top: "Outdoor settings are considerably safer than indoor settings if precautions are taken against new variants." In fact, I'm going to send the chart over to the government side.

Those precautions, as advised by the science table, are two of three: being outside, wearing a mask or maintaining a two-metre distance. To make it even clearer, the science table went out of their way yesterday to say, "We are encouraging the government to reopen appropriate outdoor facilities where people can either mask or be two metres" apart.

To the Premier, to the health minister, to anyone on that side of the House: We are weeks into the third wave. Why does this government continue to resist scientific advice on opening outdoor amenities? The Premier knows he is wrong. The people of this province know you're wrong. Please do the right thing, walk this back and let people go outside.

Hon. Christine Elliott: There is no question that outdoor transmission happens much less often than indoor transmission, and we do encourage people to be outdoors at this point, especially with the weather getting nicer. With a long weekend coming up, we encourage people to be outdoors as much as they wish to.

1100

However, there are some situations where we are wanting to limit mobility. That's the guide behind it. We heard from the medical experts that, yes, being outdoors is good. We also heard that we need to limit mobility while we're still dealing with the variants of concern. So we have to put those two things together.

We're encouraging people to still be cautious, because we are still not in the clear yet. While we are starting to see our numbers go down in our hospitals and in our intensive care units, we still need to follow those public health measures.

But we do encourage people to be outdoors as much as possible. I think that's important for their physical health as well as their mental health.

POLITICAL PARTY ELECTIONS

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Good morning. My question is for the Premier.

My constituents are shocked when I tell them that there are no laws in Ontario setting consequences for individuals committing voter fraud in an internal political party's election. Calling the police will not help you.

In November 2019, I tabled a private member's bill—Bill 150, the Ensuring Transparency and Integrity in Political Party Elections Act—to remedy this problem. If it were to become law, the bill would, for the first time in Ontario history, set consequences for voter fraud in an internal party election. Despite the Premier telling the

media in 2019 that he was against the bill, it unanimously passed second reading. But since then, it has been stuck with the Standing Committee on General Government, where it hasn't even come up for discussion.

Does the government plan on bringing Bill 150 to the House for third and final reading so it can become law and finally make it an offence in Ontario to manipulate internal party elections?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As you know, it's not the government's responsibility to order how committees do their business. We'll let the committees identify which business they want to bring forward on their own.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary.

Mrs. Belinda C. Karahalios: Speaker, I'm not the only one who thinks there's a problem with internal party votes. A few days after I introduced Bill 150, the campaign manager of the governing Ontario PC Party—recently announced as lobbyist Kory Teneycke—had this to say on the CBC about votes held at party conventions to review a leader: "It's always rigged ... The people administering it are in a huge conflict of interest, they set when the delegate selection meetings are, they set all the rules around it, they can put their fingers on the scale in a very undemocratic way, and ... if the past is to be a predictor of the future, we'll see that again, because that's what we always see."

Mr. Teneycke also has first-hand experience. You see, he was the co-chair of the 2018 Ontario PC Party convention that was supposed to elect that party's executive, but which resulted in more ballots cast than voters who voted and is now before the courts.

Does this government, whose own Ontario PC Party has seen election irregularities decide internal elections under two different leaders, support Bill 150's attempt to set consequences for such behaviour or not?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, the government doesn't order the independent committees of the Legislative Assembly—order its business.

We have a number of private members' bills that have made the floor of the Legislative Assembly, from both sides of the House. In fact, today we'll be debating private member's business from the member for Willowdale, another piece of business from the member for Muskoka, and a good bill from the member for Scarborough Southwest.

What unique circumstances all of these individuals from both sides of the House have, when they brought bills forward and had them passed, is that they've worked with their colleagues to get them to the floor of the House. As government House leader, all I can say is for the member to do the same: work with members on both sides of the House. Hopefully, the members will agree to bring the bill forward at committee and, hopefully, the members will agree to bring it to the floor of the House and, hopefully, members will agree to pass it.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Stan Cho: This is a topic that has come up a couple of times this week in the Legislature, and it continues to

be a major issue in my riding of Willowdale. It has to do with stricter border controls. We know that the variants of concern are coming in from outside our borders.

Interjections.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's a shame the opposition heckles and laughs during this, because this is no laughing matter.

Ontarians have made serious sacrifices over the last year and are frustrated that, after all of that difficulty, these variants of concern—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: —outside of Ontario. And the majority of cases today are these very variants of concern.

We've seen jurisdictions do better around the world—I'm talking about Australia, New Zealand, South Korea.

Speaker, we need stricter border controls to keep these variants out of Ontario. And it's not just international travellers; COVID-19 and its variants enter Ontario from other provinces, as well.

While our government continues to urgently request real action to secure our borders, this is just not a priority for our Prime Minister.

My question to the Solicitor General: Can she update the members of this House regarding what our government is doing to get the federal government to act and protect our borders?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I very much appreciate the member from Willowdale's engagement on this file. It's really a great opportunity for all of us to share what we have been doing as a government and, frankly, what our federal partners have not been doing. So we continue to advocate for the federal government to restrict travel through federally regulated aviation.

Our government has written three letters with very specific and urgent requests to the federal government asking them to take action only to get a vague and, frankly, non-responsive answer. That's why we have once again sent another letter to our federal counterparts to implore them to take action now.

It's time for Prime Minister Trudeau to take this seriously and address the border issue, like implementing COVID testing requirements for domestic flights, just as they did for international upon our request.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Frankly, when I speak to my relatives overseas from other jurisdictions and I tell me that the federal government here has not even put in place PCR testing for our domestic travellers, they're shocked; rightly so, Speaker. This is a change that would be critical for travellers who are now sitting beside untested travellers who may not even know that they're at risk.

We need to protect Ontario from incoming cases of COVID-19 and these dangerous variants, whether they be from domestic or international sources. This should not be a political issue, and I wish the opposition was not heckling on this because this is something we should join efforts on, Speaker.

So back to the minister: Can she provide any details on the most recent letter to the federal government?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Again, thank you for allowing me to share some of the details. We know that limiting travel and mobility is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19 and the variants. We asked Ontarians to do their part, and they're following the public health advice. Meanwhile, despite the last three letters asking the federal government to test domestic travellers, they have refused to do so.

The Premier of our province has repeatedly asked the federal government to step up and do their job. In our most recent letter, we asked the federal government for: a ban on all non-essential travel; mandatory PCR testing for interprovincial travellers; an end to the loophole at our land borders; and proper enforcement of hotel quarantining.

We continue to be very clear to the federal government. We're imploring them to take stricter measures at our borders to protect our citizens.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Bhutika Karpoche: Ontarians who received their first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine are anxious about their second dose. Bill, a constituent who received his first dose of AstraZeneca in March, spoke for thousands of Ontarians when he asked my office, "When and where can I get a second dose? Can I get a Pfizer or Moderna shot in lieu of the AstraZeneca? I am confused and worried." Ontarians shouldn't have to ask these questions six months into the vaccine rollout.

Ontario will have 300,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine next week. My question to the Premier is: What is the government's plan for these doses? And will Ontarians who received the first dose of the AstraZeneca get some answers about their second dose?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question.

I'm also in that situation. I also received the AstraZeneca as a first dose. However, what I can also tell you is that the Chief Medical Officer of Health, out of an abundance of caution, has put a pause on the distribution of doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine because of the concerns with vaccine-induced immune thrombotic thrombocytopenia, otherwise known as VITTs. This is out of an abundance of caution for the health and safety of all Ontarians.

What we are waiting for right now are recommendations from the NACI, the National Advisory Committee on Immunization, as well as Health Canada, to advise us with respect to the safety of further doses of AstraZeneca. But what we do know, based on international studies, is that any possibility of harm or risk with respect to a second dose of AstraZeneca is much, much more limited than any concerns with respect to the first dose.

We're also receiving information—and the boards are reviewing it—based on what's happened in the UK where

they have mixed doses of an AstraZeneca first dose and another type of vaccine for the second dose.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, Ontarians who received their first shot at a pharmacy or a pop-up clinic are worried about their second dose as well. Their second appointments were not automatically scheduled and many are still waiting to be contacted months later. Pharmacists tell me they've heard nothing about a plan from this government. People want to know who will contact them to schedule their second appointment and when.

My question to the Premier is, how will you ensure that no one falls through the cracks of your convoluted web of different booking systems?

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Hon. Christine Elliott: Because we have a system to deal with that. As you will know, people who have booked through our online booking system for their first dose automatically receive their second dose time. Pharmacies are also using their system that they use for the administration of flu vaccines, booking appointments. We've directed them to be able to book the second dose at the same time as the first dose. Not every pharmacy has done that, but we are working with them to ensure that they do, that they are in touch with people for their second doses. Anyone who has received doses at pop-up clinics or mobile clinics, they are in the system. They are in the COVax system, and they will be advised well in advance of the time for their second dose.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Research from the Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine and UHN used national FSA data to demonstrate that people who live in hot spots in Toronto and Peel are, on average, twice as likely to be racialized and more likely to meet low-income thresholds. This pandemic has shown the need for evidence and equity in health. People in hot spot postal codes are more likely to be working throughout the pandemic in low-wage, essential jobs, which puts them more at risk. Yet Ontario lacks in collection and availability of this necessary data.

The government put forward Bill 283, which requires the recording of some data during vaccination but does not require individual socio-demographic data. Speaker, we will be presenting amendments to address this gap. Will the PC government work with us and support these changes so that we can better track and address any gaps in terms of health outcomes for people in hot spot postal codes by mandating the collection of individual socio-demographic data in our vaccination process?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. As she will know, the bill that is now before the House will require the essential data that we need about the name, contact information for the person and the type of vaccine that they received, in case there is a need for booster shots in the future—we don't know yet.

We don't know—no one knows yet—what we will require in the future for re-vaccinations or booster shots.

However, with respect to the collection of socio-economic data, this is very important information to collect. I agree with you. But this is something that we are going to be collecting on a volunteer basis from people, asking them with respect to their sex, their ethnicity, their total household size and income, so that we can understand those issues and make good decisions for health across the entire province, to make sure that it is equitably informed and planned. So this information will be collected, should this bill pass, and it will be protected with the—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the Deputy Premier: If you say that data is essential, then we should make it mandatory. Having a voluntary collection just creates a patchwork and it doesn't give us the health equity information we need.

My question is about Bill 283 in terms of how the government will go about helping and supporting the collection of that data, making sure that it's safe to do so, but also the reporting of the results, because we know that there is a problem with vaccine hesitancy in some communities. The government is late in tracking the data on vaccinations, because it's already under way. So we're just catching up and we are missing a big piece of it without the socio-demographic data.

You already have collected some of this data on the testing side. My question to you is that, at a minimum, will you make that data available so that we understand the health equity outcomes of this pandemic on individuals in this province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: This information will be collected on a voluntary basis. First of all, it's voluntary for people to receive the vaccine or not. We know there is going to be a certain percentage of the population who will choose to decline the vaccine. In the same way, we are providing people with the opportunity to give us that socio-economic data. This is not something which, in our view, should be mandatory. We are encouraging people to provide this information, but if they choose not to, they will not be denied a vaccine. But this is important planning information going forward.

We are protecting privacy. We're working very closely with the Information and Privacy Commissioner, as I indicated before. But this is going to be information that will be available in a non-personally identified way for the people in health and for the people of Ontario to understand where the gaps are, and where we need to fill in. We will work to do that as time goes on, based on this information.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. David Piccini: My question is to the Solicitor General. With our vaccine rollout entering high gear, there is a lot for Ontarians and constituents of Northumberland—Peterborough South to be excited about. Every day of the

week we're setting new records, new milestones. In fact, I was really excited to see that in just over a week we got another million jobs in arms. Again, I would like to salute the remarkable volunteers—the Rotarians at the Cobourg Community Centre, up in Trent Hills, in Norwood, at the Garnet Rickard arena and all over this province—who are helping make this happen.

Speaker, one of the key components of this month's strategy is to funnel more vaccines into hot spot communities to address the fire where it's the worst. Can the Solicitor General update the Legislature on this strategy this month and on the great progress we're making to vaccinate Ontarians?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: It is exciting news. We always said that May was going to be a great month, and indeed it is.

With an increased supply of vaccines, we've been able to make it easier than ever to receive a vaccine in hot spot areas to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and protect our hospital capacity. As members will recall, we helped to decrease COVID-19 transmission and hospitalizations. We committed to allocating 50% of vaccine shipments for the last week, and this week, to hot spot communities. That equals a half a million doses, Speaker.

This targeted rollout has allowed over 54% of Ontarians age 18 and over, who live or work in a hot spot neighbourhood, to receive at least their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Thanks to these efforts, hot spot communities now have a higher vaccine coverage rate than non-hot spot communities, reversing the trend over the past two weeks. It's working, Speaker.

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

Mr. David Piccini: Thank you to the minister. I know members of my community find this success exciting. It's exciting for them and their loved ones because we want our lives back. I would like to thank the minister for working with me, and I know so many members of this Legislature, to understand the nuance in our own community and to support us in our local vaccine efforts.

Speaker, making vaccines as accessible as possible is key to a successful rollout. I know it's challenging in communities, in rural communities like mine, with rolling hills, and hard-to-reach rural communities.

I was pleased that part of the strategy includes workplaces and mobile vaccination clinics. The minister knows how strongly I feel about mobile vaccination clinics, so can she update this House on this aspect and the nuances of Ontario's vaccination strategy?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: As the member notes, it is important that we offer Ontarians a number of ways to get vaccinated, including mass vaccination clinics, pharmacy pathways, primary care practitioners, but also the workplace and mobile clinics he referenced, to literally bring the vaccine to you where you work.

Our workplace-led clinics have been off to a strong start. For example, the Ontario Food Terminal has vaccinated over 2,300 critical workers in the province's food industry. The BAPS community clinic has led the way with over 20,000 doses administered through its vaccine campaign. And mobile teams led by the province are out

every day vaccinating small and medium-sized workplaces in Toronto, Peel and York region. Through innovative solutions like these, we are well on our way to achieving our goals.

NURSES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. This week is National Nursing Week and the theme is, "We Answer the Call." For the past 14 months, we have seen the incredible strength, courage and commitment our nurses have for caring for our communities. These heroes have answered the call. Unfortunately, it seems this government doesn't feel the same way.

Nurses in Niagara are clear: They feel a complete lack of respect from this Conservative government. Nurses on the front lines of this pandemic work long shifts, get drinks of water—with limited staffing support—help COVID-19 patients breathe or hold their hands when their families can't. Yet the Premier won't repeal Bill 124, which sends the signal that nurses aren't valued by this government.

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Nurses in Niagara and right across Ontario deserve better. They deserve to be paid a fair wage and to have mental health supports and proper PPE.

When will this government stop denying nurses the supports they need and deserve and stop calling them heroes while disrespecting them? When will the Premier and his government answer their call?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Parliamentary assistant and member for Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: Yes, the member is correct: Nurses are very much valued—and that is especially true of our government. We appreciate the hard work they've been showing us, especially during this very difficult time.

Speaker, the reality with Bill 124 is that Ontario's public sector employees are still able to receive those salary increases for seniority or for performance, merit, increased qualifications, as they normally would. This legislation allows for that reasonable wage increase while respecting taxpayers and the services they rely on. It's important to note that since the bill's introduction, collective agreements covering over 340,000 unionized public sector employees have been settled in compliance with this act. That's 40% of unionized employees in the broader public sector.

We're going to continue responsibly managing our finances here in the province of Ontario, while respecting and appreciating the hard work of nurses—and happy nurses—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Response.

Mr. Stan Cho: —all of those nurses.

We need to make sure those services are available for today and for generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary? The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: To the Minister of Labour: This year, the Ontario Nurses' Association's theme for Nursing Week is "Still Standing. Still Strong. Still Proud." It's a

theme that reflects the challenges nurses have withstood throughout this pandemic, and their remarkable resilience and dedication.

During the pandemic, nurses have worked hard each and every shift, month after month. They are exhausted, yet they persevere and continue to care for us. The courage, the professionalism and the compassion they display is humbling.

Ontario's nurses have been called heroes, but the province has denied them the PPE they need. The government thanked them, then denied them paid sick days and WSIB coverage when they got COVID-19 at work. They have been praised for working long, difficult days and nights for months on end, and then denied negotiating rights and workplace protections from the Ford government.

Will the minister respect nurses and withdraw Bill 124?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Willowdale to reply.

Mr. Stan Cho: Of course, we respect the hard work of our nurses, as I said in my previous answer. That's why our government has responded with a \$51-billion financial package that has significant supports for countless Ontario families and businesses, including our hard-working front-line workers.

Speaker, it has to be said again that Bill 124 still allows for those salary increases—it just does so on that reasonable scale. We still recognize nurses for their abilities, their increased qualifications, their seniority, and that doesn't change. That is evidenced by 40% of unionized employees being able to settle in compliance with this act.

What we need to ensure is that we respect these pay increases for our hard-working front-line workers. But again, this has to be a sustainable system put in place for today and for generations to come. That's exactly what this government is going to do.

NURSES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Deputy Premier. It's Nursing Week in Ontario, and I have to give a shout-out to my favourite nurse: my mother, Mary.

Applause.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you. She deserves it.

I truly believe to this day that a solution to the primary care challenge is just to have a nurse in every family. It stops a lot of ER visits and a lot of doctors' visits.

The Deputy Premier is already aware of this: It's expected that the number of nurses leaving the profession will substantially increase due to the stress and workload they're experiencing this year. They're going to leave younger. We know that's going to happen. And we know that there's a nursing shortage and a shortage of nurse practitioners in this province.

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario has written to the Minister of Colleges and Universities asking if they could increase enrolment by 400 for nurses and 70 for nurse practitioners. Ontario's universities have that capacity; they've let the minister know that.

We know we're going to need more nurses and nurse practitioners in long-term care and acute care, in corrections, primary care.

Speaker, through you: Will the Deputy Premier support the RNAO's urgent request to increase the number of students enrolled in nursing programs this fall?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. This is a very important issue, and we are all grateful for the heroic efforts that our nurses have gone through over the last 16 months. We know that they're under incredible stress, they're burned out, they are exhausted, but they keep going. So we wish them a happy nurses' week, but more than that, we all express our appreciation and thanks to them for the incredible work that they're doing.

