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(Hansard)**

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27 May 2020

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Mercredi
27 mai 2020

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 May 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mai 2020

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Let us pray.
Prayers/Prières.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Barrie—Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 7(a)(i) or any special order of the House, when the House adjourns on June 3, 2020, it shall stand adjourned until Tuesday, June 16, 2020, and the House shall then continue to meet during an extension of the spring meeting period in accordance with the following schedule:

Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the weeks of June 15, 2020, and June 22, 2020; and

Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the weeks of July 6, 2020, July 13, 2020, and July 20, 2020; and

That, during these meetings, members be permitted to speak and vote from any member's desk in the chamber in order to observe recommended physical distancing; the proceeding "Introduction of Visitors" shall be suspended and the afternoon routine shall commence at 1 p.m.; and

That, in order to practise appropriate physical distancing during recorded divisions, standing orders 30(c), 32(b) and 37 shall be suspended until Monday, September 14, 2020, and the following substituted:

"30(c) When a recorded division is required, members shall proceed to the members' lobbies to register their vote with the Clerks. The ayes shall be recorded in the east members' lobby and the nays shall be recorded in the west members' lobby. Subject to standing order 13, every member shall have their vote recorded in this manner.

"(c.1) Thirty minutes shall be allotted to the conduct of each vote, during which time the division bell shall ring, and after which time no further votes shall be recorded.

"(c.2) The whips of the recognized parties, or their designates, may attend the members' lobbies to observe the taking of the vote.

"(c.3) For each vote held under this proceeding during the afternoon routine, 30 minutes shall be added to the end of the sitting day, and the House may continue to meet after 6 p.m. accordingly, if requested by the government House leader.

"32(b) Excluding the time taken to conduct recorded votes as determined by standing order 30(c.3), the time

allotted for the afternoon routine each day shall not exceed 90 minutes. At the end of that time, the Speaker shall interrupt and shall put every question necessary to dispose of the proceeding currently occupying the House, and thereafter immediately call orders of the day.

"37. Any divisions deferred under standing orders 10(c) or 30(h) shall be disposed of consecutively.

"37.1 If deferred votes continues past 1 p.m. on any day, the Speaker shall immediately call reports by committees once all deferred votes have been taken"; and

That, notwithstanding the order of the House dated March 19, 2020, the Standing Committee on General Government shall be authorized to meet on Monday, June 8, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and on Tuesday, June 9, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 156:

—that the deadline for requests to appear be 10 a.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2020; and

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

—that each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 6 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2020; and

—that the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 9, 2020; and

—that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2020; and

—that the subcommittee on committee business shall be authorized to otherwise determine the method of proceeding on the bill; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Friday, June 12, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. and on Monday, June 15, 2020, from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

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On Monday, June 15, 2020, at 7 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall

interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than the sitting day following Monday, June 15, 2020; and

That, should the committee fail to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

That, notwithstanding the order of the House dated March 19, 2020, the Standing Committee on Social Policy shall be authorized to meet on Monday, June 8, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Tuesday, June 9, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 171:

—that the deadline for requests to appear be 10 a.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2020; and

—that each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 6 p.m. on Thursday, June 4, 2020; and

—that the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2020; and

—that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Friday, June 12, 2020; and

—that the subcommittee on committee business shall be authorized to otherwise determine the method of proceeding on the bill; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, June 15, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and on Tuesday, June 16, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

On Tuesday, June 16, 2020, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than the sitting day following Tuesday, June 16, 2020; and

That, should the committee fail to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

That the order of the House dated Tuesday, March 10, 2020, referring Bill 175, An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services, to the Standing Committee on Social Policy be discharged and the bill be instead referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly; and

That, notwithstanding the order of the House dated March 19, 2020, the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly shall be authorized to meet on Monday, June 15, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Tuesday, June 16, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Wednesday, June 17, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 175; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 175:

—that the deadline for requests to appear be 6 p.m. on Tuesday, June 9, 2020; and

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

—that each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 10, 2020; and

—that the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, June 17, 2020; and

—that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Friday, June 19, 2020; and

—that the subcommittee on committee business shall be authorized to otherwise determine the method of proceeding on the bill; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, June 22, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Tuesday, June 23, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

On Tuesday, June 23, 2020, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the Committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments

thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than the sitting day following Tuesday, June 23, 2020; and

That, should the committee fail to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

That, notwithstanding the order of the House dated March 19, 2020, the Standing Committee on Justice Policy shall be authorized to meet on Wednesday, June 10, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Thursday, June 11, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and on Friday, June 12, 2020 from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 161, An Act to enact the Legal Aid Services Act, 2019 and to make various amendments to other Acts dealing with the courts and other justice matters; and

0920

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 161:

—that the deadline for requests to appear be 6 p.m. on Friday, June 5, 2020; and

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

—that each member of the subcommittee or their designate provide the Clerk of the Committee with a prioritized list of presenters to be scheduled, chosen from the list of all interested presenters received by the Clerk by 12 noon on Monday, June 8, 2020; and

—that the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Friday, June 12, 2020; and

—that the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 6 p.m. on Monday, June 15, 2020; and

—that the subcommittee on committee business shall be authorized to otherwise determine the method of proceeding on the bill; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Wednesday, June 17, 2020, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. and on Thursday, June 18, 2020, from 10 a.m. to 12 noon and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

On Thursday, June 18, 2020, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments

thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period pursuant to standing order 132(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than the sitting day following Thursday, June 19, 2020; and

That, should the committee fail to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

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

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 77. I've been advised that there is a typo in the motion. It should say "Thursday, June 18," and it says what?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day): "Thursday, June 17."

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It says, "Thursday, June 17." It should actually be the 18th. The Thursday is June 18, not the 17th.

Further debate? I recognize again the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you see by this motion, when our government got elected, we hit the ground running to accomplish so much for Ontarians. When I was knocking on doors and talking to many of my constituents, they often said, "What does the government really do for us? How can they achieve progress? We see a lot of debate, we see a lot of bickering, and we see a lot of things in the debate. What about grand achievements and really delivering on promises?"

You often heard from us, "Promises made, promises kept," and that comes with great feedback. I know that the residents of Barrie–Innisfil, especially during this time of COVID-19, have really praised this government for some of the economic achievements we have achieved, because we're in a better position to weather the storm.

Of course this is a health pandemic—and I want to, of course, thank all the front-line workers for all their efforts, whether it be Stevenson Memorial or whether it be Royal Victoria Hospital or Southlake—all hospitals that are very close to my riding. They've been doing incredible work. I just think of a lot of the retirement homes and long-term-care homes with a lot of their nurses and their PSWs who are doing so much work.

It's one of the reasons that, on personal support worker appreciation day locally, I had launched a recognition award for the community to get involved, where they can nominate their local—whether it's a nurse or whether it's a personal support worker—to nominate to recognize them for what they're doing today, because they're working really hard. We need to respect that and do our part as well, and to keep plugging away and working through the summer. We really owe it to all Ontarians. We owe it to those who are keeping us safe and we owe it to the taxpaying residents of this province.

When you talk to nurses who are working day in and day out—we're talking about sitting for a few hours a day, not even going into midnight, not even going to 4 a.m. But some of these nurses—and I want to thank many of them. One of them is a good friend of mine, Andrea Logan. She has been working, day in and day out, at Royal Victoria hospital on a lot of the shifts. She has been on different floors doing testing and what have you. I wanted to take this opportunity to also thank her for all her efforts.

She is a single mom and she has a 12-year-old son. You can only think of the challenges that she has had to overcome, like finding daycare. Of course, that's something our government also took action on: providing daycare for our emergency workers and individuals like her, so that she can have someone take care of her son. So that's wonderful to see.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention our paramedics, because it's paramedics' week. Certainly, they're working day in and day out, and they look to their parliamentarians to respect the breadth of democracy and those who came before us, who fought in World War I and World War II so we can have the freedoms that we uphold within this Legislature, to debate and to have that discussion, which is another reason why this motion is so important.

Going back to paramedics' week and how important it is to recognize those paramedics: When you do call and you need someone to help, they're often the first ones to the scene, and they're there to help you during challenging times. I know that when you do make that phone call, you're in a very vulnerable situation. They are calm, collected and they are really out there.

They've always done a lot in the community. I know, back home in the Simcoe county area, every summer they do the stretcher race. I know that the minister for women and children did that stretcher race with me last summer. We would take turns riding the stretcher. They are all pushing the stretcher. They're not just doing it for publicity; they're doing it for the community, for fundraising. They did it to raise money for a cath lab, to save lives at Royal Victoria hospital. If you are a heart patient, we know that time is muscle, and that the sooner you can get that heart patient to the hospital, the quicker you can save their life. So they went out on this very hot day—I would say that it's very much like the day we have today—and they were just pushing the stretcher, and here I was, lying in it.

So I want to thank all the Simcoe county paramedics, of course, for all of the work they've been doing every year, day in and day out. They don't take Christmas off. They don't take Thanksgiving off. They're always there. They don't take summers off either. Again, we owe it to them to do our work as best as we can to uphold democracy, just as they do in the health care field, upholding their medical obligations and being out there to save lives.

On the topic of saving lives, we had, yesterday, a grand achievement within this Legislature. My colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence tabled a bill that does that very thing: save lives for those who may need access to a defibrillator. There are many public areas that don't have a defibrillator.

I think of, back home in Barrie—we have a very tragic story: Chase McEachern. He was a young hockey player and he needed a defibrillator, but it was not there in time. So his parents—it was a challenging time for them, of course, to mourn the loss of their young son—wanted to do something about it to prevent other moms and dads to see that happen to their children. So many hockey arenas now have a defibrillator. But that same opportunity and possibility to save lives that is in our hockey arenas today isn't in all public areas. For that family, the Chase McEachern family in Barrie, it means so much to them.

I wanted to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her ability to get this bill forward and pass it, and work with so many people. We worked with members of the opposition on it as well, and there was support from all around. It really shows you what can be accomplished in this Legislature when we do work together. And hey, we've got all summer now to work together, so there's a lot of things to look forward to.

Again, when we talk about our member, she has been working really hard on that private member's bill, so it's good to see it achieved. The fact that it is going to be saving lives across the province—and that we can look back and say that during this pandemic, yes, the government and the entire Legislature unanimously agreed on motions like the emergency orders motions. We worked together on that. Protecting workers: We came back and did that.

0930

But it shouldn't just stop there; we need to keep going. There's a lot more business that we need to have happen within this Legislature to bring progress to Ontario, because when you think about it, yes, there is a health care pandemic, but there are huge economic consequences. For the first time, I've heard a lot of individuals from all different walks and parties actually talk about businesses and the struggles they are going through. We have that commonality here in the Legislature, wanting to help small businesses, which is great because, as we know, they are the creators of the mass majority of jobs in our ridings.

You just take a drive in anyone's riding, whether you're in Kenora or you're in Barrie or you're in Muskoka or Eglinton–Lawrence or Markham–Stouffville: You see these businesses and their empty parking lots. They're empty. Finally they're coming back, but now that they are able to open their doors, if they have a street-front entrance, they are able to work, so why can't they expect the same of their elected members? Which is why we are here—to really stand up for them and get things moving.

We talk about the supply chain. One of the things in this motion is talking very much about the supply chain when it comes to our agriculture sector. I know that in Innisfil—it's not a surprise; it's a statistic all around the world: We have more chickens than people. The agriculture sector there is certainly thriving. There's not going to be a take-over any time soon, I'm hoping, but it is certainly thriving. We have a lot of dairy farmers, and certainly we've seen the impacts of dairy within this pandemic, of course.

I know that our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—I've been on several phone calls and Zoom

meetings with him and with my local agricultural workers. These folks don't get thanked enough, so I want to thank all the agri-food workers, those working at food processing plants, and our farmers. You've really stepped up to the plate for this pandemic. I've seen countless stories of food bank donations. I know that our colleague from Mississauga has been working with Sobeys to deliver food. We're calling him our new Uber Eats politician because he's bringing food to all communities. In fact, in my own community, Nutrafarms is a place that provides local meats. They were able to donate some of their local meats to his efforts to deliver to families. Likewise, we are working with some local onion farmers to get some onions to make some recipes that he'll be delivering to residents. So you really see how important that food supply chain is.

We need to address some of the red tape that happens within that food supply chain, and I certainly heard a lot of that through folks in my riding and a lot of farmers, and that's why one of the things we will be debating this summer has to do with just that: with our agricultural sector and being able to get at some of the red tape that exists within the ag sector, but also to protect our farmers and protect the livestock. I think that a lot of us talk about biosecurity. That's so important, and that is certainly something we're going to be doing.

The other thing we talk about is how we actually transport those goods. We've got our member from Mississauga, who is getting in his car and delivering the food, but you need proper roads and you need proper bridges to get those supplies to market. When it comes to infrastructure and transit development of any kind, that is just so important to the entire supply chain, so of course it's a very big priority. It's something we embarked on as a province. It's certainly a challenge, especially when we think about the Toronto Transit Commission and being able to fix some of that movement of people. You can say that that is the service sector, getting people from point A to point B to their jobs, to their loved ones, and to get those support workers to their destination if that's the method of transportation they are using. They rely on and expect that when they are working really hard day and night and working those night shifts, they have proper transit that gets them to where they need to go. It's one of the things we'll be debating again this summer and will be working on, because a lot of those individuals are working and they rely on us to do the same.

So, again, tying this back to the motion at hand, and thanking all those—something that hasn't been mentioned a lot, but I know that our Minister of Transportation, our Associate Minister of Transportation, and our workers who are getting us from—the GO train drivers are still operating. The GO train, the GO bus drivers and the Toronto Transit Commission drivers, whether they're driving the subway or the streetcar—all the stuff that they're doing. The maintenance crew that are behind all of those efforts—to thank them, because they're working through this whole pandemic. If there is a call for something that needs to be repaired, no matter what time of day it is, they're there.

Likewise, as parliamentarians, we owe it to them, too, to be here and to be able to work throughout the summer on accomplishments for taxpaying residents of Ontario and all Ontarians. It's so vital. But I did want to also take that moment to thank those workers because they're out there, getting many residents to where they need to be, and doing it safely. We've seen many examples around the world of how you can use public transit safely. Certainly, all of them are washing their hands or they're wearing gloves. We've heard a lot about, if you are in confined spaces, to wear a mask, and some of those things that you have to do.

On the topic of masks, it's incredible to see how many people in our communities—I'm sure that all of you have examples of the families that step up to make these homemade masks. I know that the Richardson family—Jennifer Richardson's husband has been at his sewer this whole time, making handmade masks for everyone in Barrie—Innisfil. I have picked up several masks from him for myself—I have one today with me. Certainly, I wear that when I need to wear it, but I have also been able to pick up masks for our senior communities that are in independent living and in their homes, and they may need those things. They've really stepped up to the plate to make those masks. Certainly, we've seen many other individuals throughout the riding who have been making those masks.

I know that as I look around to my colleagues, as they were walking in here today some had their masks on. A lot of them were also made in their ridings—homemade. Some of them have personal touches and different colours; that's really nice to see. But that's the positive side of things. I think there is a lot of negativity out there. There is a lot of anxiety and stress. We have to hold on to those really positive stories in our community and thank the individuals for stepping up when it comes to this pandemic.

A lot of them who may be at home—they don't have the ability to have a job. Maybe they have applied for the Canadian emergency relief benefit or other things. At least they know that, with the job protection legislation that we passed in this Legislature unanimously with support by all parties, they will still have a job to go to. But all of us also owe it to those individuals. We're so fortunate to represent the people of Ontario. We have to ensure that we are here, working and passing legislation that will affect them firsthand because, coming out of this pandemic, it's going to be all hands on deck as to how we get the economy rolling again.

I know that the Premier has committed to never being reliant on other countries or being vulnerable to not be able to secure personal protection equipment. That's a huge economic opportunity in our province. We just saw yesterday—we've got the member for Whitby here. The General Motors plant is going to be making a lot of masks, which is incredible. That is a made-in-Canada and made-in-Ontario solution to this huge problem. But think about the jobs it's going to create for the member for Whitby and those workers that can go back to work.

Our Minister of Finance has launched these jobs and recovery committees. I've had several already. One thing

I had mentioned on the jobs and recovery committee is, when it comes to the auto sector and what they're doing, they test their workers every day. They're screening them. And they can call in; if they have any symptoms, they don't have to go in to work. All these things are happening to protect our workers.

When we came together in this House to pass that bill, it was great because it really complemented a lot of those efforts that they're doing right now within the other sectors of our economy that are so vital to keep things rolling and to keep things going. That's going to be so critical after this, as we get through this together and as we turn our minds to what the Ontario economy looks like.

A lot of the things that are in the motion that we are debating today are very much a part of that: rolling the economy and being able to say, "Within the ag sector, what are we doing to protect the supply chain, to protect our livestock and to protect our farmers? But also, how do we get people moving with transit, and thanking all those transit workers?"

When it comes to community care and community medicine, we've seen how important it is. I've seen it. I spoke to it last week—our many senior homes in the ridings and the amount of work that those are doing. But there are a lot of seniors that live independently in their home. They want to stay there as long as possible.

Sandy Cove Acres is known to be the community of golf carts, and yes, they get around the community in their golf carts. Their most famous event is their Canada Day parade, where they all decorate their golf carts and go out and parade, and I'm in there and my fellow member of Parliament is there. Unfortunately, it won't be happening like it normally does this year, but we'll find an alternative way to make it happen safely.

0940

But what did those members of Sandy Cove Acres do to help this pandemic? There were these ladies that lunch who get together, a group of seniors who get together, and they do fundraisers. The Barrie women's shelter often relies on many donations. They receive some government funding, both federally and provincially, and through the county. But these ladies couldn't get together to physically lunch because they wanted to be safe, of course—they're part of the more vulnerable population—so they went online. They took to Facebook instead of all getting together for lunch, and they asked everyone to put in \$10. Their goal was to raise about \$1,000, and they exceeded that goal. They were able to get a cheque from the Sandy Cove Acres ladies that lunch group and send it to the Barrie women's shelter. Where there is a will, there is a way, Mr. Speaker.

Here, too, this government has a will to work and help all Ontarians, as I know all members of the House have a will to do that, because we do come here every so often to extend the emergency orders, and we do come back here to have question period and to have that democratic debate—so, so important. It makes me think of all those other efforts we have throughout our ridings with people who constantly work and put those efforts in.

But I just wanted to mention some of those things and just remind people why we're here, and really kind of reach—this is really formidable for all of us in our ridings. No one could predict this was going to happen. All of us owe it to really step up and do what we can to help our communities, like I was saying earlier, whether it's delivering groceries or I know many of our members have been out there delivering personal protective equipment to local residents. I know that care kits have also been delivered, a lot of that, and just those feel-good efforts so that we can really get through this with kindness and positivity and not negativity.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury I think has a point of order.

Mr. Jamie West: I appreciate all the comments and the information about what's happening in the member's riding. I don't see how it relates to the motion under debate. It was a last-minute motion that was brought forward. I'm interested in hearing about why it is very important. The other colour commentary is interesting, but I feel like we've sort of veered into the weeds, and I was wondering if we could get back on track.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member is quite right: The comments in the debate have to relate to the motion or the bill. But I find that the member for Barrie—Innisfil is speaking to the motion, and would ask her to continue.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you to the member opposite, but they're just examples to show you that while people are working and doing all these efforts in all of our communities, we also owe it to them to be here and to be working on those efforts.

Some of the bills that I had mentioned in the motion that we will be debating have first-hand impacts on local members. I know we had another member, from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, come to Innisfil, to the Harry Eisses farm, where biosecurity is really important to them. So passing the biosecurity is so important.

We saw first-hand what Harry Eisses does, where, before you walk in to see where the egg production is made and all of that is done, you've got to put on layers: You've got to cover your shoes; you've got to cover your clothes; you've got to wear a hairnet, gloves, everything. Think about what's happening now. Everyone is wearing gloves and covering their face and whatnot. But that's their day-to-day. That's how they protect their chickens to make sure that there is no infection that happens there.

Certainly, we were able to walk through and see how amazing his operation was, and, more importantly, how important this bill is going to be to him, because for him, that's his livelihood. If there is some sort of infection or some sort of outbreak at his chicken farm, that's his livelihood. But also, just from a caring perspective, those are animals that you don't want to see hurt. You don't want to see them ill, just like you don't want to see a human ill. Certainly, that's something that he cares about. You have a lot of cattle farmers—same thing. They don't want to see their cattle ill because someone has marched onto their

property, trespassing illegally, not allowed, and suddenly you have an outbreak there.

I think, now more than ever, this is so relevant and so important because we've seen what has happened with the outbreaks in our community with COVID-19, but you imagine what the other side of things are, what happens in our agri-food sector, that you don't want that happening. That is our food supply.

I know right now—he normally has this part of his farm where you can go in. He calls it the vending machine for eggs, but really it's just that you take the eggs you want to buy and you drop off the money. It's the honour system. There's a little till there to make change if you need change, and you pick up your eggs. But right now, during this pandemic, that area is closed. Again, he wants to protect his livelihood but also the chickens so that there's no outbreak or anything amongst his workers or amongst the chickens there. There are actually pylons when you drive by; there are lots of pylons.

I've had many residents ask me when they are going to open, because they want their fresh eggs. Unfortunately, I can't really give them much of a reply because we have to take safety and health—utmost importance. Certainly, that takes precedence, but it shows you why our supply chain and the agri-food bill that we will be debating this summer are so important.

When I talked about the Minister of Agriculture—he actually came to Innisfil, and we did a round table with farmers about the bill. You had grain farmers and you had livestock farmers etc., and they said that this was needed years ago. They're finally excited that a government is actually moving through with it. So that's very good to hear.