But we know [*inaudible*] who are stressed, who will likely leave after the worst of this pandemic is over. We have offered some mental health supports and counselling to them to help deal with some of the issues. I have discussed this with nursing groups during this week, as a matter of fact. But we also know that we need more people in our system. We know that we need to hire thousands more of all types of nursing professionals: nurses, personal support workers and others.

I'll deal with the balance of your question in the supplementary.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm looking forward to the minister's response. I do very much appreciate the fact that every day I'm here to ask a question, you're here to answer it.

I asked the minister to review the RNAO submission. I think it's really important that we take action now. It's urgent. The fall is coming up quickly. Institutions need time to ramp up, and I look forward to a response.

My supplementary is with regard to scope of practice. We all know that scope of practice is generally pretty glacial. It's been that way for decades and decades. I know there was some movement forward for nurse practitioners. In June 2019, the Ministry of Health expanded NP scope of practice to include point-of-care testing, ordering CTs, ordering MRIs. However, these changes were expected in the winter of 2020. I understand, given all the things that were happening, that that was a challenge. We also know that their scope can be expanded further.

So what I would like to know from the minister, as well as the answer in terms of the expansion of spaces, is when they plan to increase the scope of nurse practitioners, as they had planned in June 2019.

Hon. Christine Elliott: For the first part of your question, yes, I can tell you that we will take into consideration RNAO's request for more positions in our educational facilities for more nurses to graduate. We know that we need more nurses, with the people who will probably be leaving as a result of COVID-19, and especially in long-term care, with the increase in care to four hours, from 2.75 hours. So, absolutely, I will take that seriously into consideration.

Secondly, with respect to the scope of practice, some of the work that has been going on in the Ministry of Health has been delayed because of the efforts that we've had to make to deal with COVID-19. But yes, we are still considering scope of practice for a variety of health professionals, including nurse practitioners. Thank you for the question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Solicitor General. In December 2016, Mr. Soleiman Faqiri died struggling to breathe as he lay on the ground of his jail cell in Lindsay as he was awaiting a mental health assessment. He was shackled and pepper sprayed after guards had placed a spit hood over his head. The details of this case are well known. Some of the guards involved or in question admitted wrongdoing, but no charges have been laid.

The Conservative government continues to sit on the correctional services oversight and investigations report regarding Mr. Faqiri's death. Will the Solicitor General do the right thing: Make this report public and take a step closer towards justice for Mr. Faqiri's family?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There are so many things that we have been able to do since forming government, particularly in corrections, and I will highlight some of those, because I think the example that the member shared is very disturbing for many of us. When we formed government, when we had the opportunity to actually make some investments in corrections, we did that decisively and we did it quickly. You will remember that we committed to hire an additional 500 correctional officers, to investments in expanding jail capacity so that we don't have to house people in very small cells with two or three people to a cell.

These investments are going to protect individuals who are in our correctional facilities, they're going to protect our correctional guards and other staff who work in these institutions and, ultimately, they're going to make a better society, because we're putting in the programming and getting this done. Finally, we have that opportunity in government.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Back to the Solicitor General: My question is about Soleiman Faqiri. At the time of his death, Mr. Faqiri had not been convicted of any crime. He was sick and he was in need of care. In the wake of the government's correctional services oversight and investigations report into his death, two out of the six correctional officers involved were fired. But the Conservative government refuses to make the report that led to these firings public.

1130

At a bare minimum, Mr. Faqiri's family and his community deserve answers as a starting point towards closure in this horrific and ongoing ordeal. Justice can't be done while this critical information is hidden. Will the Solicitor General release their government's report to the public regarding Mr. Faqiri?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There's no doubt that when individuals come into our institutions with mental health issues or with other concerns like drug addictions, it is a very challenging environment. It is, frankly, again, why we as a government have made a commitment and invested. We've invested in ensuring that facilities have ion scanners so that people are not bringing contraband into our facilities. It's ensuring that our staff are better trained to understand and deal with individuals who have mental health and addictions issues.

These are very challenging times when our community has to deal with the issues that come into our institutions. But we are doing everything possible to make sure that our staff are well trained and well qualified and, ultimately, well prepared to deal with all of the issues that occur within our 26 institutions.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday, Dr. Vera Etches, Ottawa's Medical Officer of Health, said that if local COVID-19 indicators keep declining it would be safe to send students back to school.

It's likely that other communities will find themselves in this situation, so my question to the minister is simple: Can the minister please let Ontario families know whether the government is planning a regional approach to reopening schools?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Obviously, we are all committed to having children in school. We know how important it is for their mental health and development. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has said that we continue to face challenges in the province in the context of high rates of transmission, albeit they seem to be coming down. That is good, but we cannot let our guard up. We are seeking his advice on the way forward.

What we have done in the meantime, as we await that advice and the scientific analysis, is put in place a plan, a \$1.6-billion investment, as we look forward to September to ensure we can keep schools safe and keep them open. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has confirmed multiple times to the people of Ontario that our plan has worked to keep kids safe; one of the lowest positivity case rates for youth under 20 in the nation. That is because we listened to the science, because we invested and because we followed the best advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you for your answer, Minister. The question I asked is: Are you planning for it? One of the challenges is, you should plan for the advice that you may get before you get that advice. I just needed to know that answer, so maybe you could provide that in the supplementary answer.

This is about another plan. Access to affordable child care is a game-changer for families and restarting our economy. Women have predominantly shouldered the child care burden throughout this pandemic, either leaving

the workforce or having to try and manage both at home. We know that every dollar that's invested in child care returns \$2.50 to the economy, and that full participation in the workforce is the best thing we can do for our economy.

We've recently put forward a plan to expand access to affordable, licensed child care to allow parents—mostly women—to re-enter the workforce. Speaker, through you: What is the government planning to do differently as we come out of this pandemic to ensure that licensed child care is accessible and affordable to all Ontario families?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Part of our plan is to make sure that those who work within our schools and our child care centres can be vaccinated. We're very proud that all staff who work within our education space are able to get vaccines as we look forward, as the Minister of Health and the Solicitor General have confirmed, to expanding that to young people aged 12 and up. That is a game-changer as we look forward to a more safe, more stable, more normal September for the kids of this province, who deserve that after a year of disruption.

We're proud to be investing \$1.6 billion, to be investing four times the rate of what the former Liberal government—a 400% increase in mental health supports to help kids in this province get through this adversity. We're going to continue to invest and follow the best advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: My question is for the Premier. Ontario's small businesses have struggled from the beginning of this pandemic. Businesses watched their finances dwindle and their doors close while the government claimed to have their back. It took eight months until those supports came.

The Ontario Small Business Support Grant was a lifeline that hasn't reached far too many businesses. Nadia opened Zaatanz Bakery and Sweets in February 2020. She told me that she recently applied for the OSBSG, received a secondary email requesting a void cheque and a bank statement, only to get shut down after supplying them. Jean runs Sport Clips, one of the first to shut down in the lockdowns, and has been mistakenly told her business is ineligible. She's emailed again and again, with no response.

I'm here to tell this government they're not doing enough to help small businesses. Will you reopen the OSBSG and expand eligibility so people like Nadia and Jean can keep their businesses afloat and their employees paid?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: To Nadia and Jean: This government will continue to make sure we support small businesses.

When it comes to the support grant program, already \$2.5 billion has flowed into the hands of these small businesses. In the second round alone, over 75,000 businesses have received over \$1.1 billion. But the member voted against that. It's very important to note that. The member not only voted against that but against every support

measure from the beginning of this pandemic, most recently reductions in hydro cost; reductions in property tax cost; elimination of the EHT, a tax on jobs. The member voted against that. Investments into broadband infrastructure, a historic investment of \$4 billion: The member voted against that. The member voted against \$4.9 billion to commit to the nation-leading four hours of care per resident in long-term-care homes, Speaker.

So how can the member speak to the London businesses who have received over \$30 million in the support grant program and justify his voting record and the opposition—

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Speaker, the government may be here to cast stones, but the NDP has been calling for business supports since April 2020. I'm glad this government finally stood up—but they haven't done enough.

There are other businesses in my riding that haven't even yet received a response. Dani is one of the many other small business owners in my riding still waiting for answers. She first applied for this grant in January, but her application sat under review for months. Finally, in April, after the deadline had passed, she found out her application was denied. She was not given a reason, even though the government has stated they always provide a reason for rejection. To make matters worse, there's no appeal process in place for Dani to challenge this decision.

Why does this government keep turning their backs on small business owners like Dani instead of offering a helping hand? Do the right thing.

Mr. Stan Cho: I'd like to remind Dani that the NDP, the opposition, since April of last year, has voted against every single support measure for Dani and her business—every single one. But here's the most curious fact for me, Speaker: After second reading of the budget, where the opposition has an opportunity to put forward constructive feedback, ideas on how to further support small businesses—the independent members put forward several amendments, and we're going to work collaboratively with them to achieve those outcomes. The NDP: zero amendments, zero suggestions.

DEFERRED VOTES

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE AMENDMENT
ACT (ADVANCED GLUCOSE
MONITORING DEVICES), 2021
LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE
(APPAREILS ET ACCESSOIRES
AVANCÉS DE SURVEILLANCE
DE LA GLYCÉMIE)

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

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 / *Projet de loi 272, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne l'inclusion des appareils et accessoires avancés de surveillance de la glycémie dans le Programme d'appareils et accessoires fonctionnels.*

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

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1210.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of 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, has taken place.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): The ayes are 14; the nays are 32.

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

Second reading negatived.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1300.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I'm honoured to stand in the House today to commemorate the month of May as Asian Heritage Month. Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity for all Ontarians to learn about the many achievements and contributions of Canadians of Asian descent, including South Asian descent, who throughout our history have done so much to make Canada the amazing country we share today. We can be inspired by the long and rich history of these Canadians who continue to enrich our country.

As Canadians, we are deeply proud of the free and pluralistic country we have built. It's why we dedicate the month of May to pay tribute to the Asian community, which includes over 30 countries that make up east, south-east and south Asian communities, for their significant cultural, economic and historical contributions to our land.

As Ontario's Minister of Education, I believe it's important to recognize and celebrate those contributions in Ontario's school curriculum. Asian Canadian history is part of our collective Canadian history, and as such, Mr. Speaker, this should not be highlighted only during the month of May but integrated throughout the school year.

Ontario's classrooms must provide students with learning opportunities on how to confront and combat racism,

discrimination, xenophobia and hate. This demands frank and honest discussions about our past where students can learn about and understand the long-standing impact of the Chinese head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants at the turn of the century or the Japanese internments during the Second World War or Canada's refusal to accept the South Asian immigrants who arrived in Vancouver in the spring and summer of 1914 aboard the SS Komagata Maru.

Mr. Speaker, it means teaching children to love our country while we acknowledge shameful incidents within our history, and of course it means understanding the world in which we live, including speaking up in defence of minority groups, such as the Uighurs facing systematic persecution by the communist Chinese state.

It's why the ministry works to ensure that curriculum is inclusive, reflects the diversity of Ontario's population and promotes understanding and inclusion. This learning begins in kindergarten and continues in elementary school throughout various grades in a number of subjects. At the heart of our public education system is a shared responsibility and role to safeguard the success and well-being of all students, irrespective of their race, creed or faith.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge and condemn the concerning spike of anti-Asian hate, including physical assaults against children and elderly people that have occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic—a sad reality that has existed for generations, however tragically amplified today.

These racist attacks are unacceptable and an affront to the values our country upholds. Motivated by hate and fanned by the COVID-19 pandemic, this racism has negatively impacted the mental and physical health, well-being and safety of educators, students, families and communities of Asian descent. Every student in Ontario has an unassailable right to feel safe and protected at school so that they can reach their full potential and achieve lifelong success.

As minister, I'm committed to upholding and promoting human rights and eliminating hatred, racism and discrimination in our schools. It's imperative that we, as a Legislature, remain steadfast in that commitment to work with our communities, our families, school boards and education partners to create safe, respectful and inclusive spaces for students to learn, interact and develop.

Last July, our government announced changes to the education system that will break down barriers for Indigenous, Black and racialized students, including those who live in low-income households and those with disabilities and special education needs, so that they can succeed. As part of this action, we're moving forward with eliminating and ending grade 9 streaming into applied and academic courses, proposing to eliminate discretionary suspensions for students, strengthening sanctions for educators who engage in behaviour of a racist nature and providing teachers with additional anti-racism and anti-discrimination training.

I'm proud to tell you that this has enabled the funding of new community organizations, including those that support Asian communities directly, through culturally

relevant mental health supports and educator and parent resources to address the anti-Asian racism phenomenon that we're seeing at home and abroad.

Today, I want to highlight the \$6.4 million that the Ontario government is directing towards numerous third-party initiatives and partners to protect against racism and hate. It includes funding to community organizations to address anti-Asian hate, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, among others, as well as support for newcomer parents and families to enhance access to school and community resources and culturally appropriate mental health supports for Asian youth, students and families. Specifically, \$340,000 targeted to Asian community partners to support initiatives that break down those barriers to success, that support inclusivity and the child's mental health. These initiatives will help ensure that students learn in more inclusive classrooms, that they are supported by their educators and their communities.

In opposition to this rising hate and in the defence of inclusion, Ontario is investing in targeted supports to counter racism in our schools, to support educator training and professional development, to provide family services in heritage languages, including for newcomers to Canada, and mental health supports directly for students victimized by this prejudice within our schools. We're proud to announce \$140,000 to the Hong Fook Mental Health Association to provide mental health supports for Asian students, for families and for teachers, including offering counselling and workshops in Mandarin, Cantonese and English.

In addition, through the Safe Restart Agreement we're partnering with community groups that include the Chinese Canadian National Council for Social Justice that's receiving \$50,000 to develop online resources to help Chinese Canadian households engage their children, from grades 3 to 5, in discussions about racism, part of a broader effort to change the culture within our households through our classrooms. We're providing \$10,000 to the Asian Canadian Educators Network to develop a series of professional development workshops about anti-Asian racism for schools and boards in Ontario to better empower our front-line educators to oppose racism of all kinds. And \$140,000 to Community Family Services of Ontario to deliver resources and supports relevant to pandemic-induced issues and risks faced by newcomers and East Asian Ontario families.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of these significant investments because, without question, all of Ontario's students deserve the opportunity to succeed and flourish at school. This has always been our pledge, as well as my personal commitment as minister: to affect real, genuine change for our students, that they can thrive, reach their potential and succeed in the real world.

Our government will not tolerate racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia or hate in any form in any school. Through these initiatives, we will ensure students from all walks of life are prepared for lifelong success. All students must feel welcomed and afforded an equal opportunity to succeed. As minister, I want all of

Ontario's Indigenous, Black and racialized students, including those of Asian descent, to know that they are valued and respected.

We will stand with all students on this journey to advance respect, dignity and opportunity. We will continue to build a world-class education system that has high expectations for our students, regardless of their social identities, and will help to ensure equitable opportunities, meaningful experiences and successful outcomes for those students.

The proud history of Asian immigration and, tragically, discrimination in Canada, can be traced back to more than 150 years ago when Chinese workers arrived on the west coast and joined workers to construct the nation-building CP Railway. Many lost their lives in an endeavour that saw them treated unfairly and inhumanely; treated as if they were expendable. Mr. Speaker, the incredible sacrifice of these individuals and their families—sons and fathers, mothers and daughters—were not appreciated or rewarded by Canadian lawmakers at that time. Instead, Canada restricted immigration from China through the head tax, which was actually abolished through the Chinese Exclusion Act, and aimed to prevent nearly all Chinese immigration to Canada. Mr. Speaker, the Chinese Exclusion Act remained in effect until 1947.

These past and present failings must be acknowledged and confronted, as I have noted, and we must be unyielding in our motivation to honour the sacrifice of those pioneers: these newcomers who chose Canada and helped to shape our history. It is for our forefathers and mothers and for young people today—the next generation, our students—that we must keep building a more welcoming, free and pluralistic society, one that recognizes that all people are created equally, deserving of love and respect. That work must continue as we confront rising hate and racism against Canadians of Asian ancestry.

It was the previous Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper that acknowledged the injustice inflicted on Chinese Canadians, with an apology for the deeply discriminatory head tax. In the Prime Minister's words, he said, "This was a grave injustice, and one we are morally obligated to acknowledge."

1310

It was the government of Progressive Conservative Prime Minister Brian Mulroney who recognized and apologized for the Canadian state's mistreatment and racist actions against Japanese families. At the time, Prime Minister Mulroney said, "We cannot change the past. But we must, as a nation, have the courage to face up to these historical facts."

Indeed, it was just last month that we celebrated Journey to Freedom Day, a day marking the welcoming of more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees fleeing war and persecution by communists in their home country. More than 34,000 of those refugees were privately sponsored by charities, religious organizations and, of course, Canadian families. It was an impressive show of compassion and love to their fellow man that drove Canadians and that government to welcome such a significant number of refugees.

These moments should remind us of what our country can be at its best.

Asian Canadians not only physically helped to build this great country, but they also culturally enriched its diversity, which has become an important characteristic of our nation. It is why we undertake to better reflect the positive contributions Asian and racialized Canadians have made to the development of our country, in many cases even before Canada's Confederation.

The experiences of each family and individual vary, but the promise that Canada offers remains the same: the promise of a better life, steeped in democratic tradition; the foundational principles of freedom and of equality, for this generation and for the next.

This month, let's work hard to counter all forms of hate and, most especially, celebrate the rich diversity of Asian culture and history that contribute to the success of this beautiful country, Canada.

NURSES

Hon. Christine Elliott: Speaker, nurses play a critical role in ensuring Ontarians have access to the high-quality health care and support they need every day, but we have never been more grateful for their contributions than throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Monday, May 10, marked the beginning of Nursing Week in Canada, an opportunity to recognize all of the incredible nurses across our health care system and in our province. Yesterday, on May 12, we also celebrated International Nurses Day.

Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise in the House today as Minister of Health to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all of Ontario's nurses for the vital work they do and the compassion they demonstrate to patients and families each and every day. Whether they are providing care in hospitals, long-term-care homes, primary care settings, home and community care settings, correctional facilities, public health units, retirement homes or academic institutions, nurses make a tremendous difference in the lives of countless Ontarians. This has never been more clear than during the COVID-19 pandemic.

From day one, nurses have been on the front lines of Ontario's pandemic response, working tirelessly to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians, while also continuing to deliver exceptional care to patients and families. Occasions like this remind us all to recognize and celebrate the incredible courage, compassion and unwavering dedication of nurses here in Ontario, across the country and around the world.

Our nurses have worked around the clock, sacrificing precious time with their loved ones, facing exhaustion and burnout, and putting themselves at risk to keep all of us safe. Yet, even when faced with the extraordinary challenges posed by a global pandemic, Ontario's dedicated nurses rose to the challenge to be there when we needed them the most.

On a daily basis, they are there caring for some of our most vulnerable and supporting us through our health care journeys. Whether they are ordering diagnostic tests, such

as X-rays and ultrasounds; prescribing medications for patients, that they need to care for their health; or supporting patients in managing their health conditions, Ontarians can be comforted in knowing that even in the most trying of situations, nurses continue to be there for us and for our loved ones in our time of need.

Nurses are an inspiration to us all, and we continue to see more and more people dedicate themselves to a life of service by joining the health workforce as nurses. In fact, Speaker, according to the College of Nurses of Ontario, there has been an almost 13% increase in the number of nurses eligible to work in Ontario over the past five years, and today, I am proud to share that there are over 173,000 men and women eligible to work as nurses across this province.

As we rightly recognize registered nurses, nurse practitioners and registered practical nurses, we also know there are so many other health care providers who are caring for Ontarians during this pandemic. To protect these front-line health care heroes, we are investing \$1.4 billion to procure personal protective equipment to help keep them safe from harm.

Furthermore, our government has invested approximately \$69 million in nursing education, recruitment and retention programs.

Nurses are an important cornerstone of our health care system. By investing in nurses, we are supporting our government's commitment to end hallway health care and to build a modern, more connected health care system that is centred on the needs of patients and their families.

As we face the COVID-19 pandemic together, the incredible contributions of nurses across the province are critical in keeping our loved ones and our communities safe.

Vaccines remain our greatest tool to help protect our nurses and other front-line heroes from becoming overwhelmed, and to stop the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. Nurses are essential in this fight and have been identified as a high-priority group in Ontario's vaccine rollout.

And with our vaccine rollout well under way, we are once again seeing nurses step up to support this important initiative. Across the province, nurses are volunteering to administer vaccines in mass immunization clinics, pop-up clinics, mobile clinics and primary care settings—helping us to receive the best protection possible from this devastating virus and ensure that there are brighter days ahead.

Together, we continue to make progress as we ramp up our vaccine rollout, vaccinating more and more people every day. Thanks to our collective efforts, we expect that 65% of Ontarians 18 years of age and older will have received their first dose of the vaccine by the end of May. That is what hope looks like. We are so grateful to the nurses, health care heroes and public health units that are working with us to reach this exciting milestone.

As we celebrate nurses' week and International Nurses Day in Ontario, let us take a moment to recognize the critical role that nurses play in building strong and healthy communities, and their unwavering commitment to protect the health and well-being of all Ontarians.

Ontario's nurses are the heart of our health care system. They are there celebrating with us on good days, grieving with us on the worst, and supporting us through our health care journeys.

Once again, on behalf of the government and on behalf of all Ontarians, I want to thank all of Ontario's nurses for showing the world the best of Ontario and making a tremendous difference in the lives of patients and families with their exceptional service and endless compassion. Ontario's nurses truly are our heroes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

NURSES

INFIRMIÈRES ET INFIRMIERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: This Nursing Week, my heart is full of gratitude for nurses. Their importance in the lives of all Ontarians is immeasurable, and the pandemic has shone a spotlight on that.

But this Nursing Week, more than ever before, I want the government to appreciate and celebrate nurses not just with words, but with actions.

This year, the Ontario Nurses' Association's theme for Nursing Week is "Still Standing. Still Strong. Still Proud." The theme reflects the challenges that nurses have withstood throughout this pandemic, and their remarkable resiliency and dedication.

Ontario's nurses have been called heroes, but the province has denied them the PPE they needed to stay safe. The government has thanked them, then denied them paid sick days and WSIB coverage when they got COVID-19 at work. They have been praised for working long, difficult days and nights for months on end, but then denied negotiating rights and workplace protections by the Ford government.

Our nurses have been there for us during the worst of times. Ontarians and New Democrats recognize their immense contribution in taking care of us and taking care of our families. But sadly, Premier Doug Ford has forced nurses to go to court against the government in the middle of a pandemic, rather than respect the value of their work and their lives. Nurses deserve far better than that.

1320

New Democrats are proud to stand with nurses, and we will continue to push this government for the recognition and the respect that they deserve, and that means the withdrawal of the discriminatory and unconstitutional Bill 124.

I want to wish every nurse a happy Nursing Week. I want you to know that you are loved, you are trusted, you are respected, you are appreciated. Je vous souhaite une bonne semaine des infirmières et des infirmiers.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have seen an alarming rise in anti-Asian racism in Canada. A recent report documented over 1,150

incidents of anti-Asian racism across the country, with 40% of these attacks happening in Ontario.

Speaker, these attacks are not isolated incidents. These are symptoms of the systemic racism that Canadians of Asian heritage have faced for generations. This racism is an inextricable part of our country's history. Over 130 years ago, after approximately 600 Chinese workers died building the Canadian Pacific Railway, Canada brought in the Chinese head tax to restrict immigration from China. One hundred and seven years ago, Canada denied entry and forced the return of the Komagata Maru, which proved to be tragic. Eighty years ago, the Canadian government detained and dispossessed more than 90% of Japanese Canadians in internment camps. And it wasn't until 1967 that Canada removed immigration restrictions on the basis of race that kept people of Asian descent out of the country. That's only 54 years ago, Speaker. Many in this chamber were alive for that.

Anti-Asian racism is not new, but it has reached new heights during the pandemic, and we must oppose it in all its forms. That's why my colleagues and I tabled a bill earlier this week to declare May 10 as a provincial day of action to address anti-Asian racism.

Speaker, we must be aware of how we perpetrate systemic racism under the guise of protections or rescue. It manifests itself even if we may have the best of intentions; for example, Bill 251, a well-meaning attempt to prevent the despicable crime of human trafficking. Groups like Butterfly, an organization that provides a network of support for Asian and migrant sex workers, has raised concerns that Bill 251 will lead to further criminalization of Asian Canadians and other racialized communities. Butterfly is concerned that enhancing unfettered police powers, like being able to enter places at any time without a warrant, being able to demand, copy, remove anything, is counterproductive and will instead lead to more discrimination and racial profiling, and that Asian and migrant sex workers will be subjected to increased surveillance, interrogation, detention and even deportation.

It is incumbent on us as legislators to listen to the communities the bill is claiming to help. We cannot oppose anti-Asian racism without listening to the Asian community and validating their experiences. So let us do that: Let's listen to them and let's work together to dismantle the systemic discrimination that hurts so many Asian Canadians.

NURSES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am delighted to speak on behalf of Nursing Week, International Nurses Day and also nursing month. Speaker, nurses are the first people that we see at birth, and usually, throughout our lives when we have a medical care issue, we are with a nurse. Their actions offering care to each and every one of us touch our lives, and they do so with compassion and care.

In the current pandemic, we can testify to the sacrifices of nurses—sadly, some even with their own lives. Nurses

are at the forefront and have bravely put their lives at risk during the pandemic, with long hours and unselfish work. They risk their lives on the front line, alongside other front-line workers, each and every day. They are often the only ones present as a loved one passes away due to COVID-19. We must recognize this great sacrifice and the contributions of nurses to our society, and also acknowledge their families, who, too, are making sacrifices to support them.

I want to thank all nurses, as well as their representatives, like ONA, for the contributions that they have made, especially during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The nursing profession is diverse, including Indigenous, Black, Asian and other people of diverse backgrounds. They make this profession lively. They make huge contributions to our society here in Ontario. Many of them reside in my riding, in Scarborough.

Nurses need to be appreciated not only in words, but also in substantive actions to address the concerns that they've put forward to this government; specifically, the hours of care, the ability to bargain freely, as well as wages and benefits. I call on this government to establish an all-party select committee to review the conditions of nursing across all health care systems in Ontario. Platitudes alone are not enough. Nurses are deserving of more pay and better benefits.

In my own family, I've witnessed the many sacrifices that nurses make each and every day.

I've visited many of Scarborough's health care settings: long-term care, hospitals, community health centres—and just yesterday, a vaccination pop-up clinic at the East Scarborough Boys and Girls Club, where I met many nurses.

I want to thank all of our nurses for the work that you do each and every day and the care you provide to all of us.

ASIAN HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, anti-Asian racism is an issue on the rise in Ontario.

In Scarborough, we have a vibrant and strong Asian population. It is a diverse and essential part of our community.

The Momiji centre is in my riding. It is a wonderful place. There's no more peaceful place than the Japanese garden at Momiji Health Care Society. However, it is a reminder of Canada's apology to the Japanese people following the internment in World War II.

Racism of any kind must not be tolerated in this province, in this country. The rise of anti-Asian racism, particularly during the pandemic, is disgusting. As legislators, we must do more.

The TDSB's annual report from the board's human rights office shows that incidents of racism against Black and Asians is on the rise, with race-related complaints making up 69% of all reported hate incidents in 2019-20. The data in the report outlines significant growth in anti-Asian sentiment.

This week, my colleagues MPP Coteau and MPP Collard tabled a bill that will amend the Anti-Racism Act, 2017, to expressly address anti-Asian racism.

The Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto recently released a report that found 1,150 cases of racist attacks reported in Canada during the pandemic, and 40% of the reported cases were in Ontario.

The government needs to act on this growing problem before greater levels of severity of this unacceptable action are reached.

I also call on the government to mandate the collection of incidents of racism across all school boards.

Speaker, our young people need to grow up in an inclusive, welcoming and diverse Ontario society where all are treated with respect, fairness and justice.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, on a point of order: In accordance with standing order 59, I'd like to outline the agenda for next week, if I may.

On Monday morning, there is ballot item number 87, standing in the name of the member for Brampton Centre. That item has yet to be determined; I suspect we'll get some more information over the weekend. In the afternoon of Monday, May 17, there will be a take-note debate on the report on Ontario's second declared provincial emergency from January 12, 2021, to February 9, 2021.

1330

On Tuesday morning, third reading debate on Bill 282, An Act in respect of various road safety matters; in the afternoon, we will continue on to third reading debate on Bill 282; and in the evening, there will be private member's ballot item 88, standing in the name of the member for Brampton West. That item is also yet to be determined. I again suspect we'll hear additional information over the next day or two.

Wednesday, May 19: In the morning, there will be third reading debate on Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters. That debate will continue in the afternoon, and in the evening, ballot item 89 for the member for Ottawa-Vanier, Bill 287, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to equity education and the Education Equity Secretariat Initiatives Branch.

On Thursday, May 20, in the morning, there will be third reading debate on Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters, and in the afternoon, we will continue third reading debate on Bill 282 on road safety matters. In the evening, there will be ballot item number 90 standing in the name of the member for Ajax, which, as well, is yet to be determined.

I'd also just like to thank all members for another very productive week and safe week at the Legislature.

If colleagues will indulge me, today is the last day of Jessie Saliba, who has been with my office since before I took on House leader's role. She has done a great job for us. I thank her for all her hard work. I'll just wrap up by

saying I'm sure the table officers will certainly enjoy not hearing her scream her orders at me from behind the Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING POLYSTYRENE OUT OF ONTARIO'S LAKES AND RIVERS ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DE LA POLLUTION DES LACS ET DES RIVIÈRES DE L'ONTARIO PAR LE POLYSTYRÈNE

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

Bill 228, An Act to prohibit unencapsulated expanded or extruded polystyrene in floating docks, floating platforms and buoys / Projet de loi 228, Loi interdisant le polystyrène expansé ou extrudé sans enveloppe de protection dans les quais flottants, les plateformes flottantes et les bouées.

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

Mr. Norman Miller: It's my honour to rise today to speak to third reading of my private member's Bill 228, the Keeping Polystyrene Out of Ontario's Lakes and Rivers Act.

Beautiful waters and the natural environment are a big part of the identity of Parry Sound–Muskoka. As you probably know, my riding sits on the east side of Georgian Bay. The riding boundary in the north is the French River, in the south it's the Severn River, and in the riding, there are hundreds of lakes, rivers and streams. People are attracted to the area whether as residents, as seasonal residents or as visitors to spend time on and around the water, so protecting the water is good for both the environment and the economy.

As well, Georgian Bay is part of Lake Huron and the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes hold roughly one fifth of the world's fresh water and provide drinking water to 40 million people in Canada and the United States. We all know we need to protect that water.

Many people focus on things like single-use plastics and Styrofoam takeout containers, but I want to point out there is one form of foam that is created specifically to be put in the water, and that is dock foam. Open or expanded and extruded polystyrene—or, as it's better known, Styrofoam—is used as floatation for floating docks and rafts. I've seen broken-up dock foam on the shores of Georgian Bay for years and have been thinking about what could be done about it.

Last spring, just as I was working with legislative counsel on this bill, I, like everyone else, was taking a lot of walks. On those walks, I found more and more dock foam. Unfortunately, I can't share with you the photos I shared with the committee, but let me say, you would be

hard pressed to find a stretch of Georgian Bay shoreline that doesn't have many pieces of dock foam, and these pieces ranged from the size of a seed to a few cubic feet. I've taken photos myself and I've received pictures from groups and individuals who take it upon themselves to try to clean up the mess that dock foam creates.

I want to take a moment to recognize some of the organizations in my riding that are working hard to protect our water quality: the Georgian Bay Association, Georgian Bay Forever, the Georgian Bay Land Trust, various cottagers associations including the Bayfield-Nares Islanders' Association, the South Channel Association and many more.

The groups working hardest on this issue are generally Georgian Bay-based because the problem of dock foam is biggest on larger bodies of water, but it is a problem anywhere unencapsulated foam is used as floatation.

Many groups and individuals pick up foam and other litter, quietly doing their part to clean up this mess, but Georgian Bay Forever has also taken the time to quantify and illustrate the scope of this problem. In 2019, volunteers conducting a cleanup of the Georgian Bay shoreline collected an estimated 5,000 pieces of dock foam, far more than any other kind of litter.

I believe the government needs to support those efforts by individuals, businesses and environmental groups. That is why, in an effort to reduce the waste and pollutants in Ontario's waterways, Bill 228 is proposing that all expanded or extruded polystyrene used as floatation in new docks, other floating platforms and buoys be fully encapsulated to prevent it breaking up and polluting the waters.

The big pieces of dock foam may be relatively easy to clean up, but as the foam stays in the environment, floating exposed to wave action, wildlife and ultraviolet light, it breaks into smaller and smaller pieces. These small pieces are almost impossible to clean up. One person who wrote to me in support of this bill, Christopher Lewis, described it very well. He said, "Having collected many pieces of this polystyrene each spring and throughout the course of the summer, I find the continued use of this material very troubling. It breaks down into tiny pieces that can't be recovered except by using a vacuum—an impossible prospect."

These small pieces are obviously an eyesore, but they are also dangerous to our wildlife. Some of our most iconic Canadian animals live in the water and eat things they find in the water: loons, herons, Canada geese, beavers and all our lake fish, and then we eat the fish.

As well as the local groups, there are larger organizations trying to help clean up the dock foam and other things littering our shores. For example, the Ontario government has supported a project by the Council of the Great Lakes Region, Pollution Probe, Boating Ontario and the University of Toronto to install Seabins and LittaTraps at marinas to try to recapture some of the waste that is in our lakes and waters.

Last fall, I visited Point Pleasant Marina in the Parry Sound area, where one of the Seabins is installed. The

owner, Drew Lichtenheldt, talked about why it was important to him to help protect Georgian Bay. At Point Pleasant Marina they use docks built on steel pontoons because they last well, don't break down in the water and can be fully recycled when they reach the end of their life. Drew told me the Seabin at their marina collects about eight pounds of waste each day, including plastics, oil and other floating debris.

Projects like this are great, but it's much more effective to prevent the problem at its source than it is to clean it up. Preventing this problem doesn't mean not building floating docks. Particularly with more extreme weather events, I suspect floating docks are going to become more and more popular. Happily, there are other products that can be used to create a very buoyant floating dock that cause much less environmental damage, and many of them are made right here in Ontario.

You can build docks using metal or plastic pontoons built just for this purpose. As a matter of fact, there are manufacturers in Parry Sound–Muskoka: Kropf Industrial in Parry Sound, NyDock in Huntsville, Dock Kings in Parry Sound and many others. There are modular plastic docking systems built of hard plastic, some of which are made right in Ontario. Do-it-yourselfers can buy plastic dock floats sold at stores like Home Hardware and Home Depot. These come either filled with air or polystyrene foam, but that foam is protected in a hard plastic case.

We did hear some concerns about plastic floats filled with loose polystyrene beads in committee and the damage they cause if they break up, so that might be something to look at in the future.

This isn't just a problem of Georgian Bay or in Ontario. The Connecticut River Conservancy in the US is also promoting moving away from dock foam and did a cost analysis. This is, of course, in US dollars, but they calculated that dock foam for a four-foot by ten-foot dock would cost \$270 but needs to be replaced on average every 10 years. Encapsulated dock foam would cost \$400 but would last probably 35 years, while barrels would cost \$215 new or \$50 used and last 30 to 40 years. This measure has been adopted in several other jurisdictions, including Oregon, Washington state and Arkansas. Additionally, the US Army Corps of Engineers has prohibited the use of unencapsulated polystyrene, foam in dock billets for more than 10 years.

1340

I was pleased to see this bill called for consideration by the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, and I want to thank the presenters who appeared virtually before the committee. We heard from Georgian Bay Forever, the township of The Archipelago, former councillor Gary French, the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations, Georgian Bay Association, Andy Blenkarn of Desmasdon's Boat Works, the township of Carling and, finally, the township of Georgian Bay.

I'm going to devote most of my time to the comments from Georgian Bay Forever because they have been leading the research on this issue. We heard from David Sweetnam, executive director, Heather Sargeant, communications director, and Lisa Erdle, a PhD candidate

from the University of Toronto. Lisa is the author of Georgian Bay Forever's report entitled Problems with Polystyrene Foam: Environmental Fate and Effects in the Great Lakes.