I know that the member for Eglinton—Lawrence—of course, transit is very important to a lot of members. Another thing we'll be talking about this summer is really getting people moving. We owe it to Ontarians to have a state-of-the-art transit system. Frankly, when we all travel—when we were allowed to travel before COVID-19—if you compare Ontario to other areas, again, you talk about movement of goods, but you also talk about the service sector and movement of people. That has to be seamless. That's going to have a huge impact on our economy. If we can get that right, that has a direct impact on our economy, and we need that more than ever coming out of COVID-19 because of all the things that are linked to transit projects. That's a lot of jobs, job creation—the entire supply chain.

Near my riding I have Decast. It's just outside the riding. They actually make all the molding for the subways. They're ready. They said, "It's great. You guys, when you're getting this better, faster transit stuff through"—they'll want to come to the helm to help. It's local pride for a lot of people, but that's jobs.

They do have a few jobs open now. They're still going and they're still working—working safely. Certainly, if there's anyone watching at home who is looking for job opportunities, there are lots out there. I've seen a lot of "help wanted" signs. Those economic opportunities exist out there.

We, as a government, have the opportunity to make even more economic opportunities coming out of this pandemic, and that is through a lot of this legislation that we're going to be debating here over the summer. I want to thank everyone for their time. I look forward to seeing you in the summer and having more progress.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today to participate, in the debate on this motion that was brought forward by the government, as the acting House leader for the official opposition. I want to say at the outset how striking is the difference in tone in this Legislature yesterday and today when you reflect back on the earlier sessions we have come together for during this state of emergency.

Yesterday, we saw the government bring forward three bills with no notice whatsoever to the official opposition. Very late yesterday, they scheduled this motion that we are debating today with, again, very, very little notice to the official opposition. The other days that we had met in this place were determined through a process of negotiation and collaboration and consensus. That, Speaker, is how the people of this province of Ontario expect us to function in a democracy in the middle of a pandemic. It's more important than ever that we have that kind of cross-party negotiation, discussion, collaboration and agreement—agreement on what we should be talking about, what the priorities are of the people who we represent, and what the concerns are that all of us bring on behalf of our constituents.

It is disappointing, as I said yesterday, that the government has chosen to depart from the way that we have functioned previously. The state of emergency is still very much in effect, and yet we have this new, kind of arbitrary approach by the government as to how we are going to do business in this Legislature.

0950

I heard the member from Barrie—Innisfil talk about the democratic process. Speaker, it is so disrespectful to democracy to act in the way that we see this government acting, to act in the way that we saw them act yesterday. Bringing bills forward with no advance notice to the official opposition limits our ability as MPPs to participate meaningfully in the debate and bring forward the concerns that our constituents want us to talk about. But most of all, in the middle of a pandemic, the concerns and priorities of our constituents have shifted, Speaker. People are looking at the most pressing issues that are before them, and the bills that we talked about yesterday really had nothing or very, very little to do with the issues that we are facing in this COVID-19 emergency.

One of the most disappointing things that we saw here yesterday was the government voting against a unanimous consent motion to allow the critic for the official opposition to stand down the lead on Bill 184, a bill that addresses social housing in the province and purports to provide further protections for tenants.

You know, the government operates with cabinet ministers who are supposed to have knowledge of their files, and that is how the official opposition is structured

as well. We have critics who have a lot of knowledge and expertise in their files and who get briefings from the ministry about legislation that is going to be brought forward. It is the critic's responsibility to do the in-depth analysis of the bills that we are going to be debating in this place. To refuse the opportunity for our critic to participate in the debate was really unconscionable. It was disrespectful to the democratic process. It was disrespectful to the way that we are supposed to treat each other in this place, listen to each other in this place and, through our voices, listen to the views of the people we represent.

I have to stay, Speaker, I don't know if you had an opportunity to read some of—there were some recent articles in the New York Times about the countries that have been most successful in dealing with COVID-19. Interestingly, they are led by women. In particular, Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand is being held up as a model leader, but others—Angela Merkel in Germany; the Prime Minister of Finland—these are countries that operate on a system of proportional representation. In my critic responsibility within the official opposition, that is another one of my critic roles: democratic reform. You have to reflect on the way that an embedded system of proportional representation forces parties to work together. It forces solutions to be worked out that take into account the views of many diverse opinions and people who have different political perspectives. You reach a better decision once you engage in processes like that.

The motion that we have before us today is the counter. It's the exact opposite of the approaches that have been so effective in other countries that have political systems that allow the back and forth and that allow the participation of all members of the Legislature in determining how the government is going to address the needs of the people in Ontario.

This motion proposes that the Legislature return beyond the already agreed-upon sitting days—as I pointed out, those dates were set through a process of consensus and negotiation at the House leaders' meeting. But this motion proposes additional sitting days: four additional days in June and nine additional days in July. For people in Ontario who hear that, they may think it's really important that the Legislature continue to sit, that the Legislature debate issues that are critical to our ability to move through this pandemic, to reopen the economy safely, to ensure that workers are protected, to address the horrifying situation in our long-term-care facilities. These are all high priorities for our constituents. People seeing this motion, hearing that there are 13 more days that the government has proposed that the Legislature convene, might think this is a good idea because we're going to be able to really look at issues related to COVID-19.

Unfortunately, when you actually look at the motion, after it sets out the 13 additional sitting days, it dictates exactly what is going to be addressed in those additional sitting days. Nothing that the government wants to address, that's set out in this motion, relates to COVID-19. That is a concern. That is a real concern. We see a government that is blindly focused on continuing to push through

its agenda, and it's using its power as a majority government to bring in a motion that is going to do exactly that: to push through four pieces of legislation that were developed long prior to the pandemic and really are not the top-of-mind concerns for people that we represent.

Not only that; this motion proposes to use a virtual committee process to deal with these bills, to get public input on the content of these bills. My friends from the independents and the Liberals and the Greens are not here today, but certainly they were with me—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to remind the House that you can't point out the absence of any member.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Apologies.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I again recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Okay—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I know you didn't mean it in the—but I think I should point that out.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My friends from the Liberals and the Greens and the independents will know that, during the House leader meetings that we held when we were discussing the sittings of the Legislature and the issues that were going to be dealt with—they will have heard the government House leader say that, given that we have never in this Legislature held virtual committee meetings before, we would do sort of a trial run, that we would bring forward a single, relatively non-contentious bill—for example, a bill like the Legislative Assembly Act, a bill that was dealt with rather quickly in this Legislature because there was widespread agreement that that the measures set out in that bill would improve the functioning of the Legislative Assembly.

So the government House leader had said to us, "Why don't we use a bill like the Legislative Assembly Act and do a trial run of this virtual committee process, where we're going to be enabling presenters to come and speak before the committee, we're going to be enabling members of the committee to participate virtually?" Whenever you implement a new process, there are always going to be kinks. There are always going to be unanticipated challenges that need to be worked out.

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Speaker, I cannot understand why this government has changed its mind about proceeding in that way and why it has decided that it is going to push through four bills which are—honestly, Speaker, they are highly contentious bills. They are bills that are very polarizing, and this government has decided that they're going to implement a virtual committee process for four bills at the same time. It's not even that they're doing a single contentious bill and going to see how that works out virtually; they're doing four contentious bills at exactly the same time in an untested, untried, brand new virtual committee hearing process.

That is a real concern, Speaker: whether that process is really going to allow people in this province to engage in debate on bills that aren't on the top of their priority list, because they're preoccupied, as they should be, with COVID-19. But still, we do want to ensure that when these

bills come to committee, there are full and meaningful opportunities for the public to participate, so that is a concern.

The other significant concern with this motion is the days that it proposes that the Legislative Assembly meet. The four days in June are Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and certainly that is the schedule that we have operated under last week, this week and next week. I think that that was an agreement that was reached through consensus at the House leaders' meeting, and generally that has worked well for us for these three weeks.

But at the same time that the government wants to push through its legislative agenda, the legislative agenda that did not serve the people of this province well—when you think about the cuts to public health that compromised our ability to respond effectively to this COVID-19 emergency, when you think about the decision to end proactive inspections of long-term-care facilities that made our long-term-care homes so vulnerable to the devastation of COVID-19, and the lack of support for PSWs—at the same time that this government is just laser-focused on pushing through its legislative agenda, it is also closing its ears to any possibility that private members may have some good ideas about how to address the COVID-19 emergency.

I know in my community the only thing I'm hearing from people in London West is related to COVID-19. Private members' public business, which is held on Thursdays, will not be possible under the terms of this motion because this motion proposes, as I said, that we sit for Tuesdays and Wednesdays in June, and then Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in July. That completely eliminates any opportunity for discussion of private members' public business.

It was interesting. I heard the member from Barrie–Innisfil talk about the grand achievement that was secured here yesterday in the Legislature with the passing of Bill 141, which was a private member's bill brought forward by the member for Eglinton–Lawrence, but more than that, it was the result of a collaboration between several MPPs. My colleague the MPP for Nickel Belt and the member for Ottawa South had also brought forward PMBs that were similar; they dealt with the same issue of the defibrillator registry.

As I said, without notice, we had that bill come forward here yesterday morning in the Legislature, and we saw its passage with support from all members of the House, but that shows you the power of private members' public business. That shows you the importance of enabling members to bring forward private members' bills or private members' motions whenever we gather together to participate in this democratic project.

We have seen in this place many grand achievements as a result of private members' initiatives. We saw presumptive WSIB coverage for PTSD and first responders. Again, that was a private member's bill. That began with a private member's bill by my former colleague the member for Parkdale High Park, and it was taken up by the government. My colleague the member for Nickel Belt

had a private member's bill on banning tanning beds, and that was also taken up by the government and moved forward.

There are many ways that MPPs can participate in the legislative process and bring forward good ideas that everybody recognizes are important and that should have an opportunity to be considered. Yet this motion that is before us provides no opportunity to allow that consideration to happen because it excludes Thursdays from the schedule that the Legislature would meet. That, Speaker, is a huge loss for democracy and, honestly, for the government.

The government does not have a monopoly on ideas as to how to respond to COVID-19. Members on our side of the House, members of the official opposition, independent members, and even their backbench members for goodness' sake, might have some valuable input that should be considered and should be acted on by the government. But, as I said, there will be absolutely no opportunity to consider those things.

I know in my community, one of the things that I'm hearing about and am deeply, deeply concerned about that I would be interested in as a private member's motion or a private member's bill has to do with the increase of sexual violence, gender-based violence, as a result of this pandemic. We are hearing women's shelters; their calls are through the roof. The calls are absolutely through the roof. Even the domestic violence and sexual assault treatment centre at the hospital has reported a significant spike in people who are coming to the hospital to report a sexual assault. This is a grave, grave concern. There is a lot of research to substantiate the high, high risk to women as a result of this pandemic. We should be looking at how we are going to respond collectively as a province going forward to this abuse that so many women have been experiencing throughout this pandemic.

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Another issue that is of huge concern to my community, and I'm sure to all members in this place, is the risks that children have been experiencing as their families are struggling with the financial hardship of COVID-19. Schools are closed. Child care centres are closed. Those are places where, if a child was experiencing abuse at home, it could be first identified and then reported to a CAS.

I am deathly afraid for all of those children who are in maybe a one-bedroom apartment on a high floor, with no access to green space. Their parents are struggling with the financial consequences of COVID-19. They are struggling to try to implement a learn-at-home agenda without technology. Maybe they work in a convenience store without access to PPE. They're coming home. They're worried about carrying infection to their family members. They're worried about whether they are letting down their responsibilities as parents to implement learn-at-home. They're worried about their children cloistered in this small apartment without being able to play with their friends. I think, Speaker, that there is a very, very real risk that we are going to see so many more children who will need supportive services after this pandemic ends.

Again, when I earlier talked about the government being determined to push through an agenda that has not served the people of Ontario well, we only have to look at that issue of protection for vulnerable children. We saw this government—one of the first things it decided to do was to eliminate the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. And, my goodness, Speaker, if ever there was a time when children and youth will need an advocate in this province, it's in the wake of this global pandemic.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Who takes away the advocate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes.

Most recently, in the budget that was brought down just prior to the pandemic, we saw significant cuts to children's mental health services. We saw this government reorganize children's mental health, from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services over to the Ministry of Health. But in the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, there were people there who understood children's mental health. We now have a monster Ministry of Health that is obviously preoccupied with other issues. It's very, very, very concerning, about where children are in this government's agenda. Certainly, we don't see children in those bills that the government is proposing to deal with over the summer.

I wanted to start to address more specifics of the motion. The motion talks about four bills that will go to committee in June. There's Bill 156, and that is the bill that deals with biosecurity and the protection of our food supply; Bill 171, the bill that deals with building Toronto's transit; and Bill 175, the bill that deals with the reorganization of home care. Speaker, timing is everything. Who reorganizes home care in the midst of a global—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Timing is everything. Exactly; I agree.

It is now 10:15. I'm compelled to interrupt the member, but I thank her for her presentation.

Debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: Long-term care is not the only humanitarian disaster unfolding in Ontario. Homelessness was in crisis before COVID, and now it is a public health nightmare.

Folks like Michael Eschbach are falling ill to COVID because they can't self-isolate. They are terrified, forced to sleep rough or in tents if they don't want to be in shelters that are petri dishes for COVID-19. Shelters, respite centres and drop-ins are maxed out. No one can self-isolate. The government has refused to explicitly include front-line shelter and drop-in workers in the wage top-up so they continue to work multiple sites, potentially carrying the infection with them—precisely why COVID exploded in long-term-care facilities.

There is still no universal testing across the shelter system, so the infection continues to spread. When shelter users are kicked out for the day, they share public spaces, including transit, with essential workers, contributing to the community spread that is preventing Ontario from opening safely. Clearing encampments without offering people hotel rooms where they can self-isolate contravenes United Nations and CDC guidelines, but cities do it anyway because they don't have enough hotel rooms.

Cities are overwhelmed. The province needs to step up and provide the money and logistics for hotel rooms for all Ontario's unsheltered people.

This is a nightmare that is about to become worse: people who have lost their jobs, who can't pay their rent or arrears are going to swell the ranks of the homeless, and Bill 184 actually makes it easier for landlords to evict tenants mid-pandemic. The government needs to fix this now.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Today I would like to take this opportunity to say how absolutely humbled I am to represent the riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington. I continue to be inspired by the exceptional kindness of so many individuals in this very challenging time. Like so many across the aisle and here, my heart is broken as I witness the hardships, the pressure this pandemic has caused for so many people and to so many businesses. My team has worked tirelessly to answer questions and provide resources and assistance to families, businesses and individuals in our riding.

My peers—my colleagues in this House—have demonstrated tremendous leadership: engaging with stakeholders and ensuring that we are accessing and working with all the professionals and advice, and making the best possible decisions with the information we have.

As I consider my riding as a snapshot of ridings across the province and across this country, I am hopeful in our future. I can tell you, it certainly won't be easy; I think we all recognize that reality. But we are resilient. We recognize the value of hard work, the power of information and innovation, and the spirit of co-operation. I am confident and I remain confident not only in our systems but in our members' representation and all of our supporters that we as Canadians and we as Ontarians can and will move forward together. Thank you, and God bless.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yesterday, the Canadian Armed Forces released a report on the state of the five long-term-care homes that they were deployed to because of the coronavirus. What the Canadian Armed Forces uncovered was unspeakable. I can't imagine how families and their loved ones in long-term care are feeling, how they are processing this information, and how they must be filled with worry and, quite frankly, disgust.

My office heard from Lyndsay that her mother-in-law shares a room with someone who had tested positive for COVID, and the for-profit long-term-care facility didn't know what to do in that instance. It took days before she was removed from that room she was sharing with someone.

We cannot allow this government to express outrage with words of anger on the failings of what's happening. They are part of that. There are many governments that are at fault here, but what we need to do is we need to make sure we can take action. We need to make sure we can get inspections back on track, take over all long-term-care homes that are not safe, and call on this government to put a full, independent, transparent inquiry. It's a find-and-fix. It doesn't mean that they can't make interim changes that will actually help families and their loved ones suffering in long-term care now. They have been suffering under the coronavirus and have been suffering before.

We need to make sure we do the right thing. This is our opportunity. I call on this government for a full public, independent inquiry.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Throughout these challenging times, we have all witnessed incredible acts of kindness, generosity and compassion in our communities.

Ontario's front-line health care professionals deserve our thanks for their sacrifice and determination to saving lives and defeating this disease. Like other front-line medical professionals, my wife is a medical doctor. I admire her courage and commitment to her patients every morning she leaves the house for work.

1020

In my riding of Markham–Thornhill, I receive phone calls almost every day from doctors, nurses, personal support workers and other front-line staff. I know we say it every day, but we can't say it enough: These people are our heroes. There also are many ordinary people doing extraordinary things. I have worked with community donors not just in Markham but across the GTA to deliver face masks, meals and other essential supplies to those most in need.

I want to say thank you to the generous support from SDI Supplies, Exact Imaging, Claire Lin, Peter Zhou, SuOn Academy, Parya Trillium Foundation, the Islamic Society of Markham and the Indo-Canadian community for your efforts. The kindness you have shown to your fellow Ontarians during this time is an example to us all.

NORTHERN MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Guy Bourgoïn: Small municipalities in the north face a devastating fiscal situation. While they all have limited fiscal capacity, small towns must face new COVID expenses and keep up with infrastructure that cannot be shut down. Moosonee, for example, continues to operate the main airport of the James Bay, in spite of having lost

most revenues. They must keep the airport alive because they serve medical, flood, forecasting and cargo operations. Also, most northern municipalities have taken relief action. Hearst, for instance, paused a tax increase while facing a revenue loss of a quarter of a million dollars between mid-March and April. Other towns have waived interest and penalties, offered payment deferrals or service rebates to small businesses.

Not long ago the Premier said that he won't spare a penny to help the people of Ontario. Families, people and workers depend on northern, small towns' services and infrastructure. The Premier needs to stick to his word and offer direct financial aid to northern municipalities before it's too late.

FAMILY CAREGIVERS

Mr. John Fraser: This pandemic has been hard on families across this province, especially families in long-term care, those families who have someone who is sick and being treated in hospital, and someone who is chronically ill. There's some risk in this pandemic where we may lose something that's really important, lose our humanity. One of the things we are at risk of losing is the role of essential family caregivers and the role that they play to keep their loved ones well: sometimes feed them, sometimes bathe them, sometimes avoid medical accidents, to ensure that they get the care that they need. Essential family caregivers are just that: They're essential. They are not visitors.

When I read the story of Leonard Rodriques this week, where his wife was not allowed to come into the emergency room with him, even though he was desperately ill—then, he was sent home. I wondered, if she had been there, would he have been sent home? That's happening across this province in hospitals and long-term care. This government needs to have a plan to bring essential family caregivers back into health care situations. It needs to be part of our pandemic plan because, simply, it's better for patients, it's safer for them and it's the human thing to do.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: From the onset of the outbreak of COVID-19, the government of Ontario has taken significant steps to curb the spread of this virus and to reduce its impacts on the health of Ontarians and our economy. During this time of crisis, volunteers and organizations from Brampton West and Brampton have rallied to provide support for vulnerable people in society. Organizations like Knights Table Brampton, Khalsa Aid, Regeneration Outreach, United Sikhs, Canada India Foundation, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, My Indians in Canada Association, care4cause, Punjabi Food Seva Mississauga and Brampton, Thapliyal Foundation and other similar organizations, and their volunteers are working very hard to keep people and families safe, fed and socially supported during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such organizations

and their volunteers are stepping up to ensure food can reach Bramptonians who need it the most.

Today, I take this opportunity to stand here in this House to acknowledge the efforts of these volunteers and our heroes out there in Brampton, Ontario and across Canada who are supporting communities every single day by ensuring that no one goes hungry during these trying times. I salute these unsung heroes and want to reiterate that we're all in this together and hope is on the horizon.

CHURCH-WELLESLEY VILLAGE

Ms. Suze Morrison: I rise today to share my concern with this House and directly with the Premier about the future of the Church-Wellesley Village.

The Village is more than just a neighbourhood; it's a living, breathing testament to the strength and resiliency of queer and trans communities. It's a gathering place for 2SLGBTQ+ people seeking refuge—a place to be themselves, to build community and to organize for queer and trans rights.

The Village was already suffering from skyrocketing rents before COVID-19 even started. It was forcing many of our beloved queer- and trans-owned businesses to close their doors before the pandemic even started. Over the years, we've lost Zipperz, the Barn, Fly, Byzantium, Slack's, Fire, Zelda's, Sive, Babylon, Slack Alice, the Barracks, the Club, Richmond Street Health Emporium, Roman II Health and Recreation Spa and, most recently since COVID-19 started, Club120. Many, many more are at risk because of the direct failure of both the provincial and federal governments to come to the table with meaningful supports for this community. The only rent relief program being offered right now relies on commercial landlords to opt in, which they are not.

The Village needs commercial rent subsidies, we need a ban on commercial evictions and we need a real plan that's going to support queer and trans communities. Premier, it takes a village to save the Village. I'm asking you to join us today and commit to the supports that our community needs.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members' statements? The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: In the fight against COVID-19, the residents of Scarborough–Rouge Park have been more resilient than ever. I want to recognize the incredible work by our neighbourhood groups and organizations, such as the Centennial Community and Recreation Association, the West Rouge Community Association, the Highland Creek Community Association, Muslim Welfare Canada, the Inforce Foundation, Feed Our Community: Scarborough and the National Council of Canadian Tamils.