Georgian Bay Forever has been trying to educate waterfront property owners on the pollution caused by dock foam for a few years now. Heather Sargeant gave a very thorough explanation of the problems, and I want to paraphrase her presentation for the record here today. Heather explained, "Polystyrene foams are complex compounds often produced with a variety of chemicals. The base ingredients, benzene and styrene, can have toxic effects and can leach into water. Other chemicals can be added for a variety of purposes, such as to make the material change form to foam, increase production efficiency, last longer or change its colour." She went on to explain that there are two types of polystyrene, expanded and extruded polystyrene, and that both are found in abundance along the shores of Georgian Bay.

Heather described that, in 2019, more than 100 volunteers from communities on the east coast of Georgian Bay participated in 13 half-day shoreline cleanups. They picked up 1,369 pounds of trash. Far and away, the most common kind of litter was dock foam. She described pieces that ranged in size "from large pieces as big as hockey bags to smaller pieces the size of woodchips."

Heather went on to say that it isn't just a Georgian Bay problem: "A recent Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup report showed more than 500,000 pieces were picked up by volunteers from 2016 to 2018. Most of this debris was collected in Ontario. This is pollution that is never going to go away. It may break down into smaller and smaller pieces, but it's going to keep accumulating." As the foam breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, it gets harder to clean up and more likely to be ingested by wildlife where it can cause problems like liver inflammation and have negative impacts on growth, survival and reproduction.

Heather concluded by saying, "The environmental impacts associated with the breakdown of unencapsulated polystyrene foam are significant. Litter is aesthetically unpleasing, and when ingested in microplastic form, it can harm wildlife. Let's work to reduce the source of polystyrene that is in our waterways by ensuring it is properly encapsulated in future floats and docks."

The reeve of the township of The Archipelago, Bert Liverance, talked about meeting with Minister Yurek about this matter last year and went on to explain that, "The impact of dock foam is more than just environmental, it's also an impact on our municipality. As Heather mentioned, you take the dock foam and you bring it to a transfer station. We have water-based transfer stations, and a barge costs over \$1,000 to haul this stuff out of the bay back to a land-based transfer station where ... it would then go into a landfill."

In the township of The Archipelago, dock foam is a big enough issue that they have specific bins at the transfer stations for people to drop off the pieces of foam. He also pointed out that both the municipality and many of their

residents draw their drinking water directly from Georgian Bay, so any microplastics in the water and any chemicals in the bay will impact drinking water quality.

Gary French appeared as a private citizen, but I should note he is a former councillor of the town of The Archipelago and a past director of the Georgian Bay Association and the Georgian Bay Land Trust. Gary and another presenter raised an issue that my original bill hadn't addressed, and that was whether this bill should apply only to new docks or whether it should apply to docks that are being repaired or rebuilt. The other presenter who raised this issue was Andy Blenkarn, who owns marinas and a contracting business. Andy said he's often asked to replace the dock foam of existing docks. As a result of these suggestions at committee, we amended the bill so that it will cover both new docks and those that are rebuilt.

Next, the committee heard from Terry Rees, executive director of the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations. FOCA represents more than 500 cottagers' associations across the province. Terry explained that waterfront property owners have reported that polystyrene foam is a major source of pollution in our lakes, much of which comes from dock foam. He said they look forward to seeing this bill passed.

Next, we heard from Rupert Kindersley, the executive director of the Georgian Bay Association, and Susan McPhedran, who is on the board of the Woods Bay Community Association.

They were followed by Andy Blenkarn, owner of Desmasdon's marina in Pointe au Baril, about 30 minutes north of Parry Sound. Andy spoke on his own behalf but also as a member of Boating Ontario, the industry association for most marinas. Andy took a moment to point out that Ontario's marinas are, on the whole, very aware of the importance of protecting water quality. Boating Ontario has a voluntary program called Clean Marine, which is an industry-led program to keep contaminants out of our water, including oil, fuel, and antifreeze. These business owners recognize that clean water is key to their businesses.

I know I mentioned the Seabin at Point Pleasant Marina in Parry Sound. Point Pleasant, Desmasdon's and 18 other members of Boating Ontario are all part of the Great Lakes Plastic Cleanup program.

Finally, we heard from Mayor Mike Konoval from the township of Carling and Mayor Peter Koetsier from the township of Georgian Bay. Again, both these local representatives stated that dock foam is a significant problem along their shorelines.

We also received written submissions, mostly from individuals who are sick and tired of cleaning up bits of foam along their shorelines. A picture is worth a thousand words, and Andy Myers used a picture to speak for him. He sent a picture of a pile of huge pieces of foam he and his stepson had collected last August. It included both expanded and extruded polystyrene pieces of blue, pink and white foam. The pieces were all rounded like they had been worn away by rubbing against the rocks or sand.

Erika Kramer sent pictures of small pieces, all smaller than an acorn, and wrote, "I've spent hours trying to pick

up tiny bits of foam and it seems hopeless. There's so much of this horrible stuff in the environment."

Jan Morrissey wrote in to the committee. She talked about picking up pieces of foam. But this is what hit me the hardest: She said, "Last year, our nephew caught a black bass and within its stomach contents were small pieces of blue polystyrene."

The committee received written submissions from some 27 people and organizations in support of this bill, and I received dozens more directly. The committee also received two submissions in opposition to this bill: one from DuPont, a manufacturer of extruded polystyrene billets, and one from a contractor who builds docks. I want to thank them both for their comments. They both say that foam buoyancy billets don't break down if they are properly protected. I don't know if that's true, but what I do know is that there are a lot of pieces of extruded polystyrene in the water and on the shores of Georgian Bay, so their foam billets do break down, whether that's the result of how they are made or how they are installed.

I also want to share some comments I received about this bill directly. The Georgian Bay Land Trust sent a letter in support of this bill: "As an environmental organization, we are well aware of the massive pollution created by dock foam along our shores and coastline. We are constantly removing minute, small and large pieces of dock foam from the windward shores of our properties throughout the season. Our and the Georgian Bay community's efforts cannot keep pace with the rate of dock foam pollution. Bill 228 effectively addresses such pollution at its source."

While we've heard mostly from people who have a connection to Georgian Bay, this is an issue around all the Great Lakes and elsewhere across Ontario. Marlaine Koehler wrote to express the support of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, which is the organization that oversees the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail which connects 155 communities, from South Glengarry to Prince township on Lake Superior. She wrote:

"Bill 228 represents a step towards achieving healthy waters and protecting aquatic ecosystems. If adopted, it will limit microplastic pollution by requiring all new dock floats and buoys made from expanded or extruded polystyrene, also commonly known as Styrofoam, to be fully encapsulated to prevent the foam from breaking down and entering the waterway ecosystem, which is harmful to both wildlife and humans.

"We have a responsibility to more than talk the talk when it comes to the environment. Mr. Miller's Bill 228 is an achievable measure forward that will help us do better by the waters we all love so much and on which our economy and well-being depends."

1350

Mike McKay, PhD, executive director and professor at the Great Lakes Institute for Environmental Research at the University of Windsor, said, "I am supportive of common-sense actions like this that help ensure the integrity and health of our fresh water resources."

I've recently taken part in a couple of meetings of the Great Lakes Commission, and I know that water quality

and microplastic pollution are on the agenda of the states we share this great resource with.

The bill also received the support of Dr. Norman Yan. Dr. Yan is a respected biologist who has written extensively about protecting our lakes and who is chair of the Friends of the Muskoka Watershed. He writes, “Given that fragmentation of extruded polystyrene into small particles can lead to the uptake of polystyrene nanoparticles that are a threat to aquatic life including fish ... its encapsulation during dock, floating platform or buoy manufacture or assembly makes perfect sense to lower the threat to aquatic ecosystems that microplastic pollution may represent.”

This problem extends to Ontario’s Far North as well. There is a group of cottagers from the Lake of the Woods area who have an online petition asking for the unencapsulated Styrofoam billets to be banned. The petition was created about two years ago by Darek Dawda, and last I checked had been signed by 490 people. In his petition, he describes the problem: “These Styrofoam billets are frequently chewed up by animals, such as muskrats and beavers that like making their nests in them.” In case anyone doubts that animals would really chew up dock foam, during second reading debate on this bill the member from Nickel Belt told us about this exact thing happening.

Finally, let’s take a moment to look beyond our borders and our coastlines. We’ve all heard about the amount of plastic that is going into the world’s oceans. Of course, almost anything that goes into the Great Lakes will eventually wash out into the ocean.

Speaker, do you remember the children’s book *Paddle-to-the-Sea*? In that story, the canoe and the little boy carved out of wood travel all around the Great Lakes and eventually out the great St. Lawrence River and into the ocean. I realize it’s a fictional story, but now the U of T Trash Team is doing some experiments that will likely prove this. They’ve released sealed plastic containers with GPS trackers into Toronto harbour so we can start to study where our litter ends up. So, if anyone finds a bright orange drinking bottle with their insignia on it, that isn’t actually litter, so please don’t pick it up. I hope that they will expand this experiment to other Great Lakes in the future.

This bill is one simple thing we can do to reduce the amount of plastic that Ontario is adding to the problem of plastics in our oceans. We hear a lot about single-use plastics, and I agree those are a problem as well, but dock foam is creating more litter, at least in Georgian Bay, than any single-use plastics.

Mr. Speaker, I see I am running out of time. I would just ask members to support this bill, as I think it will make a real difference for our Great Lakes and Georgian Bay.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to be able to rise in the House on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and on behalf of my colleagues in the opposition, and to make remarks on Bill 228, brought forward by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka,

keeping polystyrene out of Ontario lakes. We are fully supportive and would like to commend the member for bringing it forward.

Before I enter the main part of my remarks, I think I would be remiss if I didn’t take this opportunity—it has just been announced that lockdown has been extended. We fully support measures, in the opposition, that actually help stop the spread of COVID. We fully support, as do I believe most Ontarians, but many Ontarians are demanding scientific justification for all measures. As we talk about docks in northern Ontario, docks all over, people want to spend time outside by themselves in green spaces. Some of those restrictions are being questioned, seriously questioned. The government needs to make sure that they have scientific justification for all the measures taken, because if measures don’t make sense, don’t make common sense to people, measures—important measures—will also be ignored, and the spread will go farther and the spread will go faster. We can’t afford that at this point. As we’re talking about beautiful lakes and rivers, I’d just like to mention that.

Getting back to the bill and getting back to—I listened intently to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. We come from a bit of the same part of the world. Part of the French River system is also part of the riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. It exemplifies what a private member’s bill is about. You see an issue, often it’s an issue that a member has some personal experience with, and you identify the issue and you bring it forward and it makes sense.

Unprotected Styrofoam shouldn’t be in water, because we all know it breaks down. The big pieces, we can pick up. The little pieces that we can’t see are much more dangerous. So this is good legislation. But it begs the question: Where were the legislators and where were the regulations when this stuff first came on the market? Because it doesn’t take a rocket scientist—and believe me, I’m not one—to realize that this is going to break down, that this is going to go into our water systems. You know that going in. “Hey, this stuff floats. This stuff is fantastic: It floats.” “Yeah, but what about if it breaks?” “Oh, yeah, but it’s a fantastic marketing opportunity. We can sell millions of these.” Right?

So this is a great bill. We need to support it. It needs to become a law. I commend the member for bringing it forward. But it teaches a lesson: What are all the other things that are great marketing opportunities and are going to create jobs and are going to do all these things, and then we’re going to have to clean them up after and there’s going to be all kinds of damage in between?

When the first plastic water bottle came on the market—that wasn’t that long ago. Where were the legislators, where were the regulations that say, “Okay, before you put that on the market, how are you going to make sure that it doesn’t end up in a landfill or, worse, in our lakes? Where is the plan?”—before you put it on the market. Where is that plan? It wasn’t there. That was an overall failure, and it’s incredibly maddening when we see that happening. Styrofoam billets on docks are a perfect

example, because no one's going to tell me that when they put the first one in, the company and the people—including the people buying them—they knew that they were going to break down. But it might be they didn't think it was going to happen to them.

Our job in the Legislature, your job as government is to identify that, have the strength of regulation that those issues can be identified, and when a good product comes forward, you can say, "Okay, but what are the downsides to that product?" If that had been done, we could have saved—I'm sure the ecosystem has been incredibly damaged by this type of Styrofoam. Again, I commend the member. But we have to remember, what are the products that we are allowing to go to market now without even thinking about that? We are worried about jobs today, rightfully so, but we should also be worried about jobs tomorrow and the environment tomorrow.

We fully support this bill, but this bill teaches us a valuable lesson. Look when the products start to production and make sure that they don't force bills like this and cause incredible damage to the environment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I just want to inform the House that the night sitting will be cancelled for the evening.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Hon. Bill Walker: It is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of Bill 228, the Keeping Polystyrene Out of Ontario's Lakes and Rivers Act. I'd like to thank my colleague and friend the MPP for Parry Sound–Muskoka, Norm Miller, for bringing forward this important bill. I want to first recognize the tremendous work and advocacy he does every day on behalf of the good people of Parry Sound–Muskoka, and congratulate him on 20 years of public service as MPP. I'm sure his dad, former Premier Frank Miller, and his entire family are very proud of him for all that he does and all that he has accomplished to help people in our great province. I want to acknowledge that this is just one of many private member's bills that he has introduced to this House that have resulted in initiating legislation to help the people of Ontario. It's a beautiful part of Ontario, and I look forward to visiting Parry Sound–Muskoka again when we're able to do so.

1400

Madam Speaker, we are blessed to live in a province that is so abundant in natural beauty and fresh water. From canoeing along the Saugeen River to kayaking down the Sauble River; from the vast beauty of northern Ontario to the spectacular sunsets along Lake Huron; from the shores of Sauble Beach, Oliphant, Red Bay, Pike Bay, Johnston Harbour, Tobermory, Dyer's Bay, Cape Chin, Hope Bay, Colpoy's Bay, Wiarton, Big Bay, Owen Sound, Leith and Meaford—this sounds like a bit of a Stompin' Tom song—there are countless ways to enjoy nature and waterways in our province.

Bill 228, if passed, would take a specific and tangible step towards protecting it. It requires polystyrene, or

Styrofoam, used in new floating docks, platforms and buoys to be fully encapsulated. This is intended to prevent the foam from breaking down in the water over time and causing pollution that is detrimental to our lakes and ecosystems.

As MPP Miller noted, the sight of dock foam waste has become all too common along our lakes and rivers. I'm told that he has received a great deal of correspondence on the issue supporting his bill and its intent to reduce microplastics pollution in our waters.

In my own backyard, I've heard from constituents on this issue as well.

Laura in Lion's Head writes: "As a Lake Huron cottager, I am well aware of the annual pollution created by dock foam along our shores and coastlines. Many residents try to clean up the minute, small and large pieces of dock foam each spring and throughout the season.

"Instituting this ban will encourage expansion of the industry in Ontario to create and manufacture viable alternatives.

"I hope that all-party support will be received for this enlightened legislation."

Marlaine Koehler, executive director of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, writes: "Bill 228 represents a step towards achieving healthy waters and protecting aquatic ecosystems. If adopted, it will help limit microplastic pollution by requiring all new dock floats and buoys made from expanded or extruded polystyrene ... to be fully encapsulated to prevent the foam from breaking down and entering the waterway ecosystems, which is harmful to both wildlife and humans.

"We have a responsibility to do more than talk the talk when it comes to the environment. Mr. Miller's Bill 228 is an achievable measure forward that will help us do better by waters we all love so much, and on which our economy and well-being depends."

I think this is something we can all support.

This bill has the backing of the environmental research and education group Georgian Bay Forever. Heather Sargeant of Georgian Bay Forever writes: "Polystyrene needs to be properly encapsulated if it is used in water to float docks in order to prevent this plastic from fragmenting, breaking off and getting dispersed widely with weathering, storms and animals.

"Not only is that unsightly and ruins the enjoyment of the shorelines, but these will degrade into microplastics which are a concern for ingestion by wildlife."

The township of The Archipelago passed a resolution supporting Bill 228. It has been endorsed by organizations including Green Communities Canada and the Federation of Ontario Cottagers' Associations.

Rose, a long-time cottager in the Parry Sound area, writes: "I have witnessed first-hand the pollution caused by dock foam. I have been involved in several cleanups, which helps to some extent but does not solve the problem.

"Plastic pollution from docks that use encapsulated polystyrene foam is a significant global source of plastics pollution in lakes, rivers, wetlands and oceans."

Members on all sides of this House share the goal of protecting our lakes, rivers and wildlife. Our government shares this goal. We can all support the objective of removing pollutants from our waterways.

Freda from New Hamburg writes: “My husband and I have enjoyed our little piece of heaven in Georgian Bay since 1989 and have seen first-hand the pollution caused by blue foam billets used for building floating docks. Over the winter when wildlife is looking for a warm winter home, they are chewed on every year.

“With the rise and fall of the water levels, floating docks have become more economical and a common-sense way to go.”

Speaking to this bill, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka recalled the story of Georgian Bay volunteers who collected an estimated 5,000 pieces of foam on the shoreline in 2019. In the future, thanks to Bill 228, I believe volunteers working on the same stretch of shoreline will note the scarcity of polystyrene dock foam.

Madam Speaker, similar legislation has already been adopted in Oregon, Arkansas and Washington state. It is not without precedent, and it is a sensible way to protect the environment.

I want to conclude my remarks by quoting Margaret from Whitby. She writes: “Every summer we pick up dock foam in various sizes along our shoreline. The winds even manage to blow some inland as we sometimes find foam on our walks around the island. We strongly urge you to support this bill to reduce pollution from plastics.”

I agree with Margaret. Let’s support this bill and take a solid, tangible step in the direction of environmental stewardship and responsibility.

Again, I want to sincerely thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, MPP Norm Miller, for bringing this forward, and I am proud to support him.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A reminder that we must always, no matter how much we like folks, refer to them by their title or their riding only. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It’s an honour to rise today in the House, as always, and speak to Bill 228, which would require that all expanded or extruded polystyrene used as flotation in new docks and other floating platforms and buoys be fully encapsulated to prevent it breaking up and polluting our waterways, our lakes, our streams.

As we’ve heard, polystyrene, commonly known as Styrofoam, breaks down quickly when exposed to the elements, and becomes a hazard for wildlife and humans alike. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, I do a daddy-daughter canoe trip every year with my daughter—she’s almost 16 now; we’ve been doing it for over 10 years—and one of the things that she does not like on our canoe trips is when she sees Styrofoam floating in the water. It is hard to get it out of the water when it’s floating around as microplastic.

So I think my daughter will be happy to see this bill pass and to see us take action in protecting our waterways, because 22 million pounds of plastic debris from Canada

and the United States ends up in the Great Lakes alone each and every year. Plastic is responsible for 80% of shoreline litter on the Great Lakes, the very Great Lakes that provide drinking water for over 35 million people, which is why it is so vitally important we take actions to protect the Great Lakes in all ways possible.

As the member opposite has stated in debate, and as the member from Timiskaming said as well, it’s easier to prevent plastic pollution in the first place, and I would argue it’s less expensive to prevent it in the first place, so it’s both environmentally and fiscally responsible to bring in the kinds of regulations that prevent plastic pollution. I’m glad to see that this bill—and maybe, in some ways, this is the good thing about private members’ bills at times—has attracted support from members across the House. It’s good, because we need urgent action on plastic pollution.

We also know that dock pollution isn’t the only source of plastic pollution in our waterways, in the Great Lakes, in our rivers and streams, and it’s good to know that there is momentum building in society to address all forms of plastic pollution. We need to ban single-use plastic beverage containers, which are a huge source of plastic pollution in our waterways; we need to ban plastic coffee cups, Styrofoam takeout containers and other plastic pollution. We also need to bring in regulations that require filters in washing machines to filter out the microplastics in our clothes that are getting into our waterways. A lot of people don’t think about this, but a lot of new and particularly exercise clothes actually put a lot of plastic pollution in our waterways through our washing machines.

I know the member opposite is well aware of Georgian Bay Forever, a great environmental conservation group in the member’s riding in Parry Sound, which has been very involved in advocating for and in support of this bill and has been running pilot projects where they have given out free microplastic filters to residents of Toronto, Parry Sound and Collingwood. Preliminary results from just 100 of these filters in Parry Sound are indicating that between three and six million fibres are being diverted each and every day from the waters of Georgian Bay. Think of what a difference we could make if we actually regulated these filters into all washing machines for sale in Ontario. As a matter of fact, there’s a company, PolyGone, in the Kitchener-Waterloo area I’ve had an opportunity to meet with a number of times that has designed a filter—two young women entrepreneurs who have designed just such a filter.

I believe we actually have legislation that has been recently introduced into the House, Bill 279, that addresses this issue. I would hope that we can come together across the aisle to support legislation like that as well, because we need to do more to end our dependence on plastics. So I will continue to push for a ban on plastics that pollute our waterways, especially when we have cheaper and more responsible alternatives available.

1410

I’m happy to be voting for the member’s bill. I appreciate the member bringing it forward and I look

forward to working with my colleagues from all parties in this House to address plastic pollution in this province and to protect our lakes, rivers and waterways.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: It's my pleasure to be able to rise to speak to the private member's bill entitled the Keeping Polystyrene Out of Ontario's Lakes and Rivers Act. I fully support the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka in his endeavours to see this bill pass so it does improve the conditions of our waterways.

I want to thank not only the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for introducing this very important bill, but also the Georgian Bay Forever group. They've been working so tirelessly for years, whether it's doing research or advocacy, education or so many cleanups. They've got volumes of volunteers. I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank them for all their efforts and for working with the member to bring this very important piece of legislation forward.

What will this piece of legislation do, if passed? I think it's very important to remind ourselves. It's going to require that all polystyrene in new floating dock platforms and buoys will be fully encapsulated to prevent the foam from breaking down in the water, thereby making sure it doesn't go into the water. And of course it's not just the condition of our water; it's those within the water, our great fish habitat and everything that is the microorganisms that we have in our water. This bill in itself is not just going to help us to enjoy our beautiful waterways, but our fish life and our plant life within that water.

This bill is very complementary to our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan, which is really great. As you know, in our Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan we commit to developing a plastics strategy to reduce plastic waste and limit microplastics that will end up in our lakes and rivers.

In addition to that, the Great Lakes Protection Act promotes Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River Basin protection, restoration, sustainable economic benefits and community engagement, which includes monitoring and reporting on microplastics, so this very much complements that act.

In addition, this bill also complements draft 9 of the Canada-Ontario Agreement on Great Lakes Water Quality, and we're currently in the process of finalizing the 10th Canada-Ontario agreement on the Great Lakes, so stay tuned for that—lots of exciting initiatives.

In addition to that, the Ministry of the Environment has worked—just last summer, as the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka mentioned—with Pollution Probe. Pollution Probe has done these great projects around our waterways to pull out microplastics using Seabins and LittaTraps. They've been able to accomplish quite a bit, and at the Ministry of the Environment we're excited to be continuing our partnership with Pollution Probe to tackle those microplastics in our waterways.

Another thing I just wanted to mention with this particular bill is that I really appreciate how far and wide the member has been working with different communities.

I had the opportunity, for instance, to go to the Lake of the Woods conference near Kenora, back when we were in Minnesota. We were able to travel, and I went there in person and was able to talk to Todd Sellers and so many other advocates for Lake of the Woods. They were part of this bill as well. They gathered over 500 signatures in order to prevent plastics from going into Lake of the Woods.

You see that this bill affects all of Ontario, from the north to the south to the east to the west. It's my great pleasure to support this bill and the great environmental impact it's going to make today, tomorrow and well into the future.

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

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this legislation. I want to commend my colleague for bringing forward such an important bill, representing one of the only two ridings in the great province of Ontario which span two Great Lakes, both Lake Erie, on the southern part of the riding, and Lake Ontario, on the north. We recognize how incredibly crucial it is to protect and maintain the purity of our waterways and also maintain strong environmental standards.

The legislation that has been brought forward will help address a problem that I have also seen when working with my constituents on shoreline issues—seeing just how much of this polystyrene really is coming up to the shoreline, even in all the grasses and reeds and everything along the shoreline. We can only begin to imagine how much of it is breaking down into microscopic particles and being ingested by fish and all the various wildlife.

So I want to speak in favour of this legislation and thank the member for bringing it forward. I know it will have a positive impact on my constituents in Niagara West and on all our Great Lakes and, of course, the many waterways that make Ontario unique and beautiful.

Congratulations. It's a great initiative. I'll be voting in favour of this bill.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to echo some of the comments that have been made by some of my colleagues and thank the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka for putting this bill forward. He has done a great deal of work on it. He has provided us with an awful lot of detail that we wouldn't have otherwise.

I also want to say thank you to the interns who gave him a hand in preparing this bill. He asked me to mention them—because he thought he had a two-minute response at the end, but he doesn't have that. So thank you to Kieran Lawlor and Elizabeth Haig for all the work that they put in on this.

The OLIP interns are really the unsung soldiers who do a lot of that legwork for us. If it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have a lot of the things done that we need to get done. And a lot of times, they make us look much better than we actually are.

Madam Speaker, I've had some people say to me, "This is about Georgian Bay. It's not necessarily about our riding." I'm going to counter that.

I've referred to my area of Ontario as God's country a number of times, and the reason I have is because we've got a lot of great things. We've got the Canadian Shield. We've got sandy beaches. We've got 250 lakes, and they're all joined by the Trent-Severn Waterway. The Trent-Severn Waterway, for those of you who don't know, joins Lake Ontario to Lake Superior. It was originally designed to transport the Canadian navy from Lake Ontario to Lake Superior without having to go through US territorial waters, in case we were ever at war with the United States. That means that everything that happens in Georgian Bay has an effect all the way down into the Kawarthas. To put it in perspective, lock 18 is the first lock in my riding, and lock 32 is the border between my riding and my colleague's riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock—14 locks on the Trent-Severn Waterway, 250 lakes. So when we're talking about expanded and extruded polystyrene, it has a massive effect in my riding.

I'm going to quote Darek Dawda from Kenora, Ontario. He said, "It is a very important issue that if unaddressed will continue to lead to a cumulative microplastic pollution in our watersheds, which is utterly unnecessary because the alternative safe encased dock billets are readily available."

A lot of people don't think about the microplastics that come from expanded and extruded polystyrene.

Orb Media studied 159 water samples across 14 countries, using both tap water and bottled water, and they found that more than 80% of them had microplastics in them. That's your drinking water. So even if you think that a big chunk of Styrofoam floating in the lake isn't that big a deal, even if you think that the lid off of your worm container floating in the lake isn't a big deal, even if you think it's not a big deal that animals like otters and beavers will burrow into those billets in the winter to keep warm and have it spread out, think about this: 80% of the drinking water that was tested contains microplastics, so you're drinking it.

In my riding, as I said, we have more than 250 lakes. Everything that happens in Lake Superior and everything that happens in Georgian Bay is going to work its way down through my riding and all the way down into Lake Ontario. We're all interconnected that way.

I can't thank the member enough for the amount of work that he's put into this and the amount of time that he has spent, making sure that all of us are well educated on it, having the science backing him up. It's not just an opinion; it's actually scientific fact.

1420

This is one of those bills that, as the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane said, we probably should have been looking at 40 or 50 years ago, when they first authorized using Styrofoam for this purpose. Maybe, had we stopped doing it back then, we wouldn't be in the position that we are today. The member from Guelph mentioned that it's cheaper to prevent than it is to clean up

afterwards. This is a perfect example. We're going to be doing something that is going to stop it from getting any worse. We still have work to do in the efforts of cleaning it up, but we're making that first stop. We're not letting it get any worse. If you think of it like a pendulum swinging on a clock, it's gone as far as it's going to go in one direction, and now we're starting that process of moving it back in the other direction on the cleanup side.

I commend the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka for this, because I think this is one of those bills that crosses all party lines, it's something that's good for everybody in Ontario, and I will be voting very much in favour of this.

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

Mr. Miller, Parry Sound-Muskoka, has moved third reading of Bill 228, An Act to prohibit unencapsulated expanded or extruded polystyrene in floating docks, floating platforms and buoys. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

CONVENIENCE STORE WEEK ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA SEMAINE DES DÉPANNEURS

Mr. Stan Cho moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 262, An Act to proclaim Convenience Store Week /
Projet de loi 262, Loi proclamant la Semaine des
dépanneurs.

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

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

First of all, I would like to thank everybody in the Legislative Assembly for working with my office to put this bill together. This bill would not be possible without the great work from the office of the legislative counsel, the translation team and the legislative researchers. To the Clerks of the Legislative Assembly and the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, your role here in putting this together was invaluable to our democracy, and I want to thank all of you for your very diligent work.

Speaker, it's been 1,071 days since I was elected and we started the 42nd Parliament of this Legislature, and to this day, every time I walk up the front steps, it fills me with honour and with pride, and I understand how privileged I am to be standing in this place to represent the

people of Willowdale. It's a pride and thankfulness that hasn't diminished here in my third year. I know that all members of this House, despite sometimes disagreeing, feel the same way, and I know many members—as I look to some across the way who have been here much longer than me—who I've heard still feel that way here.

Speaker, this bill to establish Convenience Store Week in Ontario means a lot to me personally. It represents why I feel gracious and honoured to serve my community. It reminds me of my parents, my role models by example, and these are values that they taught me that I carry to this day. Speaker, it seems every time I talk about my parents, you seem to be in the chair, and I'm proud to do so. I've told this story, so I'll keep it very brief. My parents immigrated here from South Korea in the 1970s with very little—very little, in fact. So little—and my dad couldn't speak any English and he couldn't find a job. He ended up selling earthworms as fishing bait. I've said that many, many times.

But from there, he ended up getting a little minimum wage job, actually, at a Becker's convenience store just outside of Guelph. He went on to own a Becker's franchise. That was my first memory, really, growing up, and growing up in the corner of that store, playing in that store, doing homework in the backroom of that store.

One of my first memories, too, is remembering seeing my parents wake up at 4 a.m. to go to the local cash and carry to get the freshest produce or the flowers to sell at their store—weekends, working through holidays; it didn't matter. One of them was always at the store and the other one was always taking care of me, and eventually my little sister and my little brother. These were long hours, and these weren't always fun hours.

I grew up, as I said, in my early years in Rexdale, and there weren't many Korean Canadians at the time, even across our country. I remember they went through some very difficult times with racism, just discriminatory behaviour. But what I never saw from them—while I saw tears and while I saw sadness, I never saw them give up. I never saw them lose that resolve, and it's something that carries me through difficult times today.

In our society, we see a wave of anti-Asian racism, unfortunately. I see it in my community. But that gives me strength to get through these difficult times with my constituents, and I tell that story with great pride—that we've been through it before, that love will always beat hate and that we need to get through this together. So I thank my parents for that value that I learned at a very, very young age.

That isn't just my parents, though, who have that story. It's countless people, mom-and-pop shops, hard-working immigrants to this country, who do the same thing, and convenience store owners and their employees are no exception from that. They're some of the hardest-working people I have ever known, that I have ever had the privilege of meeting. They work long hours, just like my parents did, 365 days a year. What we sometimes take for granted is that they're always there. They're always there when we need them—not just for the goods that you need

to purchase, but sometimes just for some advice. They're also your community watch. They're the ones who support our little leagues, coach our teams, sometimes just give you a friendly ear when you need it the most. I want to thank them for that. They truly are pillars in our communities.

We've heard members throughout this House, on all sides of the bench, talk about that very fact. I know a few members, actually, have shared their personal stories when it comes to convenience stores. The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville told everyone in this Legislature that, in fact, his first job was at a convenience store and it led to him finding a new interest in sports, because he was helping customers fill out Pro Line. I thought that was a very cool story.

The MPP from Scarborough–Rouge Park mentioned that after arriving in Canada, his first job was working at a convenience store in Scarborough, and he was grateful to the store owner for giving him that shot, for giving him that chance and the experience of serving his community. For a lot of kids out there looking for a summer job, I'd say working at a convenience store really does teach you the skills that you need for the rest of your life.

We also heard MPPs talk about their connections to convenience stores through their relatives. The MPP for Algoma–Manitoulin shared a very nice story about when he was a young lad, unloading the beer truck at his relative's—I believe it was his uncle's—corner store, and his payment was getting a treat for all of his hard work. And to the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, if you're watching, congratulations on getting paid for your work. I never was at my parents' convenience store, but that's a nice little bonus for you. What a great memory, and I'm sure that the people in Gogama have great stories about JR Corner Store and that time shared there.

Of course, my friend, the member from Barrie–Innisfil, talked about her grandparents coming to Canada as refugees and working at a convenience store, that it gave them a start to a better life—a better life here in Canada, the best country in the world, setting up their opportunities. To the member, I know she mentioned that she appreciated their hard work and their sacrifices, and I can't imagine the pride and joy that her grandparents and her whole family must have to see now that their granddaughter gets to sit here and represent her constituents and continues to do a fantastic job every single day.

Well, I had a very special moment in 2019, and it made me very emotional, actually. It was before the pandemic hit, and I was on Ministry of Finance work for pre-budget consultations, out near Guelph way. I texted my dad and I said, "Hey, dad, what's the address of the old store you used to work in?" I got to go to that store, and I introduced myself. I just told the gentleman there my story—a story I'm very proud of. It brought a tear to his eye, because after I finished he said to me, "I'm from Afghanistan. This store has helped me put my three kids through university." How cool is that, Speaker? The same story that I got to have in my family, now the next generation gets to do as well. And I know that that man has worked tireless hours

like my dad did and will provide his kids a better life than he had. So thank you to you, sir, and congratulations on your success.

1430

In fact, many new Canadians get their first experiences working in convenience stores and small businesses like that throughout Ontario. Having that first chance is crucial for immigrants coming to this great country of ours, who seek that better life. Because I believe that this really is and still remains, to this day, the province of opportunity, the country of opportunity.

We know these small businesses are not only the backbone of our communities; they're the beating heart. So not only do they give these new immigrants a start, but they give them comfort when they need it the most. And as any immigrant to this country will tell you, there are real tough moments when you go to a new place. It's not just not knowing the culture or the language; it's not knowing where to begin, having that sense of uncertainty. I couldn't do it. I don't know how people continue to do it. We all owe them a sense of respect and gratitude for coming here, because they are what helps make this country and this province so great.

I know in this House a couple of members have also mentioned the role of convenience stores in rural Ontario, and we can't forget about that. This is a crucial role that they play outside of our larger urban areas. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about the Dam Depot in Latchford where they have a gas station and they sell beer; and the member from Nickel Belt mentioned how these convenience stores are a one-stop shop and crucial in rural communities to provide everything from fishing lures to winter boots, earth worms, beer, wine. And as I said earlier, these stores, their owners, play a crucial role not in just providing those essential goods and services, but in being your neighbours and your friends when you need advice, your community leaders and people you can just rely on, as I said.

The member from Waterloo mentioned the store offering her family store credits during tough times. I love that story, because I remember the selflessness of my parents when somebody in need came into the store as well. It's not like my parents were rich when I was growing up, but they always taught me that lesson, that whenever you can you help those less fortunate than you. So I really appreciated that story from the member from Waterloo because it's something we share in common.

I can go on; I want to thank all the members who shared their stories. I haven't covered every single one of them.

The member from Mississauga East–Cooksville talked a lot about Kim's Convenience, but I just don't find documentaries that humorous, Speaker. And I've said many times, it should have been Cho's Convenience; it really should have been.

Speaker, there are more than 8,500 convenience stores serving our communities. Most of these are small, family-run stores that employ less than two people. Altogether, these convenience stores employ over 78,000 people across the province and they've long been an integral part of our neighbourhoods and our economy.

Now, like for everyone else over the last year, the past year in particular has been difficult for them. But despite the challenges that COVID-19 has presented, these convenience stores have shown us just how critical a role they play. Throughout the pandemic, they have worked on the front lines. They have continued to provide those essential goods and services, selling masks, PPE and other items. And remember, living in remote or rural areas of Ontario, sometimes these are the only places you can get such supplies.

But equally as important, throughout these challenging times when many are going through social isolation and mental health issues, they also play a role that's maybe tougher to quantify in terms of statistics, because they were there to continue to be that ear that we all need, that interaction, that humanity, that as humans we need. I've heard anecdotally many stories from my family and friends who continue to work as convenience store operators, that they were there for their community and helped each other. That is a role that we cannot diminish throughout these very difficult times. I want to thank them for being here in these important communities.