My team and I launched the #SpreadKindness campaign when a senior contacted me, asking for immediate support in providing groceries such as milk, bread, fresh

fruit and vegetables for 120 senior units in his apartment building. These seniors had been self-isolating and were running low on food supplies. With the support of local business owners, T Dot Auto Collision and Allied Community Legal Services, we bought groceries for the entire seniors' building. Since then, we are continuing to spread kindness to hundreds of seniors with the help of many businesses, including Petro-Canada and Giant Tiger.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank all the community leaders and volunteers who generously offered to join hands to support our seniors during this challenging time. The Scarborough–Rouge Park community is standing together.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I thank the member for Scarborough–Rouge Park and apologize for getting his riding name wrong.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos: Since the beginning of the pandemic, people in my community of Oakville North–Burlington have stood firmly behind our front-line health care workers and other essential workers. They are keeping us safe and keeping us healthy.

With sirens blasting and horns blowing, police, firefighters and paramedics regularly parade by our local hospitals, Joseph Brant and Oakville Trafalgar, showing their support. The community has joined in by clapping for our health care workers from their front porches. Businesses stepped up, donating PPE. Walker's Chocolates, Habitat for Humanity, Mattamy Homes, Grasshopper Energy, Geotab and all others have given thousands of masks.

The Oakville Chinese Community Response Fund has raised \$30,000 in just two days; the Beer Store collected empties and donated the money; and we are keeping our food banks, like Food for Life Halton, going.

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With GlobalMedic, we delivered 600 pounds of food to the Salvation Army and Oak Park Neighbourhood Centre; local restaurants, such as Senhor Frango, Loch Side and Ritorno, made meals for our health care workers and those in need; and the famed Snowbirds flew over our local hospitals to help boost the morale of our health care workers. To top it off, friends celebrated Julie, a six-time gold medalist at the Special Olympics, with a drive-by birthday parade.

This is the Halton spirit on display. This is the Ontario spirit.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our members' statements for this morning.

I've been advised that a member has a point of order they wish to raise. First I will recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker. I rise on a point of order. Our lead questions are to the Premier, and the government has not confirmed whether the Premier will be attending today or not. I would ask if the government can let us know if he will be late, and if he will be, we would like a UC to stand down the lead—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That's not a point of order. Again, I would remind the members that it's a long-standing tradition of the House not to point out the absence of any member. I would suggest, especially at this time, we—but you were asking—

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I seek a UC to stand down our lead until the Premier arrives.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London West is seeking unanimous content of the House to stand down the lead questions for the official opposition until the Premier arrives. Agreed? I heard some noes.

The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I'm seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice respecting the voting procedure today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice respecting the voting procedure today. Agreed? I heard a no.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is to the Premier, whom people deserve to have sitting in his place answering questions today. Yesterday, the Canadian Armed Forces—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to interrupt the leader and remind all members of the House that it's not appropriate to point out the absence of any member. Again, there's a reason for it. It's a long-standing tradition. From time to time, any of us might be away from the House, so it's a courtesy to all members.

Again I'll recognize the leader of the official opposition.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. In these horrifying times, my first question this morning comes to the Premier. Yesterday, the Canadian Armed Forces presented a devastating report into the neglect and abuse of seniors in Ontario's long-term-care homes. The report is heartbreaking and horrifying, especially for families and seniors in these homes. I spoke with some family members from Orchard Villa this morning, and they are devastated, not because they're surprised but because it confirms the warnings that they had been screaming at this government for weeks.

The Premier has had 24 hours to think about it; maybe that's what he is still doing now, somewhere off in this august place.

Will the Premier now agree that the Minister of Long-Term Care failed to protect seniors in our homes, and ask for her resignation and call for a full public inquiry into long-term care?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Once again—and maybe this is the last time, I hope—I'm going to ask the

members not to make reference to the absence of any other member.

I'll look to the government to respond to the question. The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the important question. Our government is absolutely committed to transforming long-term care and health care. That is why, all this time, we've been transforming to Ontario health teams and to Ontario Health. We've taken the long-term-care sector very seriously, understanding the need for transformation. I spent almost 30 years as a family doctor, caring for people—our most vulnerable people—and understanding their needs. That's what I came here to do.

Some of the issues were long-standing; some of them had occurred over decades: the staffing crisis, the congestion in our homes, the lack of redevelopment. Then COVID hit. COVID has impacted homes around the world. Ontario is no different. We have been taking measure after measure, tool after tool, to create the stability in these homes. We knew these particular homes were in crisis, which is why we brought in the Canadian Armed Forces. So I'm very grateful. As we move forward, we will be sure to make an independent commission to find the solutions and the answers.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families who read devastating reports yesterday of ongoing abuse and institutional neglect deserve so much more from their government. Instead of acknowledging the role that the cuts and neglect played in creating this crisis, the Premier and his minister offered excuses. Instead of accountability, the Premier blocked plans for an inquiry and defended his team.

Seniors are suffering abuse and literally dying in long-term-care homes, where they are supposed to be protected. If that's not grounds for dismissal or for an immediate resignation by this minister, my question is: What exactly is grounds?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again to the opposition for that question. When you look at long-term care, as I have for decades, you understand that our most vulnerable people are in long-term care. The report was appalling; there is no question. How we respond to that now with an independent commission that allows the public to be heard, that allows for public hearings, that allows for a public report, is absolutely critical. Those voices need to be heard.

The vulnerable people in long-term care, as I've said for the past—almost a year since becoming the Minister of Long-Term Care. They deserve respect and dignity. I have sung that from the rooftops for the last year and all my career as a family doctor, knowing that the importance of how we treat our vulnerable in society is how we will be judged as a society. So I implore the opposition, who has known about the issues in long-term care, to be part of this solution. We all play a role in being part of this solution. This cannot be in vain. The lives lost must be valued. Thank you.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, a commission is not good enough. That was something that the women from the home that I spoke to this morning actually agreed with. They think a commission is the wrong way to go, and so do we.

The Premier and his minister cannot claim to be surprised by a crisis that they had a hand in creating. For months, workers in homes and families of residents have been sounding a relentless alarm bell about the conditions in long-term care, the horrifying things that they were watching before their eyes happening to their loved ones in long-term care. The Ford government either knew what was happening or chose not to know.

The Premier can do the right thing today, admit that his Minister of Long-Term Care failed to protect seniors in homes, ask for her resignation and call a full public inquiry. Will the Premier do that? And if he won't, why not?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the question. Long-term care was in crisis before COVID hit. Our government was committed, is committed and will be committed to the care of and compassion for our most vulnerable citizens. I rose in the chamber on March 12 to talk about how this is a time for caring and compassion; it is not a time for vitriol. I will say today that it is a time for finding solutions.

These problems have been festering in long-term care for decades. Our government is committed to making sure that long-term care is part of the transformation, that it is integrated into our health system in a significant way that will make a difference to the lives of those living in long-term care and those who have passed and to their families and to staff. Our number one commitment was to the safety and well-being of residents and staff. That is why this work must continue and we must have a full understanding through an independent commission.

You've also heard the Premier say that everything is on the table. We had four EOs and changes to regulation to provide flexible staffing for our long-term-care homes leading into this, anticipating the problems that COVID would cause. We called in the military when it was absolutely essential, looking around the world where homes have been abandoned.

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We have taken every measure. I live with my conscience. I know that I've done everything. I know that our government has done everything.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. Look, if this was their number one commitment, they have failed miserably. They have failed miserably, and everybody knows it now. We all knew it before. We did here in this chamber, here on the opposition bench, because the previous government failed as well. But now everybody knows the failure in long-term care.

Yesterday, the Premier claimed he was shocked at the treatment of residents in homes like Eatonville Care Centre. Over a month ago, on April 24, families of residents of that home filed a statement of claim alleging failure to protect residents, including sworn affidavits detailing residents not being cleaned after soiling themselves, residents being denied testing even when exhibiting signs of COVID-19, and one family who did not learn that their loved one had COVID-19 until the funeral home actually informed them after his death. We read these documents. They were around over a month ago. The media reported on these horrifying situations over the last number of weeks.

Were the Premier and the minister briefed on this situation, and if not, why not? And if so, how can they claim to be surprised by what the armed forces found at Eatonville?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the important question. I have said many times that long-term-care homes were on the front lines of this battle with COVID. When you consider the report, it's very clear that there was a war going on in our homes against COVID—and the fact that the military had to be called in to support these homes, and the staffing shortages that suddenly became magnified many times more when COVID came into the homes. It would spiral into an abyss very quickly, and that's why the military was called in.

These are not normal times. We are in a state of emergency, and our long-term-care homes have been facing the brunt. All the tools that we have taken—we have moved quickly. Government does not move quickly, and that's why we brought emergency orders, to make the process faster, to deal in a decisive and swift way. The very last emergency order included one case of COVID because that's why we have to move fast. This is a different setting, and our government has taken every measure possible.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the minister stood in this House and assured Ontarians back at the end of February that everything had been done, that they had a plan, that long-term care was going to be fine. And then the Premier talked about “the iron ring” around long-term care. They said they were going to spare no expense on long-term care—all of these empty words over and over and over again, for weeks and weeks and weeks, while family members and residents became more and more desperate.

Eatonville and the Hawthorne Place Care Centre were also the subject of a court ruling on April 23. A judge intervened on behalf of front-line workers at those facilities who were desperately, desperately trying to protect residents who were not being cohorted, and staff who were denied access to personal protective equipment. When those workers first decided to take legal action, there were six cases of COVID in that facility. There are now 43 residents who are dead.

Were the Premier and the minister briefed on this court ruling? If not, why not? And if so, how can they claim to be surprised by what the armed forces found at Hawthorne Place?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you once again for the question. Our government has been committed, and you can see that from the very beginning of our government's commitments. We look at the 15,000 beds that were to be developed and redeveloped. What we're finding is the ward rooms, the lack of redevelopment, the lack of new space. Our hospitals were also at capacity with hallway health care. This was an entire system reorganization: Ontario Health, Ontario health teams, integrating long-term care into that process so that they could be more integrated with expertise involving infection control and also the expertise for our long-term-care homes so badly needed. Our personal support workers were short in supply. We asked the government to help us streamline that process to make that easier. The staffing crises, the capacity in our hospitals—it all needed addressing, and our government was working on that from the beginning.

We all know that health care deserves transformation. Our most vulnerable people in their time of need deserve that care. We've taken measures throughout this, and we will continue to take measures after years of neglect of this system by the opposition not supporting change in long-term—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In February 2019, the Ministry of Health conducted a resident quality inspection at the Altamont Care Community facility. They found that the facility failed to keep the home furnishings and equipment clean and sanitary, walls were covered in food stains, and residents with bedsores were not being properly treated. This resident quality inspection was one of only nine conducted in over 626 homes in Ontario. It was one of only nine inspected. The Premier scaled those inspections back dramatically after private long-term-care operators described those inspections as “red tape.”

Were the Premier and the minister briefed on this inspection report? If not, why not? If so, how can they claim to be surprised at what the armed forces found in Altamont?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again. These homes were in crisis, and that's why the military was called in.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the majority of our homes and the majority of our personal support workers, who are doing, day in and day out, a tremendously challenging job. I would make note of the good work being done in many homes.

You've heard the Premier say that it is not right to paint all homes in the same vein as the homes that are in crisis. We need to be supporting our homes. We need to be supporting our personal support workers and those who are doing a good job who are not in outbreak, especially those who are doing important work—crucial work, critical work—to support our most vulnerable.

Our whole health transformation has been about caring for the vulnerable: people in a time of need, whether they need acute care or whether they need long-term care. We have started that work. It will continue, and it will continue with a commitment that other governments have not had.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my next question is also to the Premier—the same Premier who cut funding to long-term care and virtually eliminated long-term-care inspections, who has no right at all at this point in time to be shocked by the state of long-term care, and no credibility whatsoever when he says he will investigate.

To quote front-line workers, “We have had to fight the provincial government every step of the way to ensure long-term-care companies were keeping workers and residents safe.... These decisions came from his desk.”

Why does the Premier think that families desperate for change will be content with an internal review led by the same Premier and the same minister who have done everything in their power to protect the status quo in long-term care and, I would even say, drag us backwards in long-term care?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thanks for the question. I have to push back. I have to clarify. I have to tell the truth. And the truth absolutely is that the inspections were never stopped. We have done more inspections than ever before.

What you're describing is something that started with the Liberal government in 2016 after an Auditor General's report to address—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's something called facts.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: —and I think it's very important that we clarify, because reality matters. The truth matters.

Looking at a public inquiry versus a commission, a commission will provide us with the answers faster. It will provide us with the transparency faster. Public inquiry and commission are both included under the Public Inquiries Act. The commission that we're describing, an independent commission, will be a commission that will allow public input. It will have a public report. There will be public hearings. To construe it in any other way is inaccurate. We need to talk about the truth.

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Health care needs to be transformed. Our government is committed to doing that. We will continue to do what we started, and we will do it with a commitment that—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I would say to the minister and to the Premier: Resident quality inspections matter. They matter. And to take them down to nine a year when we have 626 long-term care homes in Ontario is negligent. It is them not doing their duty as a government.

I would also say that suggesting that a behind-closed-doors process is equal to a public inquiry does not pass the smell test, because it is not the case. It is not equal. It is behind closed doors. It is not public. The Premier either knew about the serious problems in long-term care or he chose not to know. Thankfully, our armed forces were able to break the iron ring of silence, and I have to say thank you again. The Canadian Armed Forces did all of us here in Ontario a very important service.

Families and front-line workers have been consistent and clear that they want real change this time. They want real change. Will the Premier do the right thing and call a full, transparent, independent public inquiry today?

Interjections.

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

To reply on behalf of the government, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Our government is committed, and that's why it began with the redevelopment of our long-term-care system. It put almost \$2 billion towards building capacity and redevelopment. They're undergoing a staffing study to inform a comprehensive staffing strategy. We are addressing Justice Gillese's report and the important work done by the Auditor General as well.

This government is absolutely committed to doing that. You can see that with the Ontario health teams and Ontario Health. We need to address the needs of an aging population, a growing and aging population, and support for our most vulnerable people. That's been ongoing. An independent commission that will have public input, that will have public hearings, that will have a public report—but the Premier has said that all options are on the table. We need expediency. We need to get to the bottom of this. We need to do it in a way that is transparent.

STUDENTS

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is to the Minister of Education. Parents, teachers and students in my riding of Milton are doing their best in these very difficult circumstances. They're being flexible, they're working hard and they're being creative. I've heard from countless parents who find that their kids are best supported when their teachers conduct live classes. This includes Adriana, who says, "As a parent, I would love for my kids to get the live interaction with their classmates and teachers so they can be engaged and actually learning at this time."

Can the minister please outline what our government expects from educators in delivering at-home learning for our students?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you so the member from Milton for his question and his leadership. I want just to start with a recognition of gratitude to our educators, to our students and parents for rising to the challenge in this truly unprecedented time.

We believe, as students now are spending one quarter of their academic year at home, it is incumbent on all of us

to give them every option, using every opportunity, every tool and every technology to aid them in learning while they are home. That's why we believe in, as many parents have called for, live, synchronous learning to create a classroom experience that will not emulate the in-class experience. We acknowledge that being in class, of course, is best. But at the time of COVID-19, we have an opportunity to improve delivery of education to these students by embracing that community online. That's why we're urging our school boards and partners to implement this, standardize it and improve learning for all students in this province.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: Thank you to the minister for the answer. In these difficult times, it's more important than ever that our education system adapt to the needs of students. This is critical, especially when it comes to mental health. Anxiety, depression and other mental health challenges are on the rise, and tragically, our kids are not excluded from this.

I know that mental health is top of mind for our government as we seek to support students during these difficult times. Can the minister please provide some examples on how our government is prioritizing students' mental health?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you again to the member for Milton for the question. I know that mental health is a priority for all members of the House, and I actually appreciate my conversations with the critics in all parties and the leader of the Green Party, discussing this very issue. It is why in part the Premier announced some weeks ago an additional \$12-million investment to support mental health, to enable our young people to have the strength that they need through this difficulty.

Part of that aid was more funding to Kids Help Phone and School Mental Health Ontario to provide a continuum of care. We've called on boards to unlock all mental health workers and para-professionals to do the best they can in a virtual environment. We have aided and enabled boards this summer to enable them to continue providing services through the summer—normally, they would end in June—so there's a continuity of service delivery for these kids. We're providing more investments in special education, as well as more guidance to parents to help them through this difficulty.

We'll continue to invest in mental health, continue to invest in our most vulnerable and give them the path to success this year to graduate, and in September, when they return to class.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. The government spent months saying they were monitoring long-term care closely but yesterday claimed to know nothing of the horrific conditions in our long-term-care homes. The horrifying report from our armed forces comes after the government's decision to virtually

eliminate proactive resident quality inspections in long-term care. The government insisted that this would have no impact on care. In fact, last April, the minister claimed that Ontario has “the most rigorous” inspections “in Canada” and didn’t need resident quality inspections.

Speaker, families are hurting today, and they need answers. My question to the Premier: If Ontario actually had a system of rigorous inspections, how could they not know what was happening in our long-term-care homes?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question from the opposition. Our government is absolutely committed to long-term care and reforming health care. In our long-term-care system, we are monitoring the homes. We are moving in the right direction. Our homes are improving. There are a handful of homes that have been under exceptional stress, largely due to staffing issues. We use certain criteria to identify red homes versus yellow homes versus green homes. We’ve been actively monitoring that all this way.

To characterize this as not knowing is inaccurate, and it is insulting to all the people who are doing the work on the front lines. Our staff, the managers, the personal support workers—everyone is contributing. Everyone is doing what they can. We all have a role to play. I acknowledge the anger that people are feeling from a loss and being in the state of emergency, but anger will not bring us solutions; it is dedication, everyday hard work, and making sure that we put residents at the centre of care, which has not been done.

Our government is doing that. When I was speaking at the homes that I was visiting for almost a year, I would talk about that, and nobody was interested. The media didn’t come. Only at a time of death and devastation did people respond. It should not have taken that. It should not have taken that.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question: the member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: Speaker, it’s difficult to believe that this government had absolutely no idea about the crisis in long-term-care homes when conditions like the ones detailed in the Canadian Armed Forces report are happening across this province, including in cities like Brampton. The Premier said himself that he believes that there are also other homes that are impacted.

Is the Premier and this minister going to keep pretending that they had no idea about the conditions in our long-term-care homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. In fact, there was a crisis in long-term-care homes. We knew that there was a shortage of personal support workers. That contributes greatly in a time of absolute crisis, like COVID-19.

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Our government was transforming long-term care. We were in the process of doing that—Ontario Health, Ontario health teams, working with public health, working with all

our partners and colleagues to get through this unprecedented, devastating time.

We are in a state of emergency. This is not a normal time. We acknowledge the shortcomings. That’s why I’m here. That’s why I’m doing what I’m doing. That’s why our government has committed to reform and change.

To characterize this as denying the crisis is absolutely out of touch. It’s absolutely out of touch. Our government is committed, and we will continue our good work.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care.

We’re all very deeply disturbed by what we read in the Canadian Armed Forces report yesterday into the five long-term-care homes in this province. Speaker, through you to the minister: When was the minister first made aware of conditions in these five homes, and what led her to ask for the help of the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. We were actively monitoring these homes—as I’ve mentioned, red, yellow, green—homes that were particularly on the radar for staffing crises. We had been taking measures all along in terms of our emergency orders to understand and anticipate how government could move quickly.

Beyond all the changes and the acknowledgement that our whole health care system needed to be improved for our most needy and our most vulnerable and those who need it at their time of need, we understood the critical nature of the staffing issues—which had been a long time festering; many, many years.

Looking at how we address that, we had labour inspectors. We had our own inspectors from long-term care. We had public health risk assessments. We had infection prevention and control teams. We had rapid deployment teams from the acute care system. Everything was being monitored.

COVID takes over homes very quickly. We anticipated that these homes would be in dire need, and that’s why we brought in the military.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I was hoping the minister would provide a more direct and specific answer as to when she knew.

I’m trying to understand when the minister knew and what led her to call in the military in the first place, because I know that residents, their families, staff, organizations that represent them and MPPs in this House have all alerted the government, her ministry and her to these concerns. I think for all of us, it’s important to establish a timeline here.

The situation must have been pretty bleak to make the request that the minister did. Speaker, I will ask once again: When was the minister first made aware of the conditions in these five homes, and what led her to ask for help from the Canadian Armed Forces?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: We have numerous eyes watching the homes and monitoring, and making sure that they're in close contact with the homes, looking at the red, the yellow and the green. These homes were having difficulties; there was no doubt about that. As we called in the military—it takes time. That's why I can't give you a precise date.

We looked at how we initiated that. There were other ministries involved in that process until we could actually get the military in. And as you know, there are other provinces that are also affected. Our neighbouring province has needed military help in a vast way. We understand the limitations of what our military can do. That's why, as we speak, we're understanding our next measures to take, because the military—we've asked them to stay. We're hoping they will stay. We're asking the federal government to help us.

We need that support now, but as our homes stabilize, there will be further measures taken to support them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Fraser: My question again is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Given the disturbing report from the Canadian military into the conditions in these five long-term-care homes—like these five homes, there are dozens of homes with double-digit deaths across this province. Given that the ministry's most prominent response to the Gillespie report was to only do resident quality inspections—full inspections—in nine out of 626 homes last year, Speaker, through you: How can the minister assure Ontarians that what was reported today isn't happening in other homes in this province?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: If you look at the devastating effect of COVID-19 on our homes that were already in crisis situations with staffing going into this pandemic, our government and my ministry were taking every measure possible to address that. We were looking at volunteer portals. The nursing associations were assisting with volunteers. We were looking everywhere for support, and our long-term-care homes need to be places where people want to work.

How we integrate our long-term-care homes with the acute care system into a new form, a new way of doing things—the previous governments, leading up to this point of being hit by COVID, never did that, all these years.