Speaker, we owe all of our front-line workers, whether that's in hospitals, long-term-care homes, grocery stores or convenience stores, a huge debt of gratitude. They really are the everyday heroes who have kept us safe as we have tried to survive this new normal. This private member's bill is just a small step in thanking every single one of them for their tireless efforts over this past year, and also for their efforts long before the pandemic began.

Let's remember that convenience stores also play a crucial role as our provincial partner in providing, for example, lottery sales. They account for 76% of Ontario's lottery sales, and they work closely with the OLG to return more than \$2 billion to the province each year in non-tax revenue—revenue that's used to invest in our world-class health care system, our education system, our community centres, our post-secondary education institutions. This is a critical role that they play, in a fiscal sense.

As the point of sale for many age-restricted products like tobacco—well, they're our gatekeepers. And I will tell you, the compliance rates you see with these small business operators are much higher than larger establishments. If you ever meet Mrs. Cho and try to do something untoward, you're not going to get away with it; I know I didn't. So it makes sense that these compliance rates are much higher than some of the larger companies. This is a vital role: to keep contraband items or illegal items for minors out of the hands of minors, and that includes tobacco. A 96.2% compliance rate, I might add, is much higher than other retail channels.

Of course, we will continue to work towards getting beverage alcohol in our convenience stores, as well. We know there will be a vital role for these convenience stores to play. Of course, we expect that compliance rate of 96.2% when it comes to tobacco to be reasonably extended towards beverage alcohol, as well. I know, as members, we've talked about this. The member from Niagara Falls has talked about the importance of the alcohol sector in his

riding—and that’s the case throughout our province. We have some of the best local producers—craft cideries, craft breweries. I know the member from Barrie–Innisfil has a ton of amazing craft beers. Not only should we all be trying these amazing products in Ontario; we should be making them available. These are job creators. They support our farmers. I’m proud to be born and raised in Ontario. We should be supporting the jobs here that are created from the alcohol sector. So I look forward to that day— hopefully soon—when we are able to put beer and wine in those corner stores, because they deserve it, and the communities deserve it.

Speaker, I know I’m limited in time. I could go on about convenience stores and the important role they play, but in the time remaining, I would like to make the case to everyone in the Legislature to please vote in favour of this bill.

I only found this out recently, actually, but it turns out that I’m the first Canadian-born person of Korean descent to take any seat in political office at any level in our country.

Applause.

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you. I’m really proud of that, but I don’t say that as a reason you should vote for this bill. I only mention that because I’m not here for any other reason than for my parents, and I haven’t been able to see them in a while. It reminds me of why this is a place of opportunity, of why Ontario is the best place to live. This is a story of the proud child of immigrants. This is a story of a family who came here with nothing—and now we could potentially have a law as a result of the story they brought here. And it’s the story of countless Canadian families, Ontario families, that reaffirms what we all know, despite our political differences in this Legislature: that we do indeed live in the best place on the planet, that we are indeed the province of opportunity, and it should stay that way not just today, but for generations to come.

Please vote in favour of this bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s always an honour to be able to rise in this House—and today, to speak on Bill 262, Convenience Store Week Act, brought forward by the member from Willowdale, on third reading. I enjoyed listening to his remarks. I’d like to congratulate him on his new-found information. His story is the story of many people across Canada and across this province. It’s very important.

1440

I’ve also said it in this place many times, but we are all products of where we grew up. One of the great things about this Legislature is we all come from different backgrounds. I once said—and no offence to the lawyers and poli sci grads, but I thought everyone here would come from a law family and political science. We don’t, and, actually, that’s one of the strengths of this place, that we all bring what we learned.

When listening to the member from Willowdale, growing up with parents with a convenience store is a lot like

growing up on a farm. Things have to be done. You go early, you go long, and you’re with your family. They’re not exactly the same, but a lot of the feelings that you emoted in your speech, in your remarks—I felt them personally. We disagree on lots of issues, but on that, I think convenience stores do play an incredible role.

When I was thinking about what I was going to say today, I looked at the map of my riding. I thought, “I’m going to name them all, all along Highway 11 and Highway 17.” I thought, “No, I will make someone angry, and it will take a lot longer than I have time for.” But you will know, if you’re coming—someday, when we can travel again, we are all going to travel a lot, because we are all travel-hungry; we can all feel it. When you’re coming up Highway 11 and you see the Trapper Trading Post in Marten River, you’re in Timiskaming–Cochrane. The next one is the Temagami Petro-Can. The next one I mentioned in my remarks to the second reading of this bill: the Latchford Dam Depot.

I talk about the Latchford Dam Depot because I live very close to the Latchford Dam Depot, and whenever I need something when I’m driving down here in the morning and I forgot to get gas to get here, I can stop at the Latchford Dam Depot at 6:30 in the morning and fill up. Something for groceries, bait, almost anything, you can get at the Latchford Dam Depot.

The operator of the Latchford Dam Depot, Ami Cheema—I’ve had some great conversations with him, too. We have lots of great things in northern Ontario, but we have a few things that you need to be prepared for. One of them is mosquitoes around the May long weekend or a little bit after.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Blackflies.

Mr. John Vanthof: And blackflies. I was getting gas and Ami was helping me get gas. It was pretty bad with the mosquitoes. I said something about the mosquitoes and he said, “You’ve never been to India, have you?” And we discussed the differences. I have to say, it was a pretty fantastic conversation. Once in a while in Latchford, it can hit minus 40, and I said, “You’ve never had that in India either, have you?”

But he and his wife have become an integral part of that community. It’s an incredible part of that community. We, the people of Latchford, quite frankly, can’t live without him and without the Dam Depot. That’s how big a part of the community he is. And Latchford isn’t unique; Latchford is one of many, many communities where people get up at 4 o’clock in the morning so when there are people like me—who think we get up early and show up at 6:30—and there’s something that we need, it’s there, and there’s a smile there. And when we’re coming back and it’s 7 o’clock at night and we forgot something else, they’re still there. That’s incredible.

The fact that people can come here, as my parents did, as the member from Willowdale’s did, as Ami did, and build a life in this country is truly incredible. It’s worthy of us to say we fully support this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to be able to speak about it.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: I didn't intend to speak today, but I was very interested. It's always great to hear private member's bills and the debate that goes on; and you hear about people's pasts.

The member from Willowdale made me think back—I had forgotten all about it. My wife managed a Becker's store when we were first married. I remember about the early hours, doing the inventory. I used to go over and help a bit—not much; I used to get in the way, she said.

But anyway, I think the member from Willowdale's and the other stories we heard here could only happen in Canada, and I'm glad you brought that up.

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

Mr. Cho (Willowdale) has moved third reading of Bill 262, An Act to proclaim Convenience Store Week. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

Third reading agreed to.

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DU PATRIMOINE PHILIPPIN

Ms. Begum moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month / Projet de loi 217, Loi proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine philippin.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Mabuhay and Eid Mubarak. It is an absolute honour and pleasure to be able to move third reading of this bill and see this move through the final stage. Today is particularly special for me personally because today, we are celebrating Eid, a day that is special for our community.

Before I begin, Speaker, I wish to take a moment to say Es salaam aleikom. To everyone celebrating here in Ontario and across the world, Eid Mubarak.

Today marks the end of a 30-day journey for our Muslim brothers and sisters, who fast from dawn to sunset. On this spiritual journey, we're reminded of the importance of endurance, charity and forgiveness. Facing this pandemic and its many hardships with love and patience has brought us together as a community, even as we stay apart. This beautiful time is a constant reminder that we must always be ready to make sacrifices and offer kindness at all times to keep our loved ones, our families, our friends and our community safe.

Truly, it is in what we are separated from that we find what we most value. I miss being able to gather in person and celebrating this joyous occasion with our local Scarborough Southwest Muslim family. I miss the hugs, or kulakulis; sharing the treats with all our neighbours; and the large Eid jamaat at the park or our local masjids. But

inshallah, very soon, we will be able to gather and celebrate together.

It is in this spirit that despite our recent struggles, the lessons of sacrifice and patience must not be forgotten. This Eid, let's also remember our brothers and sisters around the world who continue to suffer. In the face of injustice, we must rise to the occasion and offer love and compassion to all those who are oppressed. Be it violence or the pandemic, our love is our strength. On behalf of my family and our legislative family here—I think I can say that—I wish everyone celebrating a blessed Eid-Ul-Fitr. Eid Mubarak.

It is an honour to stand here today on behalf of the resilient and hard-working people of Scarborough Southwest and speak for the third reading debate of Bill 217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month in Ontario. While I'm the one who put this bill forward, this bill is not just mine; it is a product of years of organizing, advocacy and hard work from the Filipino Canadian community. This bill has been brought forward numerous times by many of my colleagues, and today's milestone is a result of the resilience and perseverance we have seen from the Filipino Canadian community, who have been trying to make this happen for years. I am delighted to see that we can work together to bring this much-deserved win for the community.

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Filipino Canadians are an important, vibrant part of our social, economic and political fabric. Their contribution is immense, and especially throughout COVID-19, we have seen how they have supported Ontario. Many have been on the front lines as health care workers, fighting this virus and keeping Ontarians safe. They have faced the risks of this pandemic head-on. We have lost lives like Christine Mandegarian, a Filipino Canadian personal support worker from Scarborough—who put their lives and livelihoods on the line to fight for Ontarians during this pandemic. We must remember their lives and their work.

As we talk about Filipino health care workers, I would be remiss not to mention Carlo Escario, a hemodialysis assistant from Toronto General Hospital, who has been working directly with COVID-19 patients on the front lines and working in our health care system for over a decade. While Mr. Escario dedicated his time and work to keeping Ontarians safe, yesterday we learned that he was being deported. As a health care worker, he received his first dose of the vaccine and was now facing deportation to another country, without being able to complete his vaccine series. The entire situation was heartbreaking. It was shameful to see us take the labour and hard work of Filipino Canadians like Carlo and fail to stand up for them. But thanks to the collective efforts of the Filipino Canadians organizing, this morning we learned that Carlo's deportation has been delayed. He will be able to get his second life-saving shot. But none of this would have been possible without the strength and push from the Filipino community. The way community members like Karla Villanueva Danan and Monica de Vera and many others organized in numbers here is truly impressive. It speaks

volumes to the strength and the heart of this community. The Filipino community is immensely close-knit, and they show up for one another every time, and this was yet another amazing, heartwarming example of that.

Speaker, Scarborough Southwest is home to many Filipino Canadians, and I have the pleasure of working closely with the community, with their leaders, youth and many elders. The Filipino Canadian community has always been welcoming. They were extremely dedicated as they helped me learn about their country, the people, the culture, the language, and as we worked on this bill, I had the opportunity to make some amazing friends, as well.

In highlighting the linguistic diversity in the Filipino community, Mr. Tony San Juan, the former president of Philippine Teachers Association of Canada and the chairman of the Filipino Heritage Council of Canada, said the following: “Filipino is both our national identity and our official national language ever since the passage and ratification of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. As the seat of the national (central) government and where major political and economic activities are mostly carried out in metro Manila, Tagalog is popularly used.

“Tagalog, though a predominant language, is one of the major bases of the Filipino national language. There are also other major languages spoken by millions of Filipinos, such as Ilocano, Bisaya, Bikol, Panganense and Kapam-pangan, among others. Filipino language, as currently developed and being commonly spoken and written, is using various local dialects, including Tagalog and foreign-language influences known as ‘derived, borrowed or loaned words’ from Spain, USA, China, India, Indonesia, Japan and many other Asian countries.”

I thank Mr. San Juan for sharing his words and for his continuous support.

I also want to thank, and especially thank, my friend Paulina Corpuz, from the Philippine Independence Day Council and PATAAC, and her husband, Ben Corpuz, the chair of the Filipino Workers Network and Kababayan Multicultural Centre, who have been strong leaders in advocating in the community for labour rights, community empowerment and youth engagement, and strong advocates for passing this bill. To Paulina and Ben, congratulations.

During the second reading of this bill, I was also able to highlight the many more important community leaders and advocates who have done an incredible amount of work for years to bring this bill forward.

I also want to recognize Mr. Steve Pagao, the president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, for his dedication, his work in supporting local businesses during this difficult time and for the support he has shown.

I also want to thank Benjamin Bongolan, from the Canadian Urban Institute, who is also the nephew of his uncle Tobias Enverga, the first Canadian Filipino senator, who recently died in 2019.

I also want to recognize Marissa Corpus, the national spokesperson for the Malaya Movement in Canada, as well as a journalist for a Filipino Canadian outlet.

Speaker, there are many more, including Grace Sabilano, Richmond Uy, Daniela Salcedo, Veronica

Javier, Julius Naredo, and many more incredible local leaders doing great works in our community. I am so thankful for their contributions and their support. I thank you for giving me the honour and privilege of being the carrier of this bill and for making me a part of your family. I am grateful to God for giving me the opportunity to represent such an amazingly diverse riding and incredibly hard-working community.

I also want to thank my colleagues who have spoken and supported this bill from all sides of the House, and to my colleagues who have spoken against anti-Asian hate. This recognition and this work is beyond politics, and I thank all members for their continuous support.

I also want to thank, from the bottom of my heart—a big thank you—to my incredible team, without whom I would not be able to do the difficult but fulfilling work that I do. I especially want to thank Mayeesha Chowdhury and Stephane Hamade from my office, and from our community engagement team, Jennifer Barrett and Komal Hossain for all your tireless efforts, from the introduction of this bill to where we are today. Thank you.

This is something the community has fought for, for years. This acknowledgement has been long awaited. As we pass this bill today, I hope it will enhance the ability for all of us to be closer in touch with our roots and to our heritage and our culture, and carry that with our younger generation.

So, let us come together to vote for Bill 217. And this year, on June 12, when the Filipino communities celebrate Philippine Independence Day, they will also celebrate the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. Thank you. Mabuhay. God bless you all.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, it’s an honour to rise today and speak on behalf of this bill, but I just wanted to say that the words that I’m about to say are not mine. They belong to Candice Coates, who is not only a really good friend of mine, whom I’ve known since I was 19, and is Filipino, but she’s also my executive assistant and works in my constituency office. She was very excited about this bill and she has written something for me to say in the House. And so these words are coming from Candice. And Candice, I know you’re watching. Hi, and you’re the best.

Candice says, “July 5, 2005, will always be a memorable day for me. I remember crossing the Canadian border in Niagara from New York and how much of a tourist we all were as we took photos by Niagara Falls and the excitement of going to all the attractions.

“Fast-forward five years later, we became Canadian citizens and we now call this place home.

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“Like many immigrants headed west, my parents were driven by their own set of dreams and circumstances. They wanted to give my sister and I a choice to be who we wanted to be in this world; however we chose to define that. They gave us a shot at the life they always wanted for us.

“Thanks to the risks they took, we have the privilege of living in one of the world’s most progressive and socially inclusive country, eventually living in one of the world’s most diverse provinces.

“Living in a new country comes with many sacrifices. It is not always easy to leave a world behind which you have always known your entire life and to move to a new place with people and cultures different than yours. I was lucky enough to be able to have met friends who helped me feel at home, but in the beginning, it was scary and was isolating at times.” Candice, you’re probably referring to me with “met friends.” I’m just going to put that in there.

“When we moved here, my parents were under working visas, while my sister and I were under student visas. We lived with my uncle and his family in Brampton for the first few months until my parents were able to find a home in Markham.

“My parents knew some friends from the Philippines who had moved here but for the most part, it was just my uncle’s family. Our weekends were filled with drives around Ontario, from Port Elgin all the way to Ottawa. We wanted to see and learn about Ontario as it was our way of feeling at home.

“For all the sacrifices my parents made to create the opportunities we have now, the one thing we never had to sacrifice was our culture and heritage. The thing that makes this country, this province, great is that our otherness does not make us less than—in fact, it just made us feel more Canadian.

“Going to school here in Ontario, I was proud to tell people that I am Filipino and to share with them about my heritage. Although there were not a lot of Filipinos in my class, it just made me feel more empowered to share about what it is like to be a Filipino immigrant. Every time I meet a fellow Filipino, my Filipino accent comes out and without a thought, I start speaking Tagalog. I always try to ask where in the Philippines they are from and you feel more of a connection with them when you find out they are from Manila, where I am from.

“As an immigrant, you try to hold on to anything that reminds you of where you came from, and for me it is the traditions and the celebrations back home that I remember as a child—putting up your parol on your windowsill during Christmas season or eating pancit on your birthday to celebrate long life.

“When my family and I received our Canadian citizenship in 2010, it was a milestone for us. It was everything that my family dreamt for us. This milestone was even more embraced when we were able to have dual citizenship—we are now living the Filipino Canadian dream.

“As a Filipino Canadian, to be able to share my Filipino heritage with everyone in my life, especially with my two children, is most important and very emotional.

“Teaching my children to speak Tagalog and teaching them Filipino traditions so that they can carry with them a part of their heritage; I realize how lucky I am that I live in a country, in a province, that allows me to practise, express and share my heritage without prejudice and embarrassment.

“Living in Ontario has given me a lot of opportunities that I never thought I would have had. I was able to attend school at the University of Toronto, where I met one of my best friends, MPP Goldie Ghamari”—that’s me—“whom I get to have the pleasure of working with every day! I got to meet my husband, Josh, whom I have two wonderful children with. I got to move to Ottawa and find a place to call our home.

“I never thought I would get this opportunity to write and tell my story, but as I do, I am reminded that our province is a province of immigrants, many of whom took risks similar to my family, to create a better life for themselves and their children. And, like my parents, they came to the right place.

“Today, 16 years since we first moved to Canada, I want to give thanks to my papa and mama, Albert and Sophie Apostol, for integrating our Filipino culture into our life here in Canada, so I can pass that on to my own children.

“Most of all, thank you for making the biggest sacrifice—leaving your family, leaving your country, leaving everything you ever knew all to give my sister and I” the chance for “the life you never had.

“Thank you for taking a chance on Canada and for choosing Ontario.

“I love you both and maraming salamat po.”