These homes were being actively monitored. There were investigations ongoing. We had an increase in terms of calls to our action line. We had almost 3,000 inspections and numerous other inspections, so let's be honest about this.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, why did it take us a month to raise the wages of the lowest-paid workers in long-term care, like other provinces did? Why did we take a month not to have workers working in more than one home, to stop the spread of disease? Why did we wait months and

months to give ourselves the power to take over long-term-care homes and then actually do it?

My colleagues from Ottawa–Vanier, Orléans and many members of this House have been raising concerns with the ministry and the minister about homes in their ridings, and these concerns are genuine. They're coming from families. Families are telling you and staff members are telling you and unions are telling you. Everybody is saying this.

Learning of yesterday's reports, it's natural for Ontarians to be concerned about their parents and their grandparents. Through you, Speaker, to the minister: How can the government assure Ontarians that seniors living in other long-term-care homes across this province are not experiencing similar conditions to what we heard reported yesterday?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. I share concern over our vulnerable people in society. Our government embarked on a transformation of care because it understood the need. Ontario health teams integrating long-term care into our acute care setting and into the community: These are absolutely critical pieces as we move forward.

We've done work over the last year. We prepared for COVID. COVID has hit the global vulnerable populations of those over 80 and in long-term-care homes. If you bother to look, if you bother to understand what's happening globally in other countries, you will understand that. All these measures, the emergency orders to have government work faster—because government does not work quickly—the processes we have in place are meant for a time that is not COVID time. We have adjusted for that.

Our homes are actively being monitored. We know the situation in our homes.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, back even as the pandemic was just unfolding, sadly, many in the sector—some of us included—predicted that this was going to result in a massacre of the vulnerable and the old. I, for one, wish that that was not true, and I know we all do, but it has come to be.

The Premier said yesterday that he was shocked by this report from the armed forces, but he and his minister have known what was coming, and that's very clear. I want to just point out that on April 28, I wrote to the Minister of Long-Term Care outlining just issues that have been raised in my own constituency, in my own riding, by members in my community, including the lack of testing of people who had family members in long-term care, oversight in long-term care, personal support workers who were not allowed—not allowed—to have protective equipment. I have yet to receive a response to this letter, Mr. Speaker.

The minister is right that the situation was in crisis for a long time, but this minister and this government have failed those families. They have failed the workers who have lost their lives in those homes and across this

province. I want to ask, Mr. Speaker, why the minister has not yet offered her resignation and why the Premier has not asked—

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

The Minister of Long-Term Care to reply.

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Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I appreciate the anger that you have, and I appreciate your frustration. I look back on the last few months, dealing with our long-term-care system in this COVID world we live in, and it is absolutely heart wrenching, gut wrenching. As a physician who spent 30 years not only looking after our vulnerable people but looking after members of my own family, to insinuate that I sat there and did nothing is absolutely incomprehensible to me when I know the truth; I know the reality. I know the commitment that our government has had. I know the commitment that I have had. That is why I am here, and that's why we took every measure, every tool, all the emergency orders. Everything was on the table. We acted swiftly and decisively.

COVID is a beast. And years of neglect by the previous government, supported by the NDP, have led us to a precarious position for our long-term-care homes. COVID-19 is a beast. It's been a beast around the world. Our government has been committed—it is committed now; it will be committed in the future—to making sure that we transform health care and long-term care for our most vulnerable.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Resign. Resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

The supplementary question: the member for Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Minister of Health: That answer, though, was not good enough for the people of the province. In Waterloo region, we've seen the painful fallout from declining standards in long-term care, like Revera's Forest Heights home. Fifty residents—50—have died from COVID-19 in this home. Scared and angry families have reached out to myself and the MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga. Why? Because, before COVID-19, families were spending up to six hours a day caring for their loved ones. They knew that there were no minimum standards of care; they knew that the staffing ratios were poor; they knew that there were reduced in-person inspections. Families were holding this broken system together. The health minister was also Patient Ombudsman. She would have heard these serious concerns and the pain from these families. The pain and the suffering of these residents is not subject to cabinet confidentiality.

To the Minister of Health: We agree that the former government neglected our long-term-care system, but it's this government who looked the other way when the pandemic began. There was no iron ring around these homes. Why did this minister not act decisively?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the Minister of Long-Term Care has stressed repeatedly today, we have taken this seriously from the very beginning, putting in place protections for people in long-term care, making sure that we had

the personal protective equipment that they needed. It might not have been used by the management in some of these places, but the personal protective equipment was there.

In addition to that, as things were worsening, I have had discussions with the Minister of Long-Term Care, and we have had the arrangement made where hospitals can consider long-term-care homes work sites, with the result that people were asked at hospitals to go and help in long-term-care homes. Over 40 hospitals have stepped up to do that. They are continuing to assist in providing care and they will continue to do so until this COVID-19 threat has been dealt with.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Infrastructure. I am frequently contacted by constituents about the need for high-speed Internet in many areas of my riding. One recent email was from Essa township councillor Keith White, who's concerned about a resident who may lose her Internet service. Like many residents, Keith wants to know what the province is doing about improving service, not removing it.

The government recently released Up to Speed: Ontario's Broadband and Cellular Action Plan, with the intent of expanding broadband and cellular access to rural, remote and northern communities. Well, we've been hearing these big-dollar announcements from provincial and federal governments for years, but there still seems to be a problem, particularly in the rural areas in my riding. In fact, I have to admit, I made a similar announcement some 20 years ago when I was Minister of Energy, Science and Technology, and I'm hoping today maybe this minister can do a better job than I did.

Can the minister tell the people of Essa township when they will receive up-to-standard broadband services?

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you to the member opposite for his question. While our government has been a steadfast funding partner for broadband projects in Ontario, like the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology project, known as SWIFT, I'm sure the experienced member opposite knows that providing reliable and affordable broadband service is a responsibility of the federal government. With that being said, I have raised this issue on countless calls with the federal minister responsible, urging her government to join Ontario and our municipal and private sector partners in closing the digital divide that the COVID-19 epidemic has brought to the forefront.

On this side of the House, we are not about lip service, I can assure the member opposite; we are about action. Our \$315-million action plan has the potential to expand access to up to 220,000 homes and businesses. It includes a \$150-million, Ontario-led broadband plan, and nearly \$64 million to SWIFT, which includes the communities in Simcoe-Grey.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you to the minister. I know that everyone in the House can agree that the need for high-speed Internet is only increasing during this time of the COVID-19 virus, because people are working from home and because of the e-platform for education.

Michael Birch, who lives just three minutes outside of Tottenham, says that the lack of Internet options has become particularly problematic during this crisis. His household is trying to run two essential businesses from home, and his two children are completely frustrated trying to access e-learning platforms.

Gary Wilkinson, who lives five minutes away from Collingwood, told me that when the COVID crisis began, all the Internet companies said to him that they would waive overage fees and give everyone unlimited data—everyone, it seems, except for folks in rural areas. “How,” Gary asks, “is it that in this day and age, proper, reliable and affordable high-speed Internet is not available to rural areas?”

Speaker, can the minister elaborate on her first answer and maybe tell me when the rural areas of Simcoe–Grey will actually receive Internet services? I am counting on you, Minister, to be a better minister than I was and to act and deliver rural Internet services to Simcoe–Grey. There is the challenge for you.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank you and I accept that challenge.

As someone who has been born and raised in rural Ontario and who represents those rural communities, I understand the frustrations raised by the member opposite and his constituents very well. While we’re all working remotely to adhere to physical distancing, I too have had dropped phone calls and been faded out on Zoom calls, and download speeds just aren’t what we need. That’s why we have made infrastructure a marquee part of our mandate. We are stepping up to the plate. We’re taking a whole-of-government approach to bringing Ontario up to speed.

I want to commend my colleague the Minister of Education for his work in connecting more students to e-learning platforms during the COVID-19 outbreak, assuring that every high school will have high-speed Internet up this fall; and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines for making investments and delivering broadband to Indigenous communities and in northern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I do have more plans coming out shortly, and I want to encourage the member opposite to join me in asking the federal government to help us bring Ontario up to speed. Truly, more than ever, we need all these partners together. We can make it happen.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians know that these problems are not new. Just a few months ago, I sat here in my chair and looked at my leader when, along with my colleagues, we were accused of being fearmongers. Well, the fear is real, Mr. Speaker. Families have been hurting for years because of Liberal and Conservative inaction.

In January 2018, it was revealed that the former government kept a secret list of high-risk facilities. All these facilities—the government knew that the long-term-care private operators were often breaking the rules, failing to comply with directives and not doing their job of taking care of our loved ones.

Speaker, the Premier had a list of high-risk facilities. Why did it take the military report to say that he is shocked by the system, when it has been known for years how bad things really are?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. When I look at long-term care in Ontario—you have probably heard me say that Justice Gillese said it was a system that was strained. COVID-19 came along and broke it.

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I cannot speak to any list, because I do not believe that that list is applicable now.

If you look at COVID-19, it affected some homes in a more disastrous way. Others were unaffected. Over 70% of our homes are not in outbreak, and our outbreaks are resolving. The military being called in was in anticipation of the monitoring and knowing that these homes were in dire situations. I wish I could have been able to pull a lever and have them show up the following day. The processes don’t work like that.

I am grateful to the Canadian Forces for being there for our residents, being there for our homes and for our families and staff. The red, the yellow, the green were in continual interaction with our homes. COVID-19 makes things change very quickly. The speed with which COVID-19 takes over a home—when you speak to people who are in homes, it is shocking. That’s why the military was there, in anticipation of these homes having issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question, the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: The previous government and this one have been slow to fix the problems with long-term care. Back in 2017, the Auditor General found that the government cut its inspections after it did a cost-benefit analysis of them and found inspections to be too expensive. That change in inspections resulted in a backlog of over 3,000 complaints and critical incidents. This government kept the new system, which has meant the quality of inspections of Ontario’s long-term-care facilities has dropped.

Why did this government keep a failed inspection system rather than change it?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. Issues surrounding inspections have been raised from the beginning of this pandemic. We have multiple types of inspections. We conducted almost 3,000 inspections, as well as inspections of the homes every year.

Inspections would not have solved the staffing crisis that we experienced with COVID-19. The staffing crisis was apparent for years, and our personal support workers were on the front lines. It doesn’t matter how many

inspections you would have done; it would not have provided the care that residents needed. It was a staffing crisis, which is exactly why we called in the military, with staffing getting sick with COVID-19, having to isolate and perhaps being afraid to come in. We know that the military was needed at that time, and I am grateful to the military. It is not an issue of inspections.

We need to make sure that we understand what's happening in our homes, and that will be ongoing.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Premier. Experts have been sounding the alarm on the crisis in long-term care for decades. The Premier cannot pretend that this is the first he's hearing of it or that he's shocked, because workers represented by SEIU sent out a cry for help to the government and several times since, asking the government to step up and ramp up and care when private operators turned them away. Just in January 2020, Unifor commissioned the Ontario Health Coalition to produce a detailed report called *Caring in Crisis*, which they gave to the government. Workers have been alerting the government for years about this situation.

Why have the Premier and this government ignored cries for help from workers on the front line for two years, when we know how badly families have been hurt?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. I do value all these questions. I think they are important times to address the stress and strain that long-term care has been under.

I would like to read you a short message from Miranda Ferrier, the national president of OPSWA: "Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Long-Term Care has demonstrated capable and understanding leadership. The Ministry of Long-Term Care has been diligently receptive to the needs of the front-line PSWs."

I want to emphasize how incredibly important it is—our front-line staff in our long-term-care homes. That is why our government has been conducting an expert panel to study and inform a comprehensive staffing strategy going forward. When we inherited the situation in long-term care, we understood the need to address the staffing, which became a crisis under COVID. That work is ongoing. We will continue that work. It's essential.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto Centre.

Ms. Suze Morrison: Thank you, Speaker. Both the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario and the Ontario Nurses' Association have been telling the Minister of Long-Term Care and the Minister of Health about the kind of conditions detailed in the CAF report for years now. They both say that they begged for this government to improve staffing and funding in long-term care. The ONA even said that after calling in the Ministry of Labour to try and fix things, they've also had to take this government and some long-term-care homes to court because directives weren't being followed.

Speaker, the government knew about the horrors happening in the halls of these homes because they were told by the experts and the staff on the front lines. Why? Why did you refuse to listen to them?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. We have been listening and taking action. When we look at the long-term-care homes, every operator and every home is required to meet the standards of care and to follow the directives of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. They are held to a standard that is not negotiable.

We have worked with our experts, our scientists, our medical officers of health, the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the assistant medical officer of health, and we have issued their directives and provided guidance. We did that very, very early—back in February. We have been working all along with our partners in long-term care. This must be a collaborative process.

The long-term-care ministry and the government of Ontario do not operate long-term-care homes. This is why that collaboration is so incredibly important. All the people who are doing the good work that's necessary to move us past this horrible time, I value; I value that effort.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. Yesterday's Canadian Armed Forces report on those five long-term-care residences is very alarming. We cannot tell ourselves that these are five isolated cases.

I wrote to the minister almost three weeks ago with alarming concerns about three long-term-care residences in my riding. I then urged the minister for immediate action, and I highlighted the concern that personal protective equipment was not being changed frequently enough to stop contamination, that there was insufficient staff, and that there were cockroach infestations. This is simply unacceptable.

Clearly, the traffic light—green, yellow, red—method is not working. We need to stop monitoring and we need to start following up on these reports. Can the minister commit to actually following up with every long-term-care residence that reports the need for any type of support?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for raising that. We have heard from you and others. That's why we have an integrated system with Ontario Health and with local hospitals to be engaged in what's going on in those long-term-care homes with their infection prevention and control teams.

What we need is an integrated system. That's what our government has been doing with Ontario Health, the Ontario health teams, the integration of the acute care expertise infection control in our long-term-care homes, the rapid deployment teams and the SWAT teams. That is exactly what we have been doing.

It's important to understand that this is not a normal time—all hands on deck. Everyone has to contribute; everyone has a role to play. We've been working with our partners and working with the teams that have come to

support the home that you mentioned, and others. This must continue. This is an opportunity to say that our long-term-care system needs the support of our communities, our acute care centres, our research centres and our academic centres. This is absolutely critical and necessary.

I appreciate your voice in this. I appreciate all of your voices. We must emerge from this having supported our vulnerable. This must not be in vain.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to emphasize the fact that this cannot wait. We cannot wait for an investigation into what's happening in our long-term-care homes now. Seniors have been living in these horrible situations for too long now.

What will the minister do right now to ensure that no other long-term care is going through the same situation as the ones brought up in the Canadian Armed Forces report?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you again for the question. We've taken decisive actions over the last months with many ministries, in collaboration with the experts. We are doing that now, and we will continue to do that. This requires investigation, inspections that will require a lens to be put on this to understand how we move forward from this. It's the infection control. It's shoring up staffing. It's making sure that everyone involved is accountable and responsible. I cannot be accountable for COVID, but I do take ownership of what is happening, and it's incredibly important that we take ownership, that we solve these issues.

Looking at how we can support these homes that are in crisis—we continue to do that, whether it's through SWAT teams, rapid deployment teams, working with Ontario Health, or working with public health. We will continue to do everything, including the military, and we are asking the military now to stay. We do need that federal support. We are asking the federal government to support us. It's going to take all levels of government—everyone—to find the solutions going forward and to support our homes and our residents.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: This is to the Premier. Long-term care is a serious issue for our veterans. The Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command has been one of the louder voices to this government demanding a public inquiry into long-term care—on deaf ears. Now the long-term-care crisis is also affecting our Canadian Armed Forces members currently deployed in Ontario—35 members and counting. Not only have military personnel contracted the deadly COVID-19 while rescuing Ontario's broken long-term-care system; now military sources have told reporters that they are truly worried about PTSD among the troops stationed here in Ontario long-term-care homes.

What does it say about the state of our long-term-care homes? Canada's troops are trained to face combat all over the world, and they were traumatized by what they have

found here in Ontario's long-term-care homes. This government needs to listen to their voices, and an independent public inquiry must happen now. When will you say it will?

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

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you for the question. My heart goes out. I have great gratitude for the armed forces that have come in to support our homes. It was in our time of need, Ontario's time of need, and they were there. I've said before: We are in a war against COVID-19. We are in a state of emergency, and for the armed forces to be there in Ontario's time of need—I am very, very grateful for that.

An independent commission will have public hearings, it will have public input and it will have a public report, and that is the most expedient way that we can achieve the answers in a timely way. The Premier has said that everything is on the table. The Premier has been committed to this. I am committed to making sure that we move forward with the truth and understanding and transparency. This is not a time for politics. It is not a time for politicking. It is a time for care, compassion and transparency, and that is what we will do. We will move forward with that transparency.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): That concludes our question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

REBUILDING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR LA CONFIANCE CHEZ LES CONSOMMATEURS

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

Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection / Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la protection du consommateur.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1134 to 1139.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the members to please take their seats.

On March 5, 2020, Ms. Thompson moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak
Babikian, Aris
Bailey, Robert
Bethlenfalvy, Peter
Bouma, Will
Calandra, Paul

Jones, Sylvia
Kanapathi, Logan
Ke, Vincent
Khanjin, Andrea
Kramp, Daryl
Lecce, Stephen

Roberts, Jeremy
Sabawy, Sheref
Sandhu, Amarjot
Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Scott, Laurie
Simard, Amanda

Cho, Stan	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Clark, Steve	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Coe, Lorne	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Collard, Lucille	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Nicholls, Rick	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fraser, John	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Fullerton, Merrilee	Phillips, Rod	Walker, Bill
Gill, Parm	Piccini, David	Yakabuski, John
Hogarth, Christine	Rasheed, Kaleed	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Sara
Bourgouin, Guy	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Stiles, Marit
Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy	West, Jamie

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 56; the nays are 15.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? I recognize the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: General government.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

PROTECTING TENANTS AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY HOUSING ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 VISANT LA PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES ET LE RENFORCEMENT DU LOGEMENT COMMUNAUTAIRE

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

Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020 / Projet de loi 184, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment, la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement et la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation et édictant la Loi de 2020 abrogeant la Loi sur la Société ontarienne d'hypothèques et de logement.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Call in the members. This is another five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1142 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): On May 26, 2020, Mr. Clark moved second reading of Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services

Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anand, Deepak	Kanapathi, Logan	Roberts, Jeremy
Babikian, Aris	Ke, Vincent	Sabawy, Sheref
Bailey, Robert	Khanjin, Andrea	Sandhu, Amarjot
Bethlenfalvy, Peter	Kramp, Daryl	Sarkaria, Prabmeet Singh
Bouma, Will	Lecce, Stephen	Scott, Laurie
Calandra, Paul	Martin, Robin	Skelly, Donna
Cho, Stan	Martow, Gila	Smith, Dave
Clark, Steve	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Coe, Lorne	McKenna, Jane	Surma, Kinga
Crawford, Stephen	McNaughton, Monte	Tangri, Nina
Cuzzetto, Rudy	Mulroney, Caroline	Thanigasalam, Vijay
Downey, Doug	Nicholls, Rick	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dunlop, Jill	Oosterhoff, Sam	Tibollo, Michael A.
Elliott, Christine	Pang, Billy	Triantafilopoulos, Effie J.
Fullerton, Merrilee	Parsa, Michael	Wai, Daisy
Gill, Parm	Phillips, Rod	Walker, Bill
Hogarth, Christine	Piccini, David	Yakabuski, John
Jones, Sylvia	Rasheed, Kaleed	

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy	Schreiner, Mike
Berns-McGown, Rima	Horwath, Andrea	Simard, Amanda
Bourgouin, Guy	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Sara
Collard, Lucille	Monteith-Farrell, Judith	Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie)
Fife, Catherine	Morrison, Suze	Stiles, Marit
Fraser, John	Sattler, Peggy	West, Jamie

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 53; the nays are 18.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing?

Hon. Steve Clark: I'll refer it to social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

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

The House recessed from 1150 to 1300.

PETITIONS

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

Mr. Jamie West: I have a petition that was shared through our hospital, among front-line health care workers—it garnered the first hundreds of signatures in 48 hours, with an online version having already received

40,000 signatures—calling for the \$4 pandemic pay to be fairly distributed. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has announced the temporary pandemic pay in recognition of the dedication, long hours and increased risk of working to contain the COVID-19 outbreak;

“Whereas this increase will provide \$4 per hour worked on top of existing hourly wages, regardless of the qualified employee’s hourly wage. In addition, employees working over 100 hours per month would receive lump sum payments of \$250 per month for each of the next four months;

“Whereas those eligible to receive the payment will be staff working in long-term-care homes, retirement homes, emergency shelters, supportive housing, social services congregate care settings, correction institutions and youth justice facilities, as well as those providing home and community care and staff in hospitals;

“Whereas staff providing front-line clinical services along with those providing support services will be eligible to receive the pandemic payment;

“Whereas it is vital that front-line health care providers are retained as together we continue our fight to stop the spread of COVID-19; and

“Whereas the Ontario government remains committed to using every resource it has to support the front-line workers as we work to stop the spread of COVID-19;

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

“Request that the Premier of Ontario, Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health include all front-line health care providers committed to providing front-line clinical services.

“Health care is comprised of many professionals that provide front-line care and support, and all front-line health care professionals should be included in the temporary pandemic pay program.”

I agree and attach my signature and submit the petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 27, 2020, on the motion relating to certain House proceedings and committee business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this item, the member for London West had the floor. Again, I recognize the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I started my comments this morning with an observation about the change of tone that we have experienced in this Legislature over the last couple of days. We came here in the midst of a pandemic to talk about being one team—“There’s no blue team, orange team, red team or green team; we are one team”—and yet we have seen over the last two days a complete lack of

collaboration, a complete lack of respect for the role of the official opposition.

Speaker, I have to address what we witnessed in this Legislature this morning in terms of a lack of respect for the staff who work in this place, a lack of respect for all of the members who have come in the midst of the pandemic to deal with very, very important public policy issues. We had a vote where the government members came in in full. They completely ignored any rules about physical distancing that we had agreed to. We had agreed to those rules when we first came back here in March, when we came back here in April, when we came back here earlier in May. This government decided to completely and flagrantly ignore those protocols that we had all agreed were important not just for the safety of the people who work in this place and for us as members, but to model the expectations and the behaviours that we are hoping Ontarians continue to observe. Public health is at risk. If we do not continue to observe physical distancing, to maintain two metres’ distance from each other, we are risking the health of others and our own health. When we all go back to our home communities, we go back to our families and we go back to our constituents, we don’t want to be risking their health because of the display that we saw here today. I felt that that was more important context to be provided in terms of the debate on the motion that we are looking at today.

When I concluded my remarks in the morning, I was just reviewing the bills that are going to be addressed in this motion. Bill 156 is scheduled for public hearings. That’s the bill on biosecurity, otherwise known as the ag gag laws. Major, major concerns raised about freedom of speech, freedom of expression—court challenges in other jurisdictions that have been upheld, that these kinds of laws infringe on people’s constitutional freedoms. This is one of the bills that this government thinks should be dealt with in a couple of weeks—on June 8 and 9: two days of public hearings.

They are also looking at bringing in Bill 171, a bill that deals with building transit in the city of Toronto. My goodness, Speaker, there is a need for transit in the city of Toronto, but transit agencies are dealing with a complete collapse of fare revenues. They are dealing with a plummeting of ridership because of the pandemic and because of concerns about what’s going to happen when they ride mass transit systems.

When people want to talk about transit, those are the kinds of things they want to talk about. How are we going to even ensure that we are able to continue operating the transit systems that we already have in place? I know that in my community, in London, the London Transit Commission announced that their budget won’t take them past June unless there’s some kind of major budgetary investment from the city—a city that is already looking at an over \$30-million budget hole as a result of COVID-19 measures.

So let’s talk about transit, but let’s talk about how we are going to keep transit operating in this province. How are we going to help the TTC dig out of the enormous

revenue hole that it has found itself in as a result of COVID-19? These are the kinds of questions that people are asking. When this bill is called before public hearings, if this motion passes—June 8, 9 and 10—I expect that we'll be hearing about that. I expect that when people come to talk about building transit faster in Toronto, they're going to want to talk about how we are going to maintain the transit that we already have.

The other bill that is outlined in this motion deals with home care: Bill 175. Again, that is proposed to come forward for three days of public hearings: June 15, 16 and 17. Every member on the official opposition side who spoke to that bill emphasized the fact that the glaring omission in the bill is any reference to what to do about PSWs, personal support workers. You can't have a home care system if you don't have a sufficient supply of personal support workers.

From what we have heard from the beginning of this crisis, from the PSWs who have contacted all of our offices to tell us about their working conditions, the lack of support, the lack of PPE, the insecurity of their jobs, cobbling together part-time jobs at a number of different agencies or care homes because there is no full-time employment, we know there are no benefits and the wages are deplorable. And this government had decided that it was going to limit all public sector workers to 1%. So you're talking about PSWs who already earned barely above the minimum wage, and this government wants to reward them with a 1% increase, Speaker.

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If we want to have a home care system that actually helps support people's health and well-being, we need to ensure that the workers are there to provide that assistance. We need to make the career of a PSW rewarding. We need to provide the training and supports that they need so that they can provide the care that they want to provide. I recognize that this is a very difficult time for this government, and maybe that's part of what we've seen over the last two days. They are on the hot seat, Speaker, for one of the most damning, scathing reports, I think, ever issued in the province of Ontario. It talked about horrifying, horrifying conditions in the long-term-care homes that were right under the noses of this government for the last two years—right under their noses—and yet it took the military being called in before these horrific abuses were uncovered.

I know it's not easy to be accountable for the issues that were described in that report, but this is a government that has been in office for more than two years and, Speaker, they have to take some accountability. They have to take accountability for the fact that only nine inspections were conducted of the 262 long-term-care homes in the province—because they thought that that was a more efficient use of public dollars, to end the inspections of long-term-care homes. And look where it got us. Yet they want to talk about a bill, they want to bring forward a bill that's going to completely upend the delivery of home care in this province, a system that has already been completely privatized by the Liberals and that relies on PSWs. They think that that's a good thing to do as they're dealing with this complete chaos in the long-term-care system.

We know from reports that the Ontario Health Coalition has issued, we know from the report we got from the military, from the military's investigation of those five long-term-care homes, that the ownership of these care systems has to be looked at, that when you have a privatized system of care for elderly or vulnerable people, then people are more likely to get hurt, people are more likely to die. That is what the Ontario Health Coalition's research showed, Speaker, when they looked at results, in terms of COVID-19 cases, in homes that were owned by private owners and homes that were public or municipally owned. So Speaker, I don't think this is the time to be embarking on this major overhaul of privatized home care, and yet this government thinks that this is a wise thing to do, to bring forward this bill for three days of public hearings in June.

The other bill that the government wants to address is Bill 161. That's the legal aid bill. Again, they want to bring that one forward for three days of public hearings in June. Speaker, let me tell you about some of the supports that legal aid provides for the most vulnerable people in Ontario. I think many of us have come to know Jane Meadus, for example. She's from the legal aid Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, and she's been a very vocal and outspoken advocate for elderly people, for seniors who are living in these horrendous conditions in our long-term-care homes, and thank goodness. Thank goodness for the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, for being a voice for seniors who have been completely ignored and neglected by this government and the Liberals before them.

We also know that legal aid funds the ARCH Disability Law Centre, another very important voice for people who are the most marginalized and disproportionately negatively impacted by COVID-19. People with disabilities are struggling with lack of access to housing, lack of access to employment, food insecurity, lack of access to public transit. Transit system routes are being cancelled. Many don't have vehicles, and yet they are no longer able to access public transportation.

Legal aid also funds the Income Security Advocacy Centre, another very important organization that provides policy recommendations to ensure that the most marginalized in our society are supported, that we have public policies in place that will lift people out of poverty, that will support people in moving forward in employment or education and enable them to live a decent life.

Legal aid also funds the Injured Workers Community Legal Clinic. In the context of COVID-19, when we have heard over and over about workers who have been fearful for their health and safety on the job because of the lack of PPE, the lack of employer support modifications to businesses etc.—workers are being forced to go back to work, are being called back to work. They have no options, in many cases. They are very anxious about what's going to happen to their health when they go into a workplace that does not have adequate safety measures. We know that over 200 people went to the Ministry of Labour and asked for an investigation, and so far, every single one of the investigations that has been launched with the Ministry

of Labour to look at unsafe workplace conditions has been declined.

Earlier this morning, I talked about the fact that the government is not including Thursdays as one of the days that the Legislature will be recalled. Thursday, of course, is the day when we deal with private members' bills. We talked about some of the important policies that have been advanced through private members' legislation in this House. My colleague the MPP for Niagara Falls has a private member's bill on the docket right now that would guarantee presumptive COVID-19-related WSIB coverage. That is an important bill. I can't think of anything that would be more relevant in the context of the pandemic that we are dealing with than that bill, but there won't be an opportunity under this proposal to address that. There won't be an opportunity to address any other private members' bills or motions or policy ideas that members on all sides of the House may have to help the government, to work with the government to benefit the people of this province. All of us are hearing from the people we represent about some of the changes they believe need to be made, some of the challenges that they're dealing with in light of COVID-19. We will have no opportunity to bring those ideas forward in private members' public business, and that is a huge loss for the people of this province.

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I also wanted to talk a little bit about the timelines that are set out in this bill for consideration of these four pieces of legislation. We have seen this before—when we go through the process of having days put aside for public input and then the government gives 24 hours to turn around amendments to the legislation for consideration. I have always been concerned that this does not provide due process. It does not provide the time that is required to actually reflect on the input that is received and turn that input around into amendments. When the timelines are so tight, when the timelines between the final day for written input and the day for amendments to be submitted—it doesn't really allow for the public's voice to be heard because it limits our opportunity to go through the public input that was received, both in presentation form or in written form, and identify what the amendments are that would really make a difference.

In this motion we have very tight timelines for public hearings, very tight timelines for the turnaround from the deadline for written submissions and the submission of amendments for consideration to the bill, and that's a problem. That is a real problem. If we are actually interested in hearing from the people of this province, we wouldn't create timelines like that. We would allow an appropriate opportunity for consideration of the input that was heard and turn that into amendments to improve and strengthen the bill.

The other issue is that the government is proposing that all of the public hearings on the four bills that will be brought forward will be held in Toronto. Now, the first bill that is outlined in this motion, Bill 156, which deals with biosecurity and protection of farm animals—the fact that

this government expects people who may have a strong interest in this legislation, a strong interest in what is needed to protect Ontario's farms—this government is expecting farmers to come to Toronto in early June, in planting season. I don't think that is a good way to enable the participation of the people who are closest to the legislation.

I know that originally public hearings for this bill were planned in other areas of the province. London was one of the locations for those hearings, and I can tell you I'm aware of quite a few Londoners who were looking forward to the opportunity to present to that committee. In the agricultural community in Middlesex county, which surrounds London, there are a lot of people who are involved in agriculture who were looking forward to the opportunity to come and present to committee. I know that the government couldn't prevent the cancellation of those public hearings; I understand why those public hearings had to be cancelled. But now, to reschedule them and to hold them only in Toronto is really disrespectful to the people who the government should want to hear from. The government should want to hear from agricultural workers, without expecting them to travel vast distances to come into Toronto to participate in these public hearings.

Now, I do understand that there's going to be a virtual process. We don't have any information on what that's going to look like, what the requirements will be for presenters to participate in that virtual process because, as I pointed out earlier this morning, the virtual process has never been tried before. We are going to be running four virtual processes almost simultaneously on four very substantive and, frankly, contentious pieces of legislation, and that's a problem.

With that, I would like to move an amendment to the motion.

I move that the motion be amended by striking out "Tuesdays and Wednesdays" in the second paragraph and replacing it with "Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays"; and

By striking out "Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays" in the third paragraph and replacing it with "Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays"; and

By deleting everything following "once all deferred votes have been taken; and".

I will give the amendment—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Sattler has moved that the motion be amended by striking out "Tuesdays and Wednesdays" in the second paragraph and replacing it with "Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays"; and

By striking out "Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays" in the third paragraph and replacing it with "Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays"; and

By deleting everything following "once all deferred votes have been taken; and".

I'll recognize again the member for London West to continue the debate, now on the amendment.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes. Thank you very much, Speaker. This amendment, I think, demonstrates the official

opposition's commitment to working on behalf of the people of this province. We not only want to be here two days a week in June; we want to be here three days a week. We want to be here Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. In July, we don't just want to be here three days a week; we want to be here four days a week. We want to work on behalf of the people of this province.

The amendment that I have proposed, by including Thursdays in both June and July, will enable the consideration of private members' motions and private members' bills. As I have already pointed out in my remarks, these are important opportunities. Private members' public business is fundamental to the democratic process. It reflects our rights, our privileges, our obligations as representatives of the people who elected us to come to this place. We know that many private members' bills or private members' motions originate from an issue that we have learned about in our riding. They originate from a constituent who has brought our attention to a gap or a problem that can be fixed through legislation. That, Speaker, is the logic behind the first two parts of the amendment. We want to work. We want to work hard on behalf of the people we represent and work hard on behalf of the people in this province.

The third part of the amendment calls for the deletion of the four bills that are identified in this motion. We believe that now is the time for this Legislature to be looking at legislation that addresses COVID-19-related issues. We had a consensus. We had an agreement among all the parties that that was going to be our focus, that this is what we were going to be doing as the Legislature resumed. So to see a motion that doesn't provide any opportunity for consideration of COVID-19-related bills, that simply rams through some leftover items of this government's agenda—an agenda, frankly, that has failed the people of this province, an agenda that cut millions of dollars from public health, compromised our ability to respond to this pandemic, an agenda that eliminated inspections in long-term-care homes—this is the kind of agenda that this government is narrowly focused on pushing through, and that's a problem for us.

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We want to be here. We want to be talking about the priorities that we're hearing about in our communities. We look forward to working with this government on legislation that's going to address those priorities.

We would hope that the government would be interested in hearing from us, hearing our views on actions that could be taken to support Ontarians who are struggling with the impact of COVID-19; for example, a commercial rent subsidy. That is something that we would be very interested in working with the government on. We know that they believe the program that they've put in place is just great—"Let's not rush to judgment on it. Let's see how it's working." Well, we know it is not working. All of us have been hearing from businesses in our communities that they can't stay afloat and cannot see a way to survive to the end of this pandemic. They are facing huge fixed costs, of rent that has to continue to be paid, of

utilities that have to continue to be paid. In my riding of London West, many of them don't have enough staff that would qualify them to apply for the federal wage subsidy. They're not getting anything. They have landlords who don't want to participate in the commercial rent program. They are desperate. I know that we have all heard those stories of desperate businesses. That is something we could be talking about on a Thursday in private members' public business—about bringing in some meaningful rent relief for businesses in this province so that they don't go under, so that we still have an economy to return to once we get through this pandemic.

We could also be talking about the implementation of some of those fixes in long-term care that need to be taken now. We have been very clear that a public inquiry does not mean putting off decisions about changes that need to be made until the inquiry is reported a couple of years down the road—an independent, transparent, fully public inquiry, under the Public Inquiries Act—that can identify right away the changes that need to be made now, the legislative changes that might need to be implemented to support it. That legislation could be brought in over June and July. We could move quickly to address some of the appalling abuses of our seniors in the five long-term-care homes that were supported by the military. Unfortunately, I don't think any of us believe that there were only five. Unfortunately, there were only five that the military went into. It is very, very concerning to think about the conditions that our frail elderly are living in in those other 257 long-term-care homes that the military didn't go into.

Speaker, these are the opportunities we have before us to be nimble, to be responsive, to really address the priorities that people in this province have identified, the things that they want all of us to be working together on, and to bring in legislation initiatives to deal with those things.

I have not received a single email from somebody who wants to know, "When will Bill 171 go forward on the public agenda?" "When will Bill 175"—Bill 175, again, is the home care act. If anything, I have received emails from people who are very concerned about home care. They do not see Bill 175 as the solution.

I heard from vulnerable people who were receiving services from a PSW. The private agency that the PSW worked for was not requiring that PSW to wear PPE when they went in to support that constituent. Meanwhile, that PSW may have been going into 20 different homes in a week and all the while not wearing masks, not wearing gloves and exposing very, very vulnerable people to potential COVID-19 infection. I don't fault the PSW. The PSW was absolutely working under the rules that the private sector agency had established, and that PSW was failed by those rules. Those vulnerable constituents were failed by the lack of protection for that worker and for themselves.

Speaker, I would love to be looking at paid sick days. We saw the Premiers of BC, Manitoba and Yukon release a statement about how excited they were about working with the federal government to implement those 10 paid

sick days. We haven't heard a thing from this government about when workers in this province are going to be protected with paid sick days. In fact, they say that that's politicizing, that it's being political, asking when Ontario workers can expect to see paid sick days. That's not political; that is good public policy. That is what workers in this province need and expect from us.

Speaker, I hope that people support my motion. I will conclude my remarks now.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to get up and rise today and talk a little bit about the motion that was put forward by the government and just only briefly touch on the amendment by the opposition—in the sense that what the amendment does, really, is expose the Jekyll and Hyde that has become the NDP of today.

Let me explain that, Mr. Speaker. The public face of the NDP is that they want to work, they want to be in this chamber. The non-public face of the NDP is, “We need to adjourn this place on June 3 and get out of here as quickly as possible”—because that's what the discussion has been about for weeks.

What we have done, what the government has done, is we said, “Look, this House is supposed to adjourn on June 3, but as opposed to adjourning on June 3, we are going to keep the Legislature in session. We're going to keep the Legislature in session to deal with important public matters—COVID-19, yes, but other issues that are important to the people of Ontario—so that we can continue to have an economy, or bring back an economy, that has suffered through COVID-19.” That's the reality.

Now, I appreciate that the NDP would love not to debate the items that are on the legislative agenda. They're the official opposition, and I appreciate the fact that it would be in their interest for the government not to move forward with an agenda. Of course, they would want the government not to move forward with an agenda, but we have an agenda that we were elected by the people of the province of Ontario to fulfill, and we will do that because it's in the best interests of the people of the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we always touch a nerve when we call out the NDP. Then what happens, then you get the catcalling back and forth and the heckling. They get really upset because what happens is that the members on this side of the House touch a nerve with them when they're called out for the inconsistencies of their messaging.

The member opposite, the deputy opposition House leader, earlier—just now—talked about the horror that all the members had to come in and vote in the fashion that we did. I want to, just if I can go back to prior to question period today, when I rose in this place and sought unanimous consent, after having provided the motion in advance to the opposition—it was, “Mr. Speaker, I move that for any recorded division today members may rise and be

counted from the public galleries.” Just so people at home are aware, the public galleries—not the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but the galleries that surround the floor, which would have allowed for members to social distance, which would have allowed for the scene that we saw today not to happen. The NDP said no, they would not give consent for the Legislature to vote in that fashion, Mr. Speaker.

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Interjections: Shame.

Hon. Paul Calandra: And why?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I don't know why, but that is something that they'll have to explain to the people of the province of Ontario. We had to have our vote passed.

I want to just raise a couple of things that are top of mind because she talked about this. She talked about committees and how farmers are going to have to come to the city of Toronto, in particular, on the farm trespass bill. Well, that's just simply not accurate. It's just simply not accurate. In fact, it really, again, highlights just how antiquated today's NDP are, just how in the past they are. I know—I can't speak to the colleagues opposite—that the members of this caucus have been on Zoom and other communication methods and video conferencing, day in and day out, since this began. They've been on their telephones, they've been reaching out to people in a way that I, as a House leader and as a member who has been both here for a bit and federally—I can't be even more proud than I am of this caucus for all of the work that they have done.

But we also understand that they have a role to play. The opposition has a role to play. That is their job. They are the official opposition. One of the most important parts of a parliamentary system is that the government is held accountable for the decisions that it makes. Now, we could do what the NDP and Liberals in Ottawa have done and bring down Parliament in a secret deal. We could do that. We have a majority. But we said no. What we said instead was that we would come back to this Legislature, we would deal with COVID-19 issues and we will deal with other issues that are important to the people of Ontario. Because we have to be ready when we come out of this COVID-19 pandemic. Our economy has to be ready. Our transit and transportation systems have to be ready. Now is not the time for the people of the province of Ontario or their government or their Parliament to simply put its hands up in the air and wash themselves, absolve themselves, of any responsibility.

We are in a very fortunate spot here. We're very lucky. Unlike the millions of people who are unemployed, who are faced with having their CERB or their other supports taken away from them, the people who are losing jobs, the stores that might be closing on our main streets, every single one of us has continued to get a paycheque, and I know on this side of the House, every single one of these members behind me have earned that. But they don't forget for a second how privileged they are that the people of the province of Ontario continue to pay them, and we don't earn that trust by washing our hands of a crisis, by

washing our hands of an economy that needs our help, by washing our hands of the main streets and the small and medium and large enterprises that need our help. And we're going to sit here in this place and we're going to do that, Mr. Speaker. That's important to us. It's important to our constituents.

She talked about private members' business. We showed yesterday that we actually don't need a Thursday to deal with private members' business. We took government time and we dealt with private members' business. Go figure, Mr. Speaker, that we can find time on the schedule to deal with private members' business.

Interjections.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Now, I'm hearing some of the members opposite chuckle, "Well, it's government legislation." That didn't stop them—it's a private member's bill—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Waterloo, come to order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —and the member for Eglinton—Lawrence did really good work on this. But that didn't stop them for the last, I don't know, what, six, seven hours, taking credit for it, saying how they worked with us, to bring it forward. To their credit, they did work with us and that's why we took government time to deal with a private member's business, and we can do that, coming forward.

She talks about how we should work together. We have done nothing but try to work with the NDP since this broke. In fact, again, the member for—is it Kitchener?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Waterloo.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Waterloo. She chuckles and laughs—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Yes, I'm laughing at you.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —but the deputy House leader of the opposition will know that she has spent hours on Zoom with me, the House leader for the Liberals, the leader of the Green Party, my deputy House leader—literally hours—as we negotiated elements of every single thing that we did here, every single thing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back, if I can, to May 11. On May 11, we brought forward—I guess it was May 12. We brought forward some extensive legislation in this House that passed with unanimous support. In order to get to that, we spent over seven hours on Zoom together. I brought in over 40 officials, public officials from the public service, to talk about the legislation that we wanted to bring forward, to give them the opportunity to see it, to talk about it, to make comments about it. Not only was the deputy opposition House leader on, not only was the House leader for the opposition on the call, but members of the Leader of the Opposition's staff were on the call, the critics were on the call, and they had suggestions. In fact, part of those suggestions was that two of the bills that we wanted to proceed with should be taken off the order paper and debated at a future date in time. We did that. But what did the Leader of the Opposition say? I can tell you what she said, Mr. Speaker. I'm not going to read the whole thing, but she said—

Interjection.

Hon. Paul Calandra: It's not actually confidential, because she said it when asked by the press about working with the government.

She said, "Up until now, we've had no indication from the government of what kind of bill"—this is the day before—"they're going to be introducing in the House tomorrow. Again, I mean, I think that that's something that didn't have to go that way. I've not spoken to the Premier once. He hasn't picked up the phone." Well, we know that not to be the case.

She goes on to say, "Unfortunately, you know, other than the negotiations of the nuts and bolts of how the sessions are going to happen when we come back into the House, we have not been overly engaged by the government in the legislation they want to bring forward."