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: Mabuhay and Eid Mubarak. It’s an honour for me to stand on behalf of the decent and hard-working people of York South–Weston, and it is my pleasure—and, in fact, an honour—to rise today to speak to Bill 217, brought forward by my colleague from Scarborough Southwest. I want to thank her for bringing forward this bill, making Filipino Heritage Month, on behalf of Filipino Canadians in my riding of York South–Weston and across Ontario.

Ontario is fortunate to have over 300,000 Filipino Canadians making this province their home. Bill 217 looks to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month, and this represents the work Filipino community members have sought for years.

June 12, of course, is celebrated internationally by the Filipino community as Filipino Independence Day, and the month of June is recognized by the federal government as Filipino Heritage Month. It is high time that, provincially, we honour and recognize the enormous Filipino community contribution to our province by passing Bill 217 and declaring June Filipino Heritage Month in Ontario.

In my riding of York South–Weston, we are fortunate to be home to a growing Filipino community. As the youth opportunities critic, I see Filipino youth being very much involved in their communities. Their influence and contribution to the arts, culture and food scene is undeniable. A hard work ethic, strong bond and importance of family and community are hallmarks of the Filipino community, and we could all be better served as a society by following that model.

York South–Weston is home to a great many essential front-line workers. Many of those workers keeping our province moving are from the Filipino community. We need to recognize that the hard work and sacrifices made by Filipino people in health care during this pandemic were largely represented by women. Nurses, personal support workers, dietary aides, caregivers and cleaners in long-term care, retirement homes and hospitals, as well as home care, are significantly from the Filipino community.

We need to give those workers and the Filipino community more than just thanks; we need to recognize that when we talk about the military report into long-term care or the recent report by the Auditor General into the horrible conditions and understaffed working conditions that those essential workers deal with on a daily basis, we need to do right by those workers, and we have clearly not done that. Essential workers are still awaiting pandemic pay, and having to work more than one part-time job in terrible conditions is unacceptable. Women, and Filipino women in particular, bear the brunt of this hardship. The government needs to move on showing these workers the respect they need and the working and pay conditions they deserve.

In my riding of York South–Weston, the pandemic has hit our community hard. We have been neglected in COVID testing access and COVID vaccine access. That is shameful. We have also been dealing with evictions and renovations of tenants during this very unstable time. I am proud to report that the Filipino community has come together to advocate for tenants in our community, and two people of many come immediately to mind.

I would like to give thanks to and recognize Rose Emas and Ainess Gacutan for their tremendous advocacy on fighting for tenants in their eviction and renovation struggles in York South–Weston. It is particularly telling that when we are in the midst of a terrible pandemic and an unstable economic time, with a government that has done little to help workers, families and small businesses, the Filipino community comes together even stronger to advocate for their community and look out for one another. I am deeply grateful for the care they give to York South–Weston and across the province.

Madam Speaker, I will mention as well the contributions of a former colleague of mine, Rowena Santos, a dedicated community activist who is the first Filipino Canadian elected in the city of Brampton.

I recognize that recently the pandemic has brought rise to an increase in anti-Asian racism, which has also impacted the Filipino Canadian community in Ontario. We in the official opposition strongly condemn that racism and continue to urge the government to do more to fight to put an end to anti-Asian racism and systemic discrimination.

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We have before us, with Bill 217, an opportunity to speak loudly to the Filipino community in Ontario, that we celebrate, honour and value their enormous contributions to the social fabric of this province. We cannot thank the Filipino Canadian community enough, and I will proudly

be supporting Bill 217 and officially proclaiming the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. Thank you. Salamat.

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

Mr. Aris Babikian: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to stand up here and address a very important initiative, a very important bill to declare Filipino Heritage Month. I am here today to speak on behalf of the large number of my constituents who are of Filipino descent.

I am very impressed with the Filipino community and families' tight relationships, the principle to stand with family and faith, because I'm amazed at how dedicated they are to their family members and to their faith. Unfortunately, the stereotype that we have about the Filipino community is that they are home caregivers and nothing more than that. But unfortunately, or fortunately, that is a misconception which we need to correct, and this bill is one way to address that misconception and this stereotype.

I remember very vividly when I was a citizenship judge, and during the oath ceremonies, when I looked at the audience, usually we had close to 100, 120 people in the audience coming to take oaths. Of course, we had diverse communities, diverse backgrounds and religions etc. But when I looked at the audience in whole, I immediately recognized the Filipino community members and families, because when I looked at the audience, I saw how seriously the Filipino community take that oath. It is something they cherish so much, that they are becoming a Canadian citizen, and they are proud of it. From the way the entire family is attending those ceremonies—well-dressed and very well-behaved. On the other hand, in our audience during those oath ceremonies, I saw many people with caps and, unfortunately, sometimes with shorts. That shows the immense respect that the Filipino community has for our country.

And their contribution: I also enjoy so many of their cultural events, heritage events. One of my good friends, Senator Enverga—unfortunately, he passed away very early. I enjoyed very much having discussions on multiculturalism, on Canadian diversity. I'm glad to say that I continued that very intellectual conversation with his wife, Rosemer, and she's very active.

I attended so many of the Filipino community Christmas celebrations, their heritage week and Filipino week in Scarborough, in North York. I am proud to have such dedicated members of my diverse community. When I was knocking on doors, I met so many of them. When you talk to them, they express their love and their respect for Canada, for Ontario and what our country provided them: a new lease on life.

I am very proud to stand here to support this bill and celebrate Filipino heritage in more significant, more substantial ways and means. Unfortunately, COVID doesn't allow us to do it now, but the timing of this bill is important. It is an important bill because, unfortunately, we have seen, because of COVID-19, a very tiny minority

in our society, bigoted people—they started venting their anger, their frustration on our peaceful citizens from the Asian community. We need to stand up together, regardless if it is the Filipinos, the Chinese, the Koreans, Tamils or any other South Asian community. We are equal partners in this society, and we need to support our Asian brothers and sisters and neighbours. This bill is one way to send a message to those bigoted people that we will not tolerate such behaviour. We have zero tolerance to racism, xenophobia and prejudice.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for providing me the opportunity to speak on this issue.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I am truly pleased to be able to rise to speak today to my colleague from Scarborough Southwest's bill, which would designate June as Filipino Heritage Month.

Ontario is home to over 300,000 people of Filipino descent. That's 40% of all Filipino Canadians in this country. Filipino Canadians have found a home in Ontario to build their lives, and our province benefits greatly from their contributions.

Throughout this pandemic, Filipino Canadians have worked on the front lines in hospitals, nursing and retirement homes. Over 5% of all health care workers in Canada are Filipino Canadians, and over 90% of migrant caregivers are Filipino as well. This community has taken care of others during this pandemic, even when they were not taken care of—like how many still don't have access to the paid sick days that they so need.

The Ontario government has recognized the importance of Filipino Canadians to our province. Just recently, the government asked the Philippines to help and to send health care workers here to Ontario. The first few people who were vaccinated in our province were Filipino health care workers. I doubt Ontario's health care system would function without the contributions of Filipino Canadians.

Many of our front-line and essential workers outside of health care and caregiving are from this community as well. I know I speak for the residents of Hamilton Mountain when I say we are so very grateful for the contributions of the Filipino community, during this pandemic and before. We owe this community so much.

This bill we're debating today provides us an opportunity to celebrate Filipino Canadians and their culture and heritage. I know first-hand that it is a very rich culture. I've been invited to participate in festivities with our local Filipino community in Hamilton Mountain, and there is no doubt that they know how to celebrate and how to have a good time.

I have attended many a party with the Hamilton Filipino seniors: birthday parties, anniversary parties, Christmas parties, summer barbecues and, of course, June 12, which is Filipino independence day. There is always so much food, tons of music, so much dancing and usually a lot of karaoke. Speaker, they are lovely, wonderful people who have I adopted me into their families, and I am always so grateful to them and for them.

1520

In particular, I want to mention Ruby Amog, who is the president of the United Filipino Canadian Seniors Association of Hamilton, who I've known for years and who is a local leader in the Filipino community in my riding. I look forward to the time that we can be at in-person events again, so that I can experience their vibrant culture once again with my community members.

This bill comes at such an important time in our province. As anti-Asian racism is on the rise across our country and North America, it is important that we take a stand against it and introduce legislation that recognizes and celebrates Asian cultures. We need to elevate the voices of the Filipino community and to fight back against anyone or any group that thinks that there is no place in our community or in our province. We must always fight anti-Asian racism in all of its forms.

This bill today is a small part of working against this horrible rising trend. The community has been pushing for this recognition for years. I believe we have seen several bills come before this House to proclaim Filipino Heritage Month. I am so thrilled and would love to congratulate the member from Scarborough Southwest for finally getting it done and ensuring that the community will have the recognition that they need and deserve—and this time just in time for June, to be able to celebrate that great time. So congratulations to the member, and thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to share in my Filipino community in Hamilton Mountain.

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

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I rise in support of Filipino Heritage Month, and I thank the member for introducing it. Filipinos have been making meaningful marks and meaningful history in Canada, especially in Ontario, for decades, within fields like education, research, visual arts, entertainment, sports and, of course, politics. The late Honourable Tobias Enverga was the first Filipino appointed to be part of the Senate and is just one example of many. He was also part of the Toronto District School Board as a trustee.

In Barrie–Innisfil, we have Elmer Flores, president of Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie, and of course, we've got Mely Titus, who is the president of Bayanihan Club of Simcoe County. These two organizations are making sure that Filipinos, especially the youth and Filipinos by heart, will be enriched with their roots by conducting different cultural events. They also give assistance to Filipino families that just migrated here to Canada, and through different ways they help them land a job. For example, Rolando, who is currently working as part of my team and, of course, helped me with my remarks today, has been a great addition, so thank you, Rolando—a big shout-out to you if you're watching.

The two groups I mentioned also conduct seminars in partnership with Migrants Resource Centre Canada, which was founded and led by a Filipino, Jesson Reyes, and aims to improve the lives of migrant and immigrant workers by advancing their rights and dignity while working and

living here in Canada towards full participation in Canadian society.

In Barrie–Innisfil, we also have the Filipino ministry of Heritage Baptist Church in Barrie, who celebrated their third anniversary just a few months ago. I want to thank Pastor Elmer for all his work at the church, and his wife, Shirley Norella.

I also want to mention a lot of the Filipinos who are part of our health sector and have been sacrificing a lot during these challenging times. I mentioned him a few times, but Edwin Ng was fighting for his life on a ventilator at Royal Victoria hospital. I'm pleased to announce to this Legislature that after undergoing a lung transplant, he is making his way to a full post-COVID recovery. I want to give a shout-out to his family and the workers he has worked with, because I know they have been praying for him quite a bit.

I also want to talk about the PSWs we have at IOOF; for example, the ones I have spoken to recently over the holidays: Gloria, Ida, Helen, Zeny, Analyn, Mary Ann and Addy. Thank you for everything that you're doing at IOOF. As they know, and I speak about this quite a bit, the Philippines has always been close to my heart ever since I was in high school when my best friend and I organized a fundraiser to help with a disastrous typhoon that had hit, to help with relief efforts.

Since then, since those early years, I became more involved in the Filipino community in the Barrie–Innisfil area. And at every single event they have I know you will always be able to witness the great atmosphere that they provide, whether it's cultural, talking about their country, their great food—but more importantly, the meaning of “kababayan,” meaning, of course, “fellow” for the Filipinos. They exercise “bayanihan,” their spirit of civic unity, in every way that you can really imagine. Up until now Filipinos never really ceased to amaze me. It's incredible how much they've done.

Filipino Heritage Month, if passed, will not only bring knowledge to all Ontarians about Filipinos' rich culture, but also the positive impacts of their contributions to our economy, their sacrifices during this pandemic and so much more. Mabuhay to all the Filipinos in Barrie–Innisfil and Ontario. Maraming Salamat.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Speaker, kamusta ka po? And magandang hapon to everybody in the Legislature today.

I'm going to just keep my comments very brief, because I think my colleagues across the way and on the government benches have explained very eloquently the reasons why Bill 217 has incredible merit and why they will be voting in favour of it. I will also be voting in favour of it. I would vote multiple times if I could. Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this forward.

We've talked about a multitude of reasons why this is a noble bill and should be passed. We talked about culture, community leaders and contributions made to our great society and communities. A few weeks ago, with Persian

Heritage Month, I went into some great deal about tahdig, and at the risk of becoming the Food Network's MPP, I think we need to dive a little deeper into the food discussion around the Filipino community.

The member from Hamilton Mountain brought up how fun the Filipino barbecues are; amen to that. If you are ever near Earl Bales Park, sort of on the edge of my riding, during the summer months when the weather allows, you will smell something that—just close your eyes and follow your nose, you will end up at a Filipino barbecue. A lot of that has to do with adobo sauce: soy-based, sweet, acidic. You put it on anything from chicken thighs, to vegetables, to short ribs, and then you leave it for a couple of days, and then grill on a charcoal flame. The umami taste you get off of the combination of flavours and that smokiness off the grill: you will smell it kilometres and kilometres away; fantastic.

Interjection: You're making me hungry.

Mr. Stan Cho: I don't want to make anybody hungry, but there are a lot of dishes we need to talk about.

Another one is lechon liempo. Now, bear with me on this one: You buy a slab of pork belly, a deboned piece, and you score the meat, crosshatch it. Then you rub it down with some garlic, some lemongrass, some red onions, some scallions. You add some other herbs and spices and then you roll it over so the skin is on the outside and you tie it with butcher's twine.

And then, low and slow, put it in the oven and cook it for three and a half to four hours, and then the last half-hour you crank up the heat. Speaker, what happens is the outside skin starts to get very, very crispy. You take it out of the oven and you let it rest for 15 minutes, and then you take a fork and you just rub it across the top of that skin. It's like a musical instrument. It's just a thing of beauty to your ears. It's one of the best things I'll ever try. Google the recipe later; it's fantastic.

Finally, because we're going into the warmer months and we have hope on the horizon that we'll be able to celebrate outdoors soon, I have to talk about halo-halo. It's like a shaved ice sundae. You have a layer of fruit on the bottom, some shaved ice, some sweet red bean, evaporated milk and then a taro ice cream scoop on top. If you're ever at Taste of Manila and you're wondering what that beautiful shaved ice dessert is, it's halo-halo. “Hah-lo, hah-lo” is the pronunciation. And the beauty is, you don't have to eat it quickly, because if you let it melt in the warm weather it turns into this milkshake consistency, Speaker.

If you don't know where to get these things, they're readily available in Willowdale. Give me a call. I'd be happy to give you a tour. But absolutely, I will be voting in favour of Bill 217. Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this bill forward.

1530

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

Ms. Begum has moved third reading of Bill 217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? 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): I recognize the deputy government House leader on a point of order.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find we can see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The deputy government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Is it agreed? Agreed. Okay, so it is now 6.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE AMENDMENT ACT (SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS IN THEIR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES WITH ASSISTIVE DEVICES FOR MENTAL HEALTH), 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE (APPUYER LES PARTICULIERS À LA MAISON ET DANS LA COLLECTIVITÉ GRÂCE À DES APPAREILS ET ACCESSOIRES FONCTIONNELS POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE)

Mr. Kernaghan moved second reading of the following bill:

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 / *Projet de loi 277, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne les appareils et accessoires fonctionnels destinés à appuyer, à la maison et dans la collectivité, les particuliers ayant des besoins en matière de santé mentale.*

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

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It is an honour to rise today and speak about the importance of my bill, Bill 277. We have an opportunity to help Ontarians address their mental health challenges. I think everyone has a new appreciation for the importance of maintaining and respecting their mental health since this pandemic began. We all know someone who has struggled with their mental health during this difficult time, or perhaps we've even experienced it ourselves. The uncertainty, fear and isolation of this last year has been tough on everyone.

Throughout this pandemic and over the last several years, Ontarians have become more open about their

mental health struggles. Awareness campaigns have led to Ontarians having more honest and frank conversations about their mental well-being. By sharing our mental health challenges, we've collectively worked to destigmatize mental health issues and illnesses. However, despite this important step forward, these conversations have not always led to the concrete policies and the systemic change we need to improve our mental health.

Today, this House has the opportunity to take concrete steps to give Ontarians with mental health struggles a helping hand. It's critical that we pass this bill because too many people in the province of Ontario do not get the mental health support that they need. There simply aren't enough options for supports, treatment and care. That was true before the pandemic, and it's particularly true now that the number of Ontarians struggling with mental health issues is on the rise. I'm asking the House to pass this bill today so we can help even more Ontarians struggling with mental needs to lead fuller, more independent and safer lives.

If passed, this bill would extend the Assistive Devices Program to cover mental health devices and any associated data costs with them. This would cover devices which allow patients to virtually access medical and counselling appointments, relay their heart rate, physical activity and sleep data to health care providers, and automatically dispense medications on schedule. It would keep people safely in their homes, receiving care, instead of waiting in hospital hallways.

This bill tackles two problems: giving Ontarians struggling with mental health needs access to assistive devices that will help them manage their mental health, and helping end the cycle of crisis and hospitalization that strains our health care system. I'm confident this bill will achieve these notable goals because we have substantial research studies from health researchers in my city of London demonstrating its clear impacts.

Dr. Cheryl Forchuk of the Lawson Health Research Institute has spent years researching the benefits of providing assistive devices to Ontarians with mental health needs. Beginning in 2014-15, health researchers started to examine how smart phone apps could help people monitor their own health. Findings from this study discovered that outpatient visits dropped by 44% and psychiatric care admissions dropped by 20% when patients had access to these apps.

Dr. Forchuk's subsequent research expanded on these findings by installing "smart home" assistive devices into the homes of patients with mental health needs. Participants included those with a range of various mood, anxiety and psychotic disorders, with some suffering from chronic pain. The assistive devices provided to patients varied depending on need, but included a medication dispenser that administered doses at prescribed times, video conferencing technology to meet with doctors and nurses, tools to monitor their moods, and an interface to help organize their day-to-day activities. Additionally, these devices could monitor other health indicators such as heart rate, sleep, and physical activity information.

Findings from these research studies demonstrated clearly that assistive devices can help those struggling with mental health needs. Ontarians with assistive devices for their mental health said that they felt more empowered, more mobile, more integrated into their communities and less isolated. The assistive devices also supported greater independent living, greater self-care and less pain. In fact, nearly 80% of study participants found assistive devices for their mental health needs improved their overall health. The studies are clear.