I guess the only thing I can surmise from that is that the opposition House leaders are not explaining to them that they actually negotiated the withdrawal of two bills from the package, that when they gave us unanimous consent on every single bill that we brought forward up until this point, including a financial statement, they just simply hadn't read any of it. They must not have known, Mr. Speaker—or the Leader of the Opposition's own staff, who sat in on these meetings and helped negotiate some of these bills, simply didn't tell their leader. That's the only thing I can surmise. Why would the Leader of the Opposition undermine all of the hard work that was done not only by members on this side, but members of her own caucus, members of the people on her own team, the leader of the Green Party and the House leader for the Liberal Party, and then come out and say this every single time?

Just last week, colleagues, we allowed an opposition day motion to come into this place, because we know it's important that the opposition has an opportunity to speak on things that are important to them. In that agreement—"Don't worry, we only want 70 minutes to speak to it, and then we can get out of here and go on and do other things that are important." Part of that agreement was that I would sit down my members after two speeches to allow them to go on for 70 minutes. Later on in the day, when they took it right through to the end of the day—"Oops, sorry. My bad." That is the spirit in which the NDP has been moving since March, since we left this place. They have had to be shamed every step of the way.

To their credit, on most of those instances, they finally came around because they knew the public would not tolerate the types of behaviour that we see behind the scenes, when the Jekyll and Hyde comes through. And then of course, when they're in public, they say one thing—it's outrage that members have to come in and vote—but when they think nobody is listening, they deny unanimous consent for the members of this House to vote in the public galleries, in a way that is safe to all people, and then feign surprise that, hey, we want to pass the legislation that is important to us.

She talks about the importance of debate. They allowed two bills to pass yesterday. They didn't have enough people who wanted to speak to these bills, debate collapsed and we were able to move forward to a vote

today. They talk about the bills that are on the order paper. There are a number of bills that are on the order paper. We're proud of some of these bills. They don't like some of them, but they don't want to debate them. They don't want to debate them.

When you look at farm trespass, there have already been—it was introduced 177 days ago. There have been over 22 speeches; 24 other members have participated in questions and answers. On Smarter and Stronger Justice—170 days on the order paper, 23 speeches; 28 members have participated in debate on that. Bill 171: 22 members have provided speeches; 39 others have participated in debate on that. Bill 175, introduced 92 days ago: 27 members have spoken to it; 24 members have participated in debate. Bill 159, 174 days ago: 14 people have spoken to it; 23 members have participated in debate. If I'm not mistaken, that bill was sent to committee after first reading so that people could comment on what they heard, and it was so well received that we couldn't fill the committee days.

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In fact, that's been the case on a lot of the bills that we have been bringing forward recently. We are unable to fill the committee days because the bills have been done properly. It is not my job to help the opposition do its job. I can only surmise that when they can't speak to bills in the length of time we are providing, they are supportive of the measures that we are doing. It's not my job to help them do their job; it's my job, as the government House leader, to help the government move forward its agenda. That's what we are doing.

We can move forward an agenda on the economy, we can move forward an agenda on long-term care, we can move forward an agenda on health care, and we can move forward an agenda that sees our supports for our small, medium and large enterprises move forward. We can see an agenda that helps our cultural and tourism communities that are desperate for our help and advice. We can do that while still continuing to do the people's business in this place. Our example should not be what happened in Ottawa: Cave in and go away. That's not what we're going to do here. We're going to pass the people's business because they've told us that they want us to do that.

Mr. Speaker, in the motion that we are debating today there are important measures that will allow all members of this place to vote, because we recognize the fact that people in the opposition might not necessarily be supportive of the bills that we have brought forward. We do not think it's appropriate that a majority government dictates to the opposition, to the members of this Legislature, what you can or can't vote for.

So what we've done is created a system that will allow all of the members of this Legislature to come in and vote on bills, by creating a "yea" lobby and a "nay" lobby for voting, in much the same way that the mother Parliament does in the United Kingdom, and staggering votes over a half-hour time period. You will have a half hour to make your way, if you're in support of a bill, into the government lobby; if you're opposed to a bill, into the opposition

lobby. You will have a half hour so that we can respect physical distancing, so that what happened today doesn't happen again; so that the government doesn't have to be reliant on the opposition to give us unanimous consent to vote in a way that I think the people of province of Ontario would expect, and so that the government doesn't decide who the 15 members on that side are who can come in and vote against something and who the 25 members on this side are who will come in and vote for something.

We're collecting our paycheques; we should be here doing this work. That's what the people of the province of Ontario expect, Mr. Speaker, and we are going to find ways to make sure that we do that. If July 23 isn't enough, then we'll come back and do more, because that's our job. If it means that we have to vote in this fashion until December, then that's how we will do it, because it is completely inappropriate and unacceptable that some people think that I as a House leader or the opposition House leader should decide which one of these members should come in here and vote on Bill 177.

I can tell you that all of my members want to have a say on Bill 177. All of my members want to have a say on transit and transportation issues. All of my members want to talk about the great things that have been happening in their communities, despite the fact that we are dealing with a global pandemic.

I reference the member for Mississauga–Lakeshore, who has been spending not only hours of time on the phone and on Zoom meetings with us, but has spent an enormous amount of time delivering meals, not only into his own riding but into communities—all of us have had that opportunity.

The member for Scarborough–Rouge Park, who was fighting hard to find a way so that we could visit the zoo in a way that was respectful and allowed social distancing—you know what? We're able to do that.

All of the members in this place have been meeting with their chambers of commerce, and, I can tell you, there's not one chamber of commerce that has turned to me and said, "Yes, it's all right. Don't worry about us. Adjourn the House until September." You know what they've said? We've seen this with the Standing Committee on Finance that is coming up. You talk about co-operation. What did the government do on that? We actually expanded the committee so that it would include the leader of the Green Party and it would include a member of the Liberal Party. We added an independent to the subcommittee. We added members of the official opposition to the subcommittee. We had unanimous consent in public—in public—for how SCOFEA, the Standing Committee on Finance, would work. So one would think, given the unanimous consent, that that committee would be up and running. Well, it's not, Mr. Speaker, and I can give you one guess as to why it's not. It certainly isn't the members on this side and it's not the independent members. That's not why that committee isn't up and running right now listening to people in the tourism industry. That's not why that committee is not running and talking about culture or hearing from the Minister of Finance, like we agreed to do. We agreed to

bring the Minister of Finance. That committee should be up and running.

I have every confidence that this Legislative Assembly can actually put together meetings online so that people from across the province—whether they're in my riding, whether they're in Kenora or anywhere else—if they want to speak to one of these bills, they will have an opportunity this summer to talk to their legislators, the people who they're paying to do this work, to give their advice. They'll have more time to do it because that's the commitment that we have made. They'll have more time to do it. I have every confidence in this Legislature and the people who have brought us here and allow us to do this work that we'll be able to do this, and that the people of Ontario will be satisfied to know that their members of Parliament are working very hard, and that we have not just given up. We've said just the opposite.

Not only are we going to beat this pandemic, but when we come out of it, Ontario will be stronger than ever before. This Legislature will have done its job, and we won't take the example of the NDP or anybody else. We will sit, we will do our job, because that's what people are paying us to do, and we are grateful to the people of the province of Ontario for giving us the opportunity to do it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the members to take their seats.

Further debate.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my privilege to follow the government House leader today, and I don't know what to say in some ways because he just always seems cantankerous in this Legislature. I think, what is in his cornflakes in the morning that he has to come into this Legislature and constantly just assume that we aren't here to assist—maybe because we have a different way of doing it. It's not always what you want when you want it.

He gives the examples, and we've all talked about this, about how this week, or yesterday, we brought legislation forward and it was passed etc. The difference is—and I don't know what he's thinking and why he would operate this way—we weren't given any advance notice as to what they wanted to debate. And then to say things such as we didn't want to debate it—people do need preparation time. It's been a long time. We've all been home dealing with the pandemic on Zoom, online, on teleconferences 24 hours a day, seven days a week—all of us. All of us have been doing that work. We haven't been sitting and not working. None of us have been doing that. We all come here in the spirit of being servants to the public. That means when we're not sitting, even when there isn't a pandemic, when we're in our ridings, we aren't on break. We're not on vacation. We're actually serving the people who elected us to be here.

Sometimes the things that he speaks about—again, I don't even know how to comment on them, other than he is someone who's generally painting a picture that the opposition isn't willing to work in House leaders' meetings.

I have to say—I'm going to give everyone the benefit of the doubt, including him—that I'm sure he has his view

on how things should go, but then so do other people. Where you have to come together—I think sometimes that is where the friction is, how to come together in different ways, and it's not just always you want what you want when you want it.

1400

The motion that was brought forward—I understand that the government wants to move the business of this Legislature, but we are in a pandemic. There is so much going on outside of these four walls, and we have to address those things. Yes, there were agreements made, and if there are perceptions that those agreements are changed, why not come and speak and discuss it, as opposed to bringing the motion and making things so outside of the agreements that people are concerned as to where we're going during a pandemic.

One of the bills, I have to say, is Bill 175, and it's the bill that's connecting people to home and community care. Again, in the context of a pandemic, putting this bill into this motion to push it faster through the Legislature isn't a good idea. This is the time that you can take this opportunity to actually look at the home care bill, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, around the pandemic. They have the power to make those changes.

I'm sure everyone has talked to home care workers, long-term-care workers, essential workers. We've all had these experiences; they're not unique to any one of us. I spoke to home care workers and they said, "What we do is that we get one mask a day," and they have to pick them up at the mask depot. That's what they told me. They're surgical masks. They get six masks a week if they work six days, and they get them in a brown paper bag. They have to wear one mask all day, and they see—this is what they said—10 different people during the day. And so when we're talking about that particular description, and then we're pushing through Bill 175, which is the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, again, we have to stop and think about what's going on during the pandemic, during the coronavirus, and how it's going to implicate what legislation we're passing now.

Some of these pieces can, of course, be brought back. Again, we just had discussions about how the bills would be COVID-19-related, health-related, that kind of thing—emergency management orders. This is a bill that has a distinction that we can make, so why not bring that bill in? Why not discuss it or debate it and make sure that there are things that we can foresee in the future about prevention when it comes to viruses and workers in the workplace.

The other thing I can tell you that the home care workers talked about is that they're expected to take the mask and use it—like I said, one a day, right? And then they have to go into the office for gloves and hand sanitizers. They're not brought to them, so they've got to go to the depot for the surgical masks, and then they've got to go to the head office of this care provider to get their gloves and their hand sanitizers—and they get as many as they want, so they said that was a good thing, so there are some positives there. But what they want to know is, "Why can't we have a mask for each visit?", because that

was a better process for them. They felt that, number one, you don't want to be spreading the virus from resident to resident when you're in a home care situation, and you're also very much going home after visiting people in home care, bringing it home to your family.

We have often talked about home care, and it's another whole, big health care discussion that needs to be fixed, along with long-term care. I know that I've been on the long-term-care file for many years, and I've brought these issues many times, numerous times. I brought forward the public inquiry, in the election of 2018 at that point, when we had Wettlaufer, to expand it, and that was shot down. I don't know why governments of the day don't want to actually acknowledge what the real problems are and then just fix them. We're all talking about how we shouldn't be blaming any government. Well, then, you know what? Do the right thing, get the real problems on the table and then repair it, because then it doesn't keep trickling down to the next government, where someone tinkers on a commission or tinkers on a committee. It doesn't really get to the root of the problem, and then it passes on to the next government that's in power and then everybody is to blame. Well, we can stop that.

When the Premier said "hell or high water"—I think that was what it was. I can't remember. Am I allowed to say that? I'll change that: Heck or high water. Excuse me. I apologize. I was just quoting and not thinking of that. When he said that, the public inquiry, the independent, transparent public inquiry, where you can find the problem and fix the problem intermittently—it doesn't mean you have to stop fixing the problems; that can be done, and that is something that we've been pushing for.

Now, I'm going back to the private members' bill piece, how we are asking for Thursdays to be included in this whole debate. As the government House leader said, it doesn't negate the ability of this Legislature to pass a private member's bill. No, it does not, but the ones that are introduced are already there, and so, therefore, when you present a private member's bill, you can only do it as an introduction. You can introduce a bill and that's it. If we have Thursdays, we can actually debate it for the time that we are allowed as members to bring issues forward.

I have a bill, Bill 13, on the books, which is the Time to Care Act. The government is looking for solutions around long-term care and how to solve these problems. Well, the Time to Care Act gives you a solution to that. It's not just myself and the member from Nickel Belt who have advocated for this; it's also other stakeholders that have advocated for this. So if he is looking to balance out passing government bills to private members' bills, I urge the government to pass my bill, Bill 13, the Time to Care bill, in that vein. We'll see if that happens—but giving people enough advance notice in order to properly represent their constituents, I think, should be the professional standard in this Legislature.

We're all elected by our constituents in each one of our ridings. We all want to do the best job that we can. We all want to bring their voices and their problems to the Legislature, in a way that's not sarcastic, in goodwill. I

think we all do that. When we ask questions or when we bring stories forward in our debates, we're all doing that. But if we're not given the opportunity to, again, discuss these things, then it takes away that privilege that we do have. We're all here on borrowed time. We don't know what the next two years are going to bring, so we all want to do the best job possible. We all want to bring those strong legislative pieces that our constituents have endured.

Some of the legislation is feel-good legislation. They do good things. They're promoting wonderful, positive things, like when we talk about certain heritage days or awareness days. And then there is other legislation with very, very heartfelt, horrible stories that push us to bring legislation forward in order to make real change. It could just affect one family that you have, but then all of a sudden you talk about this issue and you see that it's widespread. And it's not anyone in particular that owns that issue, because once you start bringing up a private member's bill, as if we had the Thursdays, like we present in this motion, then what would happen is, you would actually get this back and forth and you'd hear it from other members on the government side, the independents, the opposition side. You would hear the commonalities of what is happening in other ridings that they can actually identify with and hopefully support, get to committee and pass one day.

But I have to say that the other three bills the government wants to quickly push through—I did look at the scheduling; maybe they know this, or maybe they don't. They've got Bill 156, which, again, is a very important bill. It's the biodiversity bill. In the context, again, of what we're living through, the pandemic, there are many people who work in processing plants, right? You know that there are farmers worrying about the supply and demand and how that's going to work. That is on June 8. Hearings are 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and then 1 p.m. to 6 p.m., and then so is building transit, Bill 171. That's also 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. on June 8, and then on June 9, they've got it again at the same times. Then there is an extra day under Bill 171, the transit bill, where—again, I'm not presuming this could be a conflict for anyone, but it's a possibility.

1410

And that's where you have to—when you say, "This is what I'm offering you," and then someone points out, "Well, perhaps this is something that can be changed because it could be a challenge." You can have farmers who are interested in transit. You can have people who are in transit interested in the farming. You are going to end up having people decide, "Where do I want to go? Can I present on two? Am I able to with the scheduling?"

Again, when we are in a coronavirus piece, yes, we're all home, but there are parents who are home with their children and working, trying to juggle that. There are people home who took their families, their loved ones, out of long-term care to look after them. So they can't just necessarily drop everything and plug in to those two days if they have an interest in either one, and that's very plausible.

I have to say, as much as the government House leader or the government wants to paint that picture, I would ask that they remember that the intentions of everyone in this Legislature are to bring their best foot forward to represent their constituents and to try to work within what their beliefs are, what their best decisions they feel will be able to help move things forward. It may not always be what you say, and you may want to do whatever you want to do. But giving the courtesy, the respect, the professional back and forth so that we would have known on Tuesday we were going to come in and debate the defibrillator bill, would have been good. You're a majority government. You can do what you like. You can bring it forward, and no one takes that away from you. But it is helpful to us if we're given that instead of catching people off guard: "Hah, we got you. Because you did this, I'm doing that."

I don't see how that is helpful going forward. I don't see how that is helpful, especially when we are supposed to be under this time, in a coronavirus situation, trying to work so that we can accomplish what we're supposed to be doing for the people. They're the ones that are depending on us to work together to come up with things that are going to prevent this from happening again. Nobody wants to see this occur again, and there are so many things that can be done, like I say, under Bill 175 that's been put in the motion, that we could be doing differently.

I suggest one of the things we should be doing differently is looking at, again, the not-for-profit home care piece. Under previous governments, a lot of privatization was implemented in health care, and it's not a good model. All dollars that go into public health care should be for care, should be patient-centred. I heard the minister say that today, that it should be patient-centred. How you get care patient-centred is you make sure that all the money you put into public health care is used for care. That's patient-centred, right?

Having the government wanting to push this through the Legislature and, again, not even testing what a virtual committee composition would look like—that leaves a lot of questions: Are there going to be hiccups where people aren't going to be able to get on? Is there going to be a problem because people can't get on to present? Not everybody has the Internet throughout the whole province. Not everybody can get access to it. Is that going to be a concern? There are a lot of unanswered questions when you do that.

I only ask this government that they do consider that amendment, and even look at the difference in days that we suggested, to give people the opportunity to bring legislation and have it debated. As much as they want to debate their government bills, and they have a right to do that—so do members who are elected in their ridings to come to this Legislature and bring their ideas forward to make changes where they and their constituents live, and also have that debated.

With that being said, I will conclude my debate on this motion.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I want to begin my remarks today by saying that I support having us sit this summer so

that we can focus on combatting the virus and so we can focus on how we can safely reopen our economy and recover from this crisis.

I know that all members from every party in this House have been working incredibly long hours, meeting with our constituents, helping our constituents and listening to their concerns. We all want to come back here this summer and bring their concerns to this Legislature so we can act.

While I have some concerns with the original motion, the amendment that the member from London West brought forward addresses many of those concerns. But I'll also suggest to my opposition colleagues that I believe that we could have addressed a lot of these concerns if we would all just engage together in good-faith negotiations. When I say that, I say that to every member of this House, myself included. We can all do better to rise to this occasion.

I have been so proud of the way this House has conducted itself over the last two months. People have set aside partisanship. I call it "quarantining partisanship." We have done that. We haven't all agreed. We've met four times in extraordinary sittings to pass bills and even a mini-budget through unanimous consent. It's extraordinary that we've been able to do that, but it makes sense given the extraordinary crisis that we're facing.

Now this week, I sadly see that unity slipping away. It disappoints me, Speaker, because I think that in this time of crisis, the people of Ontario expect us to work together. They expect us to be stronger together. That hashtag has meaning. It's not just a hashtag; it actually has meaning. I believe it's our responsibility to live up to the expectations on which we were elected to live up to—not to play petty political games with each other, but to actually do the people's work, not just in words but in actions.

We have made a difference. We have shown people we can do that. But what does it say to people that while our public health leaders are scolding people for what happened at Trinity Bellwoods Park on Saturday, we saw what happened in this House this morning? Because we couldn't all agree on a unanimous consent motion, the people crammed in this House. We violated public health guidelines this morning, because we couldn't agree on a unanimous consent motion.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to play a blame game. I don't want to point fingers, because we're all responsible for that, and I include myself in that. I've ratcheted up the partisanship over the last few days; I think we all have. In some ways, it's probably inevitable. It is politics, after all. We were all elected here with a different vision, with a different agenda, with different policies that we wanted to support and fight for. The people who voted for us expect us to fight for those policies with passion and commitment. I believe we can do it and still figure out ways to work together.

So when we debate bills over the next few weeks, instead of trying to navigate the private property rights of farmers with the constitutional rights of activists, why don't we talk about how our food system can be resilient in the face of the COVID-19 crisis? Instead of talking

about new ways of building transit, can we talk about how we can make sure our transit systems actually survive this crisis? And instead of playing political games, can we get this finance committee working, with all members talking about ways in which we can bring forward legislation to debate in this House that helps us with the economic recovery?

1420

My gosh, people, think of the front-line workers putting their lives on the line to keep us safe and healthy. Think of the small business owners who are barely hanging on. Think of the people in long-term care. The tragedy continues, and we have to solve it. Think of the millions of Ontarians out of work. And then ask yourselves what they are asking of us, that we could maybe at least come up with a summer schedule together that works—and yes, I believe we should have PMBs, but maybe we can figure out a way to do that without this acrimonious debate.

So I'm asking members of the government, the government House leader specifically—who, I will remind everyone, has given the opposition more time to participate in debates and to hold the government accountable—I'm asking the official opposition and I'm asking the independents; I'm asking us all to come together and reach a compromise for the summer sitting, because the people of Ontario expect that of us.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour and a privilege to be able to rise in this Legislature. I'm now in my ninth year sitting in this Legislature, and it's been a true honour and privilege to represent the people of, previously, Chatham-Kent-Essex, now Chatham-Kent-Leamington.

Speaker, a couple of things I want to point out: Back in 2018—you know what? That's almost two years ago—when we were all in this Legislature, pounding a beat and wondering on that identified day, will we be elected or, in some cases, re-elected to represent the people of our ridings. I was successful and everyone in this Legislature was successful, back in June 2018.

We formed government. We formed government with a purpose. We had a mandate. We ran on a mandate. All the other parties had their mandates as well. Perhaps some of the mandates overlapped, and of course, because of our various backgrounds and political affiliations, some of those mandates did not overlap. It made them very distinct and very clear.

Earlier this morning, I listened intently to the member from Barrie-Innisfil as she read—and it was lengthy—the motion that we initially started to debate this morning and earlier this afternoon, for which then the official opposition brought forward an amendment, of which we are addressing the amendment to the motion. I looked at it and I thought to myself, the initial motion had us sitting on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in June and on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays in July—I think three weeks totalling nine days in July and—you can do the math—I think it was six days, maybe, in June.

Interjection.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: How many? Four days. I guess I'm thinking the first week of June and then the other sittings.

Regardless of that, now the amendment wants to add Thursdays to that particular motion, from what I'm hearing—and there's a whole bunch of other things they want to drop off in terms of committee hearings. I have concerns about that.

I'm going to go back to 2018, when we formed government, based on a mandate. We still have that mandate, and we're working hard for the people in Ontario. Yes, that means the people in our ridings, but it also means the people in your ridings in the opposition as well—because we're not just for Progressive Conservatives. We're for all Ontarians, which include your members, of the NDP, of the Liberals, of the Green Party, and independents as well.

So when I think about that and I try to look further, I think to myself, “Well, because of our mandate, we need to get things done.” Now, the member for Guelph spoke about working together. I couldn't agree with him more. How do we do that? I, for one, am an individual that likes to lay partisanship aside, because we should all have the attitude in this Legislature that we work for the better whole. We work for everyone. We will differ on our approach. We may differ with our ideas, concepts. That's the democratic process. I think it's important for us all to realize, though, that we still need to get work done.

Nobody knew. Nobody planned. Nobody had any idea of what COVID-19 was. I've said to people back in my riding, “We are involved in world war III. The only difference from other world wars is in this world war, we cannot see our enemy. It's that virus.” So as a government, we didn't have a playbook to fall back on. We had to create a playbook. It wasn't just us, though. It was listening to other ideas that may have come forward from other members in this Legislature, be it from the official opposition, the Green Party, from the independents, the Liberals, because we work together on this.

I say all of that because this COVID-19 has set the world back on its heels. We've got to work hard, and we continue to work for the people, we continue to look forward and—as I say to people—look up. Why do I do that? Because it's funny, when we are in stressful situations, anxiety, and we all know—and maybe some of us in this Legislature have experienced fear. I say to people, “Do not live in fear, because if you live in fear, you can be controlled.” Rather, as a government, we have put forth guidelines to help people, to take away that anxiety, some of that fear. The guidelines themselves are put in place to keep people safe. Premier Ford has talked about and emphasizes, day in and day out, the importance of maintaining the health and safety of all Ontarians. Some people might say, “He's not moving fast enough,” and other people would say, “Boy, slow down. You move too fast.”

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Got to make the morning last.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: There was a song in there. I know, I know; those of you who know me, everything is a song. Everything is a song. Thank you to the member from—

Mrs. Robin Martin: It's a good vintage.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Golly—from Windsor-Tecumseh, yes. He and I, we have a lot of fun with that. It's because we're vintage—same vintage and so on.

Again, I look at this. This COVID-19 was unplanned. We as a government still need to proceed with getting business done. We can't let COVID-19 keep us back on our heels. Oh, has it knocked us back a bit? You bet it has.

1430

For the opposition, your mandate is to hold the government accountable. I get that. Because from your vantage point, when you look across the aisle, you see an eagle—watching the government with an eagle eye. I said “eagle,” not “evil”; there is a difference.

But we on this side, when we look across at the opposition and we look upwards, we see an owl, which means we have to create legislation—hopefully with everyone's help, but there will be differences and we get that—but we have to exercise wisdom in our decision-making.

Unfortunately, one size does not fit all. I would caution people during COVID-19—I have told people: Do not wear stretchy pants, a one-size-fits-all, because when you get back into regular clothes, you are going to realize, oops, I might be carrying a COVID-19 quarter pounder or two—or maybe three. Listen, in times like this, if you do not have a sense of humour, what do you have? What do you have? Humour will also help to get those endorphins flowing, and that's healthy.

So golly, when I look at things and I talk about the current situation, we're all here. We want to get business done.

I want to go back to the Thursday sittings that the amendment is really addressing as well, because I don't believe I've mentioned it. When we have Thursday sittings, all of us in this Legislature know and realize, that's also an opportunity for private members' business, PMBs, as we call them. The member from London West spoke earlier about the member from Niagara Falls who has a PMB. I looked at the schedule, and he is not scheduled until November.

There has also been a total of nine other PMBs that have been waived right now—mine was one of them—because of the cancellation and the House not sitting. I'm okay with that, because here's the other thing: There are other members in this Legislature, those who maybe had their PMBs waived for now—because when we come back, that opportunity will exist. But in addition to that, there isn't the legislative counsel here to help us create proper legislation for private members' bills. That's very problematic, and we have to kind of still go in order.

So that's one of the reasons why I support what my government House leader says, and what we say as a government—that we can't sit on Thursdays. We can get done in three days what you might think would take four days.

We have important legislation that still needs to be brought forward. Four of those legislations include Bill 156, which is the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020. It's going to be studied in the Standing Committee on General Government. In my riding, that bill is extremely critical. I'm not downplaying that it's not critical in your ridings either.

I want to share something with you. My area is fairly rural. We have a lot of dairy cattle, we have a lot of beef

cattle, and of course chickens, hogs, all of that—a lot of pig farmers. But I remember that I have actually visited on several occasions a mink farm. Now, I don't know if anybody here has ever had a chance to visit a mink farm before or not, but it's fascinating. It's absolutely fascinating. You see these cute little critters—by the way, don't put your finger in to pet them. They have sharp teeth. But what happens? You get these animal advocates. These are mink farmers who are providing for their family, they are generating revenue and they are helping the economy. And then you get these animal advocates who will poach or they'll come in late at night and open up all the cages and allow these helpless minks to escape—and to where? They become roadkill or they become a meal for coyotes—we have a lot of coyotes in our area. That's no way either. So, again, this bill needs to get passed. Not just for that reason, but also for the fact that it's part of the food chain. We need to ensure that we have food.

You hear a lot about individuals who are—and you've seen signs, I'm sure, in your ridings, where people have said, “A hero lives here.” Well, God bless them. Those are people who have put their lives on the line, especially in the early goings of COVID-19, to care for those people who are sick, taking the necessary precautions through personal protective equipment to care for these people. Have some died? Yes. It's tragic.

The initial modelling numbers were huge, but I think we've all come to realize that those modelling numbers were also way out—fortunately, way off. There are a lot of reasons that we could attribute that to, part of which, I think, we have to owe to the 14 million people in the province of Ontario, 95% of whom said, “You know what? I'm going to take the necessary precautions. I don't know if it's going to affect me or not, and therefore I will follow the guidelines that the government has laid down for us to keep us all safe.”

Now, maybe, initially, for a couple of weeks, people thought, “This is kind of cool. I'm home. I can spend time with my family.” But we also know the drawbacks of being home way too long, because a lot of people are running out of money. The provincial government, in conjunction with the federal government, is working to provide funds for people who have been laid off or are unemployed. What about those who aren't eligible for EI—employment insurance—the sole proprietor, so to speak? You think about that. What do they do? Well, there is that CERB program that the federals are offering. Now, I believe that's only for four months, but let's hope that, by the time that ends, we'll be back on track and we won't be on our heels; we'll be leaning forward on the balls of our feet, ready to run forward, to pick up the baton from where we left off and to keep moving. We've got to have hope. We've got to be able to project hope for people, not doomsday.

I think it's really, really imperative not just the government but for all sides: Don't project a picture of doom; project a picture of hope. Because that's what people hold on to, especially in times like this. It's vital, it's critical, it's imperative that that's what happens.

Again, part of the amendment that the member from London West brought forward is, to my understanding, to eliminate all the committee hearings. We need those committee hearings. We do. The reason why we need them is because we have important legislation, and you'll agree that it is important legislation. You may not agree with everything in all those bills—fair enough—but it's important legislation that we get passed so that we can move forward, we can get the economy going, and we can get people back to work, we can get people healthy and we can ensure that we have the food chain in place to take care of people as well.

There are many other aspects of the other bills that we talked about as well. I only talked about Bill 156, but the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act is important. I think everyone in this place would agree that the justice system is broken. There has got to be a way to expedite hearings and get things moving in the right direction, rather than let it drag on, drag on, drag on.

We talk about building transit faster. I can't wait for Chatham, Ontario, to have its first subway.

1440

Mrs. Robin Martin: You'll be waiting a lot.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Okay, I might be waiting a while. I might be waiting a while.

But the point is, we've got to get people moving. We've got to be able to find and figure out ways to help, whether it be GO trains or subways or Via Rail or—I don't care what it is, but we've got to keep people moving and cut down, maybe, on the congestion. That bill is critical.

Then, of course, the Minister of Health, the Honourable Christine Elliott, spoke about Bill 175, Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act. When I had a listen to what she had to say, I would interpret it as, there are four main pillars. One was prevention and health promotion. We could talk ad nauseam—no pun intended—with regard to what that really means. Also, pillar 2 talks about the fact that we as a government, over 10 years, are going to be investing \$27 billion in hospital infrastructure projects. Why? Because we need them. A lot of our hospitals right now are failing. The bricks are literally falling off the building. They're overcrowded. We need new equipment, because we have very, very intelligent doctors in the science side of things. It's critical that we provide the best form of hospital care, health care, for the people of Ontario.

So I will be voting against this particular amendment put forward by the NDP. I appreciate what they were thinking about, but again, I stand strong with what we want for summer sittings.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and good afternoon to you. It is always an honour to stand in this House. My voice is somewhat squeaky today. I think it's from the allergies I have. One of them is smoke, and I think a lot of people have been blowing smoke here in the last couple of days. I say that with a sense of humour, and I'll try not to inhale much more of it.

I want to compliment the leader of the Green Party for reminding us that we are in the middle of a pandemic and we should all be working together in the interest of all of the people in Ontario. I am not a privileged member of the House leaders team or the leaders team, so I'm not privy to what goes on in phone calls and back rooms. I know, as a member, when I come here I judge my colleagues on what I see in the House. I am somewhat taken by surprise sometimes, as I was yesterday, because I thought that since we're all in this together, working together, it was working okay. I thought the air went out the balloon yesterday when the government, with very little notice, plopped on our desks that we were going to be debating a housing bill, which is fine; you have the right to do that, and we have the right to comment on it.

I've only been in the House for seven years. I've been here in a minority situation and now two majorities as a member of the opposition. But any time in my seven years, on all sides of the House, I have heard people ask for unanimous consent to stand down the lead of a debate because the critic for the party asking for the UC wasn't here or would be here eventually—we heard today that we wanted to stand down our first few questions because a certain member of the cabinet wasn't here and we wanted to be able to ask that person questions. At other times with this government we've asked that and that was granted. That person was running late, and so we did some other questions until that person got here, and then our leader asked her questions to the member we were waiting for.

But yesterday, when our critic Suze Morrison, the great member for Toronto Centre, our housing critic, wasn't in the House—she knows more about housing, I would put forth, than any other member in this House. She does a great job for us. By any principle of decency, any principle of House tradition, when we ask to seek unanimous consent to stand down the lead, the answer, in my seven years, has always been, “Yes, of course,” because it's a give-and-take. It's how we do things. We work together. We work things out, because tomorrow it may be that another member on the other side wants to stand something down because they're not quite prepared or they're not available at the moment or whatever, and so it's give-and-take. We say, “Of course, yes.”

Earlier, before a lot of rule changes, the independent Liberals would stand up and ask for unanimous consent for a member from one riding to speak, because the other independent Liberal who was supposed to speak wasn't here that day but it was that person's turn to ask a question. Well, sometimes it was yes, sometimes it was no, but more often than not it was yes, because the person had a legitimate excuse for not being here. If that person didn't call in and say, “I'm stuck on a plane in North Bay. I can't get here. The plane is fogged in”—then you'd say, “Okay, yes, I'll let somebody else ask your question.” Not if it's, “I don't feel like coming in to work today, so I didn't call in to say I won't be here”—so no, you're not getting unanimous consent.

But when we asked yesterday for unanimous consent to stand down the lead, we were told no, so I'm thinking it's

kind of a tit-for-tat. If the government House leader asked for unanimous consent to bring in all of his members from around the province today to stand or sit in the public galleries and be counted on a vote, and we said no, that was in response to being told no yesterday. That's just my guessing; I'm not part of the team that makes these decisions. I had no idea that had even taken place, until all of a sudden the government benches flooded with practically every member, which was interesting.

It reminds me of what the Premier had to say last weekend after the good folks flooded Trinity Bellwoods Park and didn't keep a social distance. The Premier was very upset with them, all the people in Trinity Bellwoods and that neighbourhood. There were thousands of them really close together.

In the House, where we're supposed to set an example for all of the people of Ontario—if you look at Ottawa, sometimes they're so far apart, sometimes they do it on TV in their Parliament, but no other Parliament that I'm aware of in Canada currently brings all the members in, cheek to jowl, and takes part in voting. If we say one thing, "This is how we expect you to act," and then we go the other way and we don't act that way ourselves—I suppose it's something like, "Don't go to cottage country," and I go to cottage country, or "Don't have the kids over for Easter dinner," and I have the kids over for Easter dinner.

I saw the photographer, and I think he's with the Toronto Star, taking pictures today, so I imagine that on the front page of the Toronto Star tomorrow, if it isn't online already, we're going to see, "Politicians Say One Thing, Do Another." That is going to hurt our reputations as politicians, because people are already saying that certain members of the government say one thing and do another, and now we're going to be all lumped into this together because we didn't keep a social distance.

I believe we all wore a mask except our table officers. Our table officers may have been exposed to COVID-19 today. Who knows? I'm certainly not a fearmonger; I'm not trying to suggest that. I know, Speaker, you put your mask on halfway through, and good for you, but we were, on this side of the House, somewhat surprised. Not all of us—I left my mask upstairs, I think, yes, but there were others who had extras, so I could have had one. But I had one today, the one I wear on the train where, on the Via Rail from Windsor to Toronto, we keep a social distance. They might only have eight or 10 people in the car and you're always at least six feet away from the nearest other passenger. So we live a social distance protocol philosophy, and yet when we come in the House today, boom, blow it up. Was it petty politics? Was it political games? It's not up to me to write that editorial. But I would imagine we will be criticized for what happened here today.

1450

I support my deputy House leader's amendment to add a sitting day on Thursday over the summer sessions. I don't care if we go June, July, August and September. I'm prepared to come in on Thursdays as well as the other days of the week and do what I'm paid to do. As has been said, we can do more private members' bills on Thursdays.

My friend the government House leader said, "Well, we just did one for the member from Eglinton–Lawrence yesterday." I applaud the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. That was a great private member's bill. She knows that members on our side have been proposing identical legislation for several years, so I applaud her for being able to push that forward.

I was the beneficiary of a private member's bill just the last day we sat in December, bringing in a poet laureate in Ontario. The Clerk of the Legislature told me yesterday that we're advancing on that. The Ontario Arts Council has just named two representatives—which is called for in the bill—to the nomination committee, and I hope the Speaker soon puts out a call for nominations for the poet laureate of Ontario and we can name that person in the fall.

So private members' bills—I believe in them strongly. I've had four accepted. Two I've jointly shared with other members. It's quite an accomplishment, so I again congratulate the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. Adding a sitting day on Thursday, I believe, is something all members and all parties stand to benefit from. A lot of these bills—as mentioned, the member from Niagara Falls has one that would be up, on a COVID-19-related workplace situation. The member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington said that it wasn't going to be up until November. But Speaker, as you know, we have the ability within the House to switch ballot dates and move things along a lot quicker.

I know I had a ballot date that was going to be up in June, and I was going to prepare a resolution helping our Legions be able to raise funds through their daily draws, their weekly draws, loonie-toonie draws, which the AGCO, the OLG, took away because it wasn't designated in the act. Our Legions are hurting, as you know, but this would allow them, again, to raise some money and to entice people to the branch, give them a reason to go to the branch and sign the book, throw a quarter in the pot or a loonie or a toonie and keep the branch going, keep those funds coming in. While you're there, you might have a pop or a drink or just socialize. It helps to keep our veterans active and social.

Now with COVID-19, of course, we've heard our member from St. Catharines say again this week that insurance rates are killing our Legions because they're getting no break in their insurance. There's no revenue coming in. They've asked for help, first from their insurance companies, which said, "No. To heck with you. You're only veterans, after all." So now they're asking for help from the government, provincial and federal, to keep our Legions active and financially sound. I hope that at some point over the course of these next few weeks, we do take some measures to help our veterans.

Canadian military veterans have served us well and the unfortunate case—Speaker, I do read newspapers. I don't like to read online; I like to have the page and turn it. Mr. Coyle, Jim Coyle in the Toronto Star has, the last few Sundays, anyway, written bios, biographies, obituaries of the people who have passed away to say, "These are the people that you see as a statistic, as a number, but Joe was

a veteran and Joe survived the war. He raised a family, he was a coach and he was active in his church.” It gives you a more complete picture of the people who have passed away.

Well, several of the bios that he’s done have been veterans. It breaks my heart. My dad was a veteran. My mom is in a home at 96. But to think of our veterans, after everything they did for us, now in a home, living in circumstances—you wouldn’t keep a family pet in such circumstances. As the Canadian military report released yesterday just enunciated, the conditions are terrible—and it’s for everyone, not just the veterans in the long-term-care homes; it’s for everyone.

When we stand, on this side of the House, repeatedly calling for a fully independent public inquiry, and not a commission that may get started in September, we think it’s the right thing to do. I know the government members say, “Well, it wouldn’t happen quickly enough,” but what’s to say you couldn’t do both, or you couldn’t have several streams going, where somebody jumps in right away and somebody tells us, “We’ve only been in five homes with the military, but what about the other homes in Ontario, let alone across the country?”

With the homes in Ontario, we know there have been problems. Everyone in the House has met, I would think—on lobby days, when the PSWs, the nurses and the employees of the homes come to our offices and they put on a breakfast or a reception and they tell us about the conditions in long-term-care homes in Ontario. For years they’ve been telling us, “We don’t have enough people. Our people are underpaid. They’re overworked. When we call in sick, we’re not replaced. We don’t have enough time to get the number of people that we’re supposed to look after up out of bed in the morning and down to breakfast before the next group of residents comes in, let alone toileting throughout the day, let alone turning them for bedsores and getting out of the bed and into a chair to watch TV or to socialize or whatever.”

And the working conditions are such that we can’t get enough and retain enough personal support workers or registered nurses or social workers in these roles—horrendous stories of one nurse for an entire home of more than 200 or 300 residents, and the PSWs being told, “Wear this equipment longer because we’ve got a money crunch.”

I know I had calls early on from homes in my area, from PSWs saying, “Look, we’re told we can’t get the equipment.” The minister keeps saying, “We have the equipment. Everybody has it. Don’t worry about it. We’re all looked after,” and I would get the calls and the emails that night: “It’s not true. We’re not getting the equipment we need. We don’t have the gloves. We don’t have the masks.” Fortunately Ford Motor Co., Wisner’s and other people stepped up and starting making hand sanitizer, masks and gloves and donated them down my way. So we are doing what we can in my area to look after ourselves, but we are still in great need.

Speaker, I just want to say as we rush towards these bills over the summer—I know you’ve been on committees before—I had an email just at lunch today from a

woman from the humane society talking about the PAWS bill that we all approved not that long ago. They were told—they’re leaving a lot of stuff in regulations—not to worry about it. She said:

“As we discussed when the PAWS Act was passed, it includes a lot of great provisions and a lot of potential improvements to animal welfare. But our concern was that while the structure was there, its success would depend on both the quality of the enforcement, as well as on the government putting strong regulations in place.

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“I’m writing today with concerns about a number of regulations that need to be put into place but haven’t. I realize that the government is dealing with a lot at the moment, but they have had months to work on this. One in particular relates to section 6 of the ministerial prescriptions, which defines a ‘shelter,’ and when a shelter is deemed to be an abandoned animal’s owner. When the transitional regulation was passed in December it used the wording from the old legislation, which limits shelters to affiliates of the Ontario SPCA. Many large Ontario shelters (including ours)—the one in Windsor—“have withdrawn as affiliates of the Ontario SPCA due to concerns about the governance of that organization, and therefore are not afforded protection under this section. I brought these concerns to the office of the” Solicitor General’s “attention in December and was advised that ‘this is one of the transition regulations we intend to look at early’ but to date no progress has been made.”

The next thing she talks about: “The second regulation not yet put into place” has “become more urgent as the weather warms. Section 34(1) of the PAWS Act says that ‘A prescribed person who has reasonable grounds to believe that there is an animal in critical distress in a motor vehicle may enter the motor vehicle for the purpose of relieving the animal from distress.’ But to date to our understanding, no persons have been prescribed by regulation and therefore the only people in the province who can legally rescue an animal from a vehicle are a provincial inspector or a police officer. I fear that if this regulation isn’t passed identifying additional people (like municipal bylaw enforcement officers) who can enter a vehicle to rescue an animal in distress, there will be cases this summer where dogs die in a vehicle before a police officer is able to arrive.”

Speaker, I just wanted to put that on the table, because I know, when these bills get to a committee and amendments are made, sometimes they’re dealt with, sometimes they’re accepted by government, sometimes not. I know, when the Liberals were there—I remember being on one committee; 75 amendments were made, and 45 of them came from the Liberals themselves because they had rushed to judgment too early and put a bill on the table that needed a lot of improvement.

So thank you for this this afternoon, and I do hope you support the amendment put forward by the member from London West.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: I want to say that it is truly a privilege, truly an honour, to be able to stand here in the House this afternoon to speak to this motion, motion 77. Those same words have been uttered by many people this afternoon. But think about the privilege of being an elected member of the Ontario Legislature. It was less than two years ago that all of us won our seats. Our journeys are all different, whatever paths brought us here are all different, but we all chose to put our names on a ballot to work with a party that we believed represented our values and the values of the people in our constituencies. We won our elections and we're sitting here today in a government, during perhaps the worst crisis ever in this province's history.

When I say it's a privilege to be here, it is a privilege because we have the power to influence change, to bring about solutions to truly, genuinely help the people of Ontario. We have that power. But we can only do it if we come to work, if we sit in this House, if we debate legislation, if we propose legislation, if we work together or even if we work in opposition. We are part of a government that will move an agenda forward, and we are part of a historic government during a critical time in Ontario's history, and each one of us wants to do what we can for our constituents and for all people in Ontario, all sectors, all regions. But we truly can only accomplish serious objectives if we come to work and we pass legislation—or we oppose legislation, based on how we feel about particular bills. That's why I say I feel it is a privilege—truly, genuinely a privilege—to be in this House at this time.