Overcoming feelings of isolation and being alone is a critical step forward for those with mental health struggles. When your mental health worsens, it's easy to feel as if nobody cares for you, and then you may stop caring for yourself.

Paula Rawlinson, a member of the patients' council at St. Joseph's Parkwood mental health institute, said, "A lot of people do not have anyone to rely on except themselves, due to poor family connections, poor socialization skills, even poor self-esteem that prevents them from having developed a proper network of support."

These assistive devices helped participants avoid these feelings by providing constant support. Dr. Forchuk noted that those with assistive devices could wake up in the morning and the monitor would come up with the things they needed to remember that day, in addition to putting them in touch with their care provider as needed. By helping provide for their mental health needs, participants were better able to track their own health and were motivated to lead healthier lives. This has been particularly true during the pandemic. These devices allowed participants higher levels of community integration by keeping in touch with family, friends and their health care providers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

The devices used in these studies also included medicine dispensers, which helped remind participants to consistently take their medicine at the appropriate times. This is particularly useful for patients with severe mental illnesses such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, who tend to need additional support. Dr. Forchuk said that their treatment regimens are often complex, and their conditions can affect memory and make organizing, self-monitoring and problem-solving difficult. Assistive devices therefore helped participants by doing that work for them and ensured consistent and timely access to the medications these folks need. Sure enough, Dr. Forchuk's study found that in instances where medication dispensers were used, no medication doses were missed.

Empowering Ontarians with mental health struggles is reason enough to pass this bill, but by empowering people with assistive devices to care for their own mental health, we can help end the cycle of crisis and hospitalization that too many with mental health struggles find themselves in.

Dr. Forchuk's research found that those who had access to an assistive device decreased the number of visits they made to a social service provider or the hospital emergency department. Instead of relying on emergency hospital services as usual, the study found that participants increased the number of telephone appointments with care providers. This kept participants safely at home and helped

them to not reach that crisis point that could result in hospitalization. This alone is critically important for our patients, but also for our overburdened hospital system. Mental health requests have been a huge contributor to this province's hallway medicine crisis.

In my city of London, we actually have more mental health patients than beds available to them. Before the pandemic, in 2019, there were more mental health patients than beds at Victoria Hospital for 179 out of 181 days. Victoria Hospital's average capacity on any given night was around 112%. London's Parkwood Institute reports much the same: In 2019, they recorded an average nightly capacity of nearly 103%. What we have, then, is a large number of Londoners with mental health needs and not enough beds to actually support them.

1540

What happens then? This imbalance leads to those with mental health needs waiting for days to access care, sometimes in hospital hallways, or even going without the care they need entirely. In fact, some Londoners have waited up to six days before receiving care, despite the incredibly urgent nature of their mental health crisis.

We've all heard stories of patients waiting in hallways with no privacy and no access to washrooms, where the lights are on 24 hours a day. There's no question it would be safer and a more positive experience for these folks to receive mental health care directly in their home, where possible.

The province's unwillingness to accurately care for Ontarians struggling with mental health is also a costly problem. Dr. Forchuk's study found that a hospital bed for one individual with mental health needs costs anywhere from \$450 to \$630 per day. That amounts to \$165,000 to \$232,000 per patient per year. That's nearly a quarter of a million dollars. Due to a lack of support and the complicated nature of mental illnesses, lengthy hospital stays are the norm for patients with severe mental health needs. In fact, 50% of all patients at London's Parkwood Institute stay over three months, with an additional 30% occupying the bed for more than a year.

It doesn't have to be that way. Conversely, providing assistive devices for mental health needs to the same individuals living at home, including licensing and billing fees, all the money in, costs \$12,000 per year. Compare those numbers: You could spend between \$165,000 and \$232,000, or you could spend \$12,000 a year. It's up to you whether you'll support this bill or not. It makes good fiscal sense, it helps people and it saves this province money.

It's one of the many reasons that health professionals have come out in support of this bill. The RAO is encouraging the Legislature to pass this bill because they really believe that every Ontarian deserves access to mental health supports. RAO members have been emailing their MPPs. I'm sure you've received them. I hope the members of the House listen to their constituents who work in health care.

The Ontario Psychiatric Association has also voiced their support for this bill, stating, "The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of equity and

mental health parity when it comes to digital and assistive devices,” and has called upon all parties to support this bill.

For the thousands of Ontarians living with mental health challenges, technological devices can support mental health care and treatment. Currently, the ADP does not fund mental health supports, even though this is a critical part of our health. People living with mental illness are twice as likely as the general population to be living in poverty. That’s because living in poverty can have a very negative impact on your mental health. Covering mental health devices through the ADP is one way to ensure that nobody in our province is unable to access the care they need.

We have an opportunity today to address this gap in the ADP and ensure devices that assist with mental health are covered for those who need them. We cannot discriminate by cherry-picking which disabilities we cover and which we exclude. I urge this government to do the right thing—to do the financially responsible as well as the socially responsible thing—and vote in support of this legislation.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I am pleased to speak to this bill today, brought forward by the member from London North Centre. The bill proposes to add a new subsection to section 6 of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Act that requires the minister to expand the Assistive Devices Program to provide access to assistive devices to support individuals with mental health needs and any related data plans required to connect those devices.

The mandate of the Assistive Devices Program is to provide funding assistance to Ontario residents with long-term—over six months—physical disabilities to purchase personalized and customized assistive devices. These personalized devices are meant to assist the person with a disability to live independently by helping or compensating for a missing body part and a particular function that they can no longer perform.

This program provides supports to Ontario seniors and people with long-term physical disabilities to stay healthy and stay at home longer, reducing the strain on our hospitals and long-term-care homes and contributing to greater engagement of seniors and people with disabilities in society and the workforce. This means providing funding towards assistive devices such as wheelchairs and walkers, home oxygen, hearing aids, respiratory equipment, insulin pumps, orthotic devices, limb prostheses and ostomy supplies—in fact, a total of over 8,000 pieces of equipment and supplies for 18 types of devices for over 400,000 Ontarians each year.

The ADP accomplishes this in partnership with our province-wide network of private sector businesses, public health care organizations, health care service providers and health professionals, such as our physiotherapists, occupational therapists and audiologists. These partnerships ensure that Ontarians have fair and affordable access to a range of devices within their communities.

The key point, I think, is that ADP-funded devices are intended to replace the loss of a bodily function or

limitation due to medical conditions such as strokes, cerebral palsy, hearing loss, spinal cord injuries or MS. Over the years, the ADP has added new devices to meet the growing needs of Ontario residents with long-term physical disabilities, but the scope of the program has not been changed to add smart technologies that can be purchased without the need for a recommendation from a health care professional and that do not replace a physical function or body part. I think to repurpose this existing program for another purpose, as the bill before us today proposes to do, may not be the best way to go forward on this issue.

But our government is firmly committed to improving the way mental health challenges are addressed in the province of Ontario. Early in our mandate, we created the centre of excellence for mental health and addictions within Ontario Health. The mandate of this centre is to essentially do for mental health and addictions what Cancer Care Ontario did for cancer screening and treatment services—really, to build a coordinated, connected, comprehensive system for mental health and addictions that is accessible and responsive to the needs of the people of Ontario.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we released our comprehensive mental health and addiction plan to build that very system I just referred to. That was called the Roadmap to Wellness. Since we first announced our Roadmap to Wellness a year ago, we have been committed to working with all of our partners across the mental health and addictions sectors to close the long-standing gaps in care, expand services for our most vulnerable populations and provide long-term stability in the mental health and addictions system.

To further support this goal, as part of the Roadmap to Wellness, we invested an additional \$176 million for mental health and addictions services this year. Through the Roadmap to Wellness, we remain committed to addressing the mental health and addiction needs of all of Ontario’s residents and Indigenous people, of course, whether we’re talking about our children and youth, those suffering from addiction, those dealing with or involved with the justice sector or those in need of supportive housing.

We also recently announced an additional \$147 million to immediately expand access to the provincial mental health and addictions system for individuals and families, in order to help address the issues many Ontarians face as a result of the pandemic. This includes more than \$15.4 million to expand many publicly available online and virtual supports, including those specifically for our front-line health care workers. These supports have already helped more than 55,000 Ontarians of all ages.

This brings new investments across the sector since 2018, when we were elected, to more than \$650 million, and we remain on track to fulfilling our commitment of investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years in this area.

1550

Speaker, I want to take a few moments to highlight the mental health and addictions supports that are available right now for people struggling during this pandemic. It

has always been our mission to ensure people and families who need extra help can access the most appropriate mental health and addictions supports that meet their unique needs.

Over the last year, we've made investments in emergency mental health and addictions funding to enhance and expand the availability of supports to Ontarians of all ages. Through these investments, we funded virtual online mental health tools, including Kids Help Phone for children and youth, BounceBack Ontario for those 15 and older and innovative Internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy programs for adults and health care providers experiencing heightened anxiety and depression.

Our latest data has shown that over 71,000 Ontarians have accessed these virtual services since the pandemic began. The program is available to all Ontarians via a self-referral mechanism and is a way to give people access to evidence-based mental health supports in a safe and socially distanced manner. Since last May, over 32,900 have enrolled in that program.

On top of our commitment to mental health and addictions during the pandemic, and as I mentioned earlier in my remarks, we announced through this year's budget that we are investing an additional \$175 million this year as part of our Roadmap to Wellness, meaning a total of \$525 million in net new annualized funding for mental health and addictions this year alone. This year's base funding investment will support initiatives such as mobile mental health clinics in underserved communities and the expansion of secure treatment for children and youth.

Our government is fully committed to continue working with all parties, front-line workers, mental health organizations and experts, businesses and people with lived experience—and all of you here today, of course, and the rest of our colleagues—to ensure that all Ontarians can be fully supported in their journey towards mental wellness.

We are fully committed to addressing the mental health and addiction needs of all Ontarians, whether they're children and youth, those suffering from addiction, those involved in the justice sector, those in need of supportive housing and our Indigenous peoples in Ontario.

Speaker, to learn more about the many publicly available mental health and addictions supports for Ontarians of all ages and to learn how to get help when you need it, I invite anyone watching at home today to visit ontario.ca/mentalhealth.

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

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the bill put forward by my colleague from London North Centre around assistive devices for mental health. What my colleague is calling for, and what we support, is to have mental health devices covered under the Assistive Devices Program—things that would allow patients to virtually access medical and counselling appointments, and would relay information to their health care providers to automatically dispense medication when it is needed, something that is incredibly important for someone who is

struggling with their mental health, to have that daily reminder to take their medication.

As my colleague pointed out, there was a study where nearly 80% of the people who took part in the study greatly benefited from having this program. As he also pointed out, the cost alone to not doing something like this—the cost for a hospital bed is \$454 per day and can cost up to \$165,710 to \$232,000 a year. That's not including the rotating visits to the ER, because we know that that happens. They often present, more often than most people, to the ER, whereas bringing this in under the ADP program and providing these devices would cost \$12,000 per year. So you can get at least 10 times as many people serviced and supported by putting these particular devices under the ADP program than what it's costing for one person to be cared for within the hospital system.

Speaker, I'm going to address what the member from Eglinton–Lawrence said about the ADP program, and how it seems to be just fine how it is, and that this doesn't seem to fit under the ADP program or the expansion of the ADP program. She talked about how under the ADP program—first of all, they could change the ADP program if they liked. They have a majority government. They can do that at any time they want. But she had mentioned that the ADP program is to replace physical functions or body parts; that's what the purpose of it is.

Well, let me tell you something, Speaker: When you have mental health issues, especially severe mental health issues, those become physical health issues. They can result in headaches, migraines; muscle tension and soreness; digestive issues such as diarrhea, stomach pain and appetite changes; sleep issues and disorders; feelings of sluggishness. People with schizophrenia are at double the risk of death from heart disease. People with schizophrenia are at three times the risk of death from respiratory disease, and we are currently in a pandemic, where we have a virus that is spread and attacks the respiratory system.

So there is no excuse—no excuse—for this government not to support this bill and immediately implement this program. Even under the current definition of what this government says the ADP program is supposed to do, to replace physical function or to support physical well-being, we all know in this House—whether the government wants to admit it or not and listen to the experts—that for people struggling with mental health and addictions, that manifests in physical health care needs. People with mental health issues are less likely to reach out to the health care system, and are much more likely to suffer from severe health care conditions because of that.

So Speaker, I encourage the government to rethink their position on this bill, because in my opinion and that of the medical community, this definitely fits within the definition of what should be covered under the ADP program. And if the government doesn't think it is, then I suggest that they look at what does fit under the ADP program and adjust it, so that this would be covered.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to be able to have the opportunity to rise and speak to my colleague from London North Centre's bill, which would broaden the Assistive Devices Program to include devices for people with mental illness.

I have to say, Speaker, that I am greatly discouraged, greatly displeased by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health in her remarks, speaking towards not supporting this bill, because the Assistive Devices Program, despite the many issues that it has, has helped so many Ontarians each year.

If this bill were to pass, the program could help people with mental illness live more independently, and it could lead to fewer visits to the ER and to other social services. The device can be a simple thing, but it will have a big impact: like we heard, digital tools that will help better connect patients to their health providers, or tools that help people remember what they need to do each day, like take their medicine or monitor their health.

As the critic for mental health and addictions, I know that there is a great need in this province for more supports that will help people live independently. Providing assistive devices to people who need them could supplement things like supportive housing and make people's lives that much easier.

In addition to broadening the Assistive Devices Program, we also need to make sure that the program itself works well for Ontarians and is not an afterthought, as it has been during this pandemic. I recall that last year, the Ministry of Health did not designate Ontario's Assistive Devices Program as an essential service, so there were many Ontarians left in limbo, waiting to hear back about the devices that they so desperately needed. There were stories of Ontarians who needed mobility devices, and they were left waiting for weeks and months. This government shamefully ignored the pleas from people needing those devices, as well as they ignored the pleas from the official opposition. If not for the media reports, who knows if the government would have ever made their way to making the necessary changes?

1600

Speaker, as you well know, even in good times, people with disabilities face long wait times and high prices for essential assistive devices. In 2018, the Auditor General said the program was in need of reform. This is a great opportunity to take that on.

In this province, people with disabilities seem to always be forgotten. We've seen it with the Assistive Devices Program, we see it in the fact that ODSP rates are well below the poverty line and we've also seen it in the 2019 Onley report, which showed the lack of progress on the AODA and making Ontario an accessible place for people with disabilities. There is a lot of room for improvement in this province. Improving the Assistive Devices Program so that it can help more people is a good place to start. Speaker, it's an easy place to start.

This bill is an opportunity to give people with mental illness better supports to live life and have healthy lives. Wait times were bad for mental health services under the Liberals, but they have certainly ballooned under this

Conservative government. This bill would provide access to the tools needed to alleviate some of the burdens that are faced daily and provide the opportunity for people to thrive.

People don't ask for much, Speaker. Most just want to be able to live independently and to be able to manage their own lives. Without the necessary supportive housing stock and availability to support people, they are left vulnerable. This bill could help fill some of those gaps. Including technological solutions for mental health care in the Assistive Devices Program is a big step forward towards improving the lives of thousands of Ontarians living with mental illness.

The associate minister talked about this not fitting into the Assistive Devices Program, but we have seen this government change things very quickly, in the snap of an eye, when it helps their friends move quicker. We have seen bills come and fly through this House. This is a minor change that doesn't need legislation. It's a change that could truly change the way that peoples' lives work. It would help people to be able to just do those simple things in life that most of us take for granted. It's a real shame that this government doesn't see the health benefit, the quality of life benefit or the cost benefit to making this small change. It truly is unfortunate.

I am urging the government members to use the free vote that they have for PMBs, which their House leader has told me they have, to vote in favour of this bill.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to rise on this bill put forward by the member from London. In the last two days I have sat in this House, this is the second bill that the NDP has put forward to make changes to the Assistive Devices Program, to actually make a real difference in people's lives—yesterday, for glucose monitoring systems for type 1 diabetes; today, for devices that can help people with mental health issues take their medicine and keep them out of the hospital. Common-sense stuff that is going to actually—the government claims that the Conservatives are the people who understand the finances. I understand finances. I know that if you can use small programs to keep people healthy, healthier, you keep them out of the hospital and you keep them out of the system.

For two days, I've listened to the parliamentary assistant for health saying, "Well, it doesn't quite fit in our program and we don't think—we've got a Roadmap to Wellness and we've got something else."

I walked home yesterday and I thought, "Do you know what? There are still going to be kids who have to prick their fingers to test their blood sugar and they're still, after a while, going to get sick of doing it, and they're going to have heart problems and they're going to have, in the end, amputations." And now I'm listening to the same thing again on another issue: "Oh, no, it doesn't fit into the government's program." And again, people have to suffer.

If this doesn't fit in the government's program, find a program where it does fit and help these people. Please, do it now, so people don't have to suffer—and save money.

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

I return to the member, who has two minutes for his reply.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Without mental health, there is no overall health. The ADP is nearly 30 years old. Devices and apps that currently exist, that could help people, did not exist back then. The time for modernity is now, and it's a choice that you have to make.

With these devices, they are prescribed. They are individualized. There is a plan of care in place by a physician in Ontario. At the current time, nurses, mental health workers, social services have to check in. They have to deliver meds physically, in person, to many of these people. This change would allow us to stretch Ontario's resources even further, but that's a choice that it sounds like this government isn't willing to make.

This bill goes past partisanship. It is humane. It is responsible. When people are struggling, it should invoke within us an automatic response to do the right thing and to step up and to help someone who is struggling. This reaches people in their homes and it keeps them housed. It is also, financially, an upstream investment: We spend a little bit of money now, or you spend a lot later. That's a choice you have to make.

We have the science available here. It's time for this government to listen to science, to listen to the research. It is abundantly clear. This is past partisanship, but this is a

perfect gift to you. This allows you to not only vote for your conscience by helping people, but it also allows you to vote for your party ideology by saving money. So you have in front of you a choice to help people and a choice to save money. Regardless of partisanship, I hope that all of you across the floor make a choice that you can live with and one that respects your community.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Kernaghan has moved second reading of 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. 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 nays 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 9 a.m. on Monday, May 17, 2021.

The House adjourned at 1609.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
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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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Arthur, Ian (NDP)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Baber, Roman (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

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna Skelly
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts
Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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