I don't know if any of you have ever, ever had the unfortunate experience of being out of work, but I was and it is awful. Many years ago, I worked for a company that went bankrupt suddenly. I was a single mother. It was just weeks before Christmas. We were literally told, in the course of hours, "You're out of work. You will get no compensation and no severance pay. Here's the door." I know how it feels to be wondering how I'm going to feed my kids, how I'm going to make my mortgage payment, how I'm going to get by, and unfortunately, I know many, many people in Ontario are feeling that right now.

This privilege also comes with tremendous responsibility. We can stand here and debate and flex our muscles and talk about egos, but at the end of the day, we have a responsibility to make the lives of all Ontarians better, and that responsibility has never been so great as it is during this global pandemic. We talked about the front-line workers, who truly are heroes, and sometimes I'm embarrassed that they have to take on that responsibility and go out and deal with people who are dying from COVID-19 while I sit behind a computer in the safety of my home, drinking a coffee. I am not embarrassed today to say I want to be here, in this House, because I know we have such a tremendous opportunity over the next few weeks to make that difference.

Earlier, the member from London West said that she hadn't heard from people raising issues about the bills that, if we move forward with motion 77, will be addressed over

the course of the next few months. I have to argue that I have heard from people. My riding is a mix of rural and urban. Flamborough–Glanbrook also—most people don't realize, because it's part of Hamilton—contributes over \$1 billion in its agri-food sector to our local economy each and every year. So I do hear from people in the agri-food sector who are quite, quite concerned about how they can protect their products, their animals, their farms. While it may not sound, especially if you're from urban areas, that this is an important thing to be discussing now, it is, because the reality is, COVID-19 is here today. We must deal with all of the additional challenges that this crisis has raised, but we also have to move this economy forward. We also have to move forward. We will come out of it. I know we will. But at the end of it, we have to have measures in place to ensure that Ontarians can recover, that the different sectors across this province can recover.

These are just some of the ways that we can do that. Transportation: Again, I'm from Hamilton, so I commute almost on a regular basis, almost daily, to the city of Toronto. Other than during COVID-19, it's not an easy task. I can leave here after 6 or 6:30 in the evening, and just to get to the Gardiner there's a minimum of 30 minutes. Once you get to the Gardiner, to get onto the Gardiner—this is true—it's an additional 30 minutes. Just to get onto the Gardiner, coming from Queen's Park, is one hour. Then you have to get to Burlington. Burlington is another choking point. It's unbelievable the amount of cars on the roads in the GTHA. From Burlington to where I live in the city of Hamilton is another hour. My trip can be three hours home during rush hour. That is not sustainable. People cannot endure that indefinitely.

1510

The biggest problem that the city of Toronto faces, beyond COVID-19, is the movement of people and goods. We can't forget that while we're dealing with these overwhelming challenges that are associated with COVID-19, because we have to deal with it. We do have to move people. We do have to move goods.

Just coming back into work this morning, I was surprised at the number of cars now on the roads. Yes, it's shorter, much shorter, but I was absolutely gobsmacked at the number of transport trucks. People need food. People need PPE. People need clothing. They need supplies. They're being moved to different locations through many means, but also through transit trucks. And they are choking our highways.

The measures that we're putting in place, just in Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, won't help all of Ontario. It won't help all of the GTHA, but it is a critical component of moving people and of moving goods through Toronto and the GTA. It may not be top of mind today when we're thinking about some of the other tremendous challenges that we have all raised throughout the day, but it will be when we move towards recovery.

One of the comments, again made by the member from London West, was about the reluctance to move forward to support motion 77 because, when she spoke to Bill 158, farmers would have to travel to Toronto. We know that's

not the case. We are suggesting, as we all have through the past two or three months, that we meet and hear from Ontarians right across Ontario through virtual meetings. That is a new reality. I know that every single person in this Legislature is using a computer far more often to engage with constituents and with stakeholders.

As the sole government-side representative in the city of Hamilton, I meet with sectors right across the city of Hamilton, with stakeholders right across the city of Hamilton, including Flamborough–Glanbrook. I speak to the many—and there are 14 or 15—BIAs, and some of the things that they've raised I want to be able to share here in the House over the next few months. As I mentioned, some of these people are worried about paying the bills. Many, many, many are worried about paying the bills. They wonder if they will ever reopen. They wonder if their businesses that they have put their heart and soul in, for years or a lifetime, will survive.

I want to share the story of one woman who called me just over two weeks ago. It was just before we were reopening the garden centres. She was in tears. It was a business that she and her husband had spent a lifetime building, and it was coming up to Mother's Day. It was a critical time of year to open. She was sharing with me the devastation that the family was already feeling because of the sensitive timelines with the product—of course, with gardening and flowers—that she had to sell, and the impact of a delay in opening her business to her family, to her children and to their livelihood. These are the types of stories that we are hearing from Ontarians, from people in each of our ridings, from people right across the province.

We have to work together. We have an opportunity to work together, to collaborate, to make their lives better, to make the province better. But to do that, we have to be here. We will get through this, one way or the other. We will have tremendous challenges on the outside, at the end of the COVID-19 experience. But we have to be prepared when we come out of this, and that's why it is so critical to sit in this House, to be prepared to open up the economy and to be prepared to help all of the sectors—small businesses, large businesses—once we do reopen our economy.

We need to put measures in place so that when restaurants can finally open their doors or have to open patios, literally perhaps making their profit margin extremely small, contributing to the challenges that they've already faced—we want to ensure that this government is prepared for all of the businesses that will be sacrificing through COVID-19 and afterwards. But again, in order to do that, in order to put measures in place, we have to be in this Legislature.

I can almost hear now the Leader of the Opposition in November standing and saying, "Why weren't you prepared? Why didn't you do anything during the COVID-19 crisis? You knew that restaurants would be suffering. You knew that clothing stores would not survive. Why didn't you have things in place?" We're telling you now that we need your co-operation because we need to put measures in place to ensure that people can recover.

As the parliamentary assistant for job creation, economic development and trade, I meet regularly with businesses across Ontario, and they are sharing ideas. They are telling me what they would like our government to do. They are giving recommendations that I want to bring to this Legislature in hopes of ensuring that their businesses and all businesses can survive and thrive after COVID-19. But again, in order to do that, we have to be here.

One of the committees that I'm sitting on is the—I hope I get the acronym right—SCOFEA, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. We've already met. We've already met virtually. We've had our first conference, our first call, and we will be moving forward with many, many, many, many stakeholders in different sectors over the course of the next few months. The finance committee normally travels across Ontario and meets with representatives, but we know that COVID-19 has created a new reality. In many ways, it has actually provided opportunities to stakeholders to participate. Not everyone has an opportunity to drive to where the committee is meeting, whether it's in Timmins, Ottawa, here in Toronto or in Kitchener. But virtual meetings are giving more stakeholders an opportunity to share with all members of this Legislature—the opposition; I believe the member from the Green Party; and of course government members—their concerns, and what they would like us to do. This opportunity, through our Zoom conference that we are going to be holding over the course of the summer, will give these people a voice all across Ontario, right in the most northern part of Ontario, southern Ontario, eastern and western Ontario. All sectors, all ages, all time zones—it doesn't matter—all times of the day: They can participate. I think that what they have to say is so critical to influencing all of us as we move forward.

Members of the committee will be listening, will be taking notes, will be submitting our recommendations, and many of those recommendations are going to help us as we move beyond the COVID-19 crisis. They will be new times, untested, uncharted, but we have to be prepared for when we move beyond COVID-19, when we finally come out of this.

1520

We must be prepared, because, as I said, I know that in your role as opposition, you'll be challenging us: "What did you do? Why aren't you prepared?" The member from Windsor–Tecumseh and I both come from a media background, and I hear the opposition so often, and in many ways it is very similar to that of what media members do: They question, they challenge. But they also want you to provide answers and to be proactive and to follow through with what you say you're going to do. You must come up with solutions. That's what we will be doing.

We will be reaching out to our stakeholders through virtual committee meetings. We will be meeting here regularly through the course of the summer to discuss these particular pieces of legislation and other pieces of legislation and other comments, and we will be finding solutions, hopefully collaboratively, so that the people of Ontario, who have suffered the greatest crisis, probably, of

their lives, can see some sort of hope through all of this. They need to trust us. They need to know that we are here for them and that we are working for them.

I started by saying, as we all have, that it is truly, truly a privilege, an honour, to be able to work in this House, to be able to have a little bit of authority that makes a difference during the worst crisis in the history of this province. We have to stay here. We have to work during the next few months to ensure that Ontarians understand that there is hope. We have to give them hope. We have to show them.

I'm hoping, as many members have said, that we can show them that we will somehow put the partisan politics aside and recognize that they come first, the future of this province comes first, and that we will work together to ensure that it is a better Ontario.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It has been a very interesting couple of days as we've come back to Queen's Park. I have to say, I don't think that the citizens of this province are very much interested in the parliamentary circus that has happened here yesterday or this morning. For their information, and, of course, for my parents, who are always watching, I want to let them know that we're debating a motion brought forward by the government, with an NDP amendment, to sit for the summer. There was a night sitting motion, but there was a typo in it, I guess, or something like that, and so it didn't come forward.

Our amendment to summer sittings throughout June and July also has the additional day, and so, for everyone's fact-checking here in the province of Ontario, our motion has more time. We are actually advocating that MPPs work longer throughout the summer, and we would welcome pieces of legislation that the government could bring forward which would deal with anything to support the economy, especially commercial rent relief, in particular. I just had a phone call with a small business in Waterloo called Ctrl V, and they're pretty desperate. I'll talk a little bit about them in a second.

I'd also like to talk about emergency staffing levels that need to be addressed for our retirement homes, long-term-care homes, the private homes that are operating under the radar here in the province of Ontario, and our most marginalized and special-needs citizens who are off in group homes, who have sort of been left off the whole conversation here in Ontario.

That's just to set the record straight. The people of this province want us to be focused on addressing this pandemic. That is why we are in a state of emergency. We should be in a state of emergency. To date, in the province of Ontario, we have seen 2,155 people die from COVID-19, and 1,587 of those people, citizens, died in long-term-care homes—1,587. That number just came out two hours ago. That is a scathing reflection on our long-term care and our retirement home system.

So I think we have a responsibility. There's a lot of talk today about what our responsibilities are. Our responsibilities are to respond to this pandemic, to ensure that our

province has the resources it needs to fight COVID-19, and also to set us on a path for recovery. I can see why some of the antics that unfortunately happened over the last two days would be a really nice distraction for this government. They don't really want us to talk about the report that came out yesterday, which really shed a light on long-term care. It's a harsh light. It is a hard report to read.

My friend and my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh talked about the conditions that were reported by the Canadian military. My friend and colleague from St. Catharines asked a question this morning about how this government is going to responsibly and deal with compassion—the Canadian military, who have declared that they will have post-traumatic stress disorder from being in our homes, from witnessing seniors who have been neglected to the point where you wouldn't—if people saw pets and dogs and cats being treated like that, they would be outraged. This is a point in our history of our province that is a shameful place for us to be in.

If people watched question period this morning, the official opposition, as is our responsibility and as is our role, asked the Minister of Long-Term Care and the Minister of Health and called on them for a level of accountability that we have not seen to date, from the Premier as well. We asked the minister—and if you heard her answers, you would be left dissatisfied. You would be left angry. You would be left doubting the competency and the level of expertise that currently exists in that ministry.

At one point, the minister says, “We are committed because you can tell by our commitments.” That's a direct quote from this morning from the Minister of Long-Term Care. “You can tell that we're committed because you can tell by our commitment.” That does not instill confidence, Mr. Speaker. It does not.

It's a big thing to call for the resignation of a minister. It doesn't happen a lot. We don't do it a lot. In my eight years that I've been here at Queen's Park, it has happened a couple of times. And actually, governments have responded. They've recognized: “Okay, listen. What happened was wrong. We need to reset. We need to get fresh eyes and fresh competencies into that long-term-care sector.”

People are scared, as they should be. The principles and the character of individuals matter. This particular Minister of Long-Term Care is well established and well on the record, of her own volition, supporting privatized long-term care, supporting privatized health care. She has publicly said, and this is from one of her own tweets, “Ontario has short-sighted legislation that currently prohibits private provision of medically necessary care.” That was from February 17. Another tweet: “I'm waiting for the loud nursing union voices to say private health care is bad ... wait for it ...” This is the Minister of Long-Term Care. She goes on to say in another tweet, “Some politicians and health execs tell me that private health care must come, but they won't say it publicly.” Then, again: “Not even Cuba has single-payer care.”

This is the minister who believes in privatizing health care. Why does that matter? That would be a good

question to ask. I want to say that so far, the deaths in for-profit homes are eight times higher than deaths in publicly operated long-term-care homes—eight times higher, Mr. Speaker. So that does matter. There is a significantly higher death rate as a result of COVID-19 in for-profit versus not-for-profit municipal homes. The facts matter. They do.

1530

If we have a long-term-care minister who has advocated for the increased privatization of a system that has clearly failed our seniors, that causes us to question the competency. It's a big ethical issue for us as a Legislature, so we would welcome more time in this place to debate the state of our long-term care.

This is not the first time we've raised this. My bill Till Death Do Us Part was brought forward in the fall. It was the bill that shone a light on the fact that people who have been married for 70, 60, 50 years are not able to spend their last years together because the long-term-care system had been contracted out.

The Liberals, and now the Progressive Conservative government, had truly abdicated their responsibility of care for our seniors, the very people who have built this province. To that point, the minister should know that under the former Liberal government health care in the province of Ontario had already been contracted out and privatized to the tune of 40%. And that includes our lab services, which affects our testing, which affects our ability to trace and to contact.

One of the first cases that I dealt with when I was first elected in 2012 was the lab that had watered down chemotherapy drugs. Do people remember that? Yes. When profit and making money is the driver in the health care system, the citizens of this province lose, and we have enough research, we have enough evidence, to confirm that.

To date—and it's important to get these numbers on the record—82% of Canada's COVID-19 deaths have been in long-term care; four out of the five deaths in this country and in this province have been in long-term care.

We currently have outbreaks in over 300 homes in Ontario. When this first began, and this seems like a long time ago, Pinecrest Nursing Home in Bobcaygeon—you'll remember that. It's a beautiful community. My parents are from Peterborough, and we spend a lot of time up in that area. To see one of the first interviews with a PSW, who exclaimed, "How are we supposed to keep these people safe? There are four seniors in a room." They couldn't access testing. It was basically just leaving people—knowingly, intentionally, as a government—in those circumstances and not bringing in your own provincial powers, which said that a hospital could overtake that home. Imagine if that had happened right away. Imagine if that iron ring that the Premier talks about was real. Imagine if that actually had action behind it and it wasn't just a sound bite.

The important piece that we are going to be advocating for, which we have always, with our health critic, Ms. Gélinas from Nickel Belt, and our long-term-care critic, is

a system that actually takes care of people and that invests in people. The only way that we're going to get there is with a public inquiry.

The reason that our leader and our party are not going to back down on this—and we have the support of the people of this province. Mark my words: They are not going to forget if this government does not honour that, because a public inquiry is about justice. The constituent I talked to last week, who shared the story of her uncle dying at Forest Heights home, the Revera home that I mentioned this morning when I asked a question of the Minister of Health—in that home in Kitchener, 50 seniors have died—50 mums, 50 dads, 50 aunts, 50 uncles. Mr. Speaker, this is unconscionable. It's a number that doesn't even resonate with you.

But I will tell the government members that there is precedent for a public inquiry. SARS killed 44 people in Ontario—public inquiry. Elizabeth Wettlaufer murdered eight people, with no oversight—public inquiry. Walkerton: Six people died because of a system breakdown around water quality—public inquiry. Ipperwash, Dudley George—public inquiry.

So, Mr. Speaker, if you think that we are going to back down on asking for justice for those 1,587 long-term-care deaths—if you think that we're going to back down from that, you have another think coming. We will sit midnights, mornings, afternoons, August, September, whatever you want. This motion, which sets committee work for legislation that has nothing really to do with the state of emergency that we're in right now—if you think that we're just going to go along with this and not talk about long-term care and not talk about the system breakdown when privatization and profit trumped the health care of our citizens, then you really don't know who we are, because we are not going to give up on that.

The research that has come out of the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition and the Ontario Health Coalition is quite shocking, actually. As of May 6, they had confirmed that 9% of the deaths in long-term care happened in for-profit. For not-for-profit, it was 5.25%. In municipal, it was 3.62%. So just to—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's so fun when they heckle.

When you compare it with numbers of beds, in a for-profit setting—28% of the deaths happened in for-profit homes, in not-for-profit: 14.15%. In publicly run municipal homes—and this is really key, Mr. Speaker—the increase was actually a decline. So when you factored in the numbers of beds in a municipal home, municipal homes did so much better. Do you know why they did better? They did better because of their staffing ratios. They didn't allow, as this government did, PSWs to be so poorly paid and so poorly treated that they had to go from home to home to home. In municipal homes, the working conditions are those of a valued professional community. The wages are commensurate with the work that they are doing—which are primarily women, I want to say, Mr. Speaker. The levels of care are documented, and there are levels of accountability there. And profit taking is not part

of the equation, so at the end of the day, the profit is not the driver for the kind of care that people receive.

When we consider this and when we consider how community spread also happens, it's important to note that those PSWs who are working in these conditions, and those nurses, the cleaners, the cooks—we did not keep those people safe. The government, despite their claims, did not ensure they had the personal protective equipment to keep them safe. And if one of us is not safe, none of us are safe. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it has shown us that our collective well-being is connected to each other. If this government doesn't understand that—and, based on the heckling, I guess they don't. It's important for us to recognize that what happened in long-term care, what was revealed by the Canadian military, is so significant that, once you bear witness to it—from an ethical perspective, anyone who has integrity cannot ignore it. Once you have the knowledge, you cannot ignore it.

We believe that the economy is also a key part of the discussion and the debate that we should be having in this House. We do not believe that there's a false choice here, that either you have health care or you have the economy. In fact, the strength of our health care system, the well-being of our health care system, is very much connected to how we will recover as an economy. To date, this government has not shown up for businesses in the province of Ontario.

My critic portfolio is economic development, research and innovation. I have to say, I was really pleased to see, on May 25—was that yesterday? Yes. On May 25, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Retail Council of Canada and restaurant organizations wrote an open letter to the Premier. Here is some of what they said in that letter:

“Since the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) program was announced, we have been hearing from numerous small and medium-sized businesses that many improvements are desperately needed to make it work. Even though the” rent relief “program just officially started, we already know from our members that many landlords will not apply, meaning ... tenant eviction protection it includes. To make matters worse, it is extremely easy for a landlord to evict a commercial tenant in Ontario.”

1540

These organizations have been clear for months now and asked again Monday:

“Put in place temporary commercial eviction protection for tenants who were in good standing with their landlords prior to the COVID-19 pandemic....

“Without your immediate assistance, more businesses will be forced to close. In the absence of sufficient support, a large portion of the economy and the jobs created by our hard-working members will disappear forever.”

What, so far, the Ford government has offered, a deferral on WSIB and on the employer health tax—they pushed debt down the line. Well, small businesses don't have the pay sheet to sustain that.

Ryan Brooks, who I was just speaking to prior to coming up to the House—they're a family-run virtual reality business near the University of Waterloo. They've done everything they can to try and save their business, but their landlord won't participate in the federal rent relief. They've emailed MPs, MPPs, provincial and federal cabinet ministers. I mean, they've literally done everything they can. They need to open. Some businesses can open safely. That's also part of the equation, Mr. Speaker.

And then the other business, of course, that I was speaking to is Woofur. It's in Richmond Hill, and so I know that they've reached out to the member from Richmond Hill. I've spoken with Michelle Tao, as the member has as well. Their landlord is Primont. Primont has actually said that they're going to increase the rent by 30%. They've become very aggressive as landlords.

The federal plan is not working. We need a made-in-Ontario plan to save businesses. We need those businesses to stay viable so they can access the federal wage subsidy, and we need those jobs to stay viable so we can recover as an economy. That's what has to happen.

As of Friday of this week, you are going to see a massive loss in businesses if this government doesn't act. And so we will stay here at Queen's Park Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. We will sit for night sittings. We will make sure that we do our job of holding you to account, just like we tried to this morning with the Minister of Long-Term Care. We're showing up to work for the people of this province. Accept the amendments. Let's get the private members' business back on the roster, as our deputy House leader has proposed, and let's get to work for the people of this province.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm honoured to be standing here before the House in order to support motion number 77, about summer sittings. This motion will authorize the standing committees of the Ontario Legislature to begin virtual studies on the following bills:

Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020, will be studied by the Standing Committee on General Government.

Bill 161, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act, 2020, will be studied by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020, will be studied by the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

Bill 175, the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020, will be studied by the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached an historic moment where all three levels of government agree on one single, unified plan for the subway extension in Toronto, which echoes Bill 171, the Building Transit Faster Act.

Talking about transit projects and subway expansion, I have some data to share with you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty years ago, in 1990, it was the NDP government. During the five years of the NDP government, 1990 to 1995, no

subway station was built—none; zero. Under the PC government, the previous PC government—

Interjections.

Mr. Billy Pang: Yes, they're very happy that they built nothing.

In the previous PC government, from 1995 to 2003—eight years—in 1996, Spadina line, Line 1, from Sheppard Avenue West to Wilson, one subway station was built. In 2002, Line 4, Sheppard-Yonge to Don Mills: Altogether, four subway stations were built. So in the previous PC government, eight years, they built five subway stations.

Okay, let's talk about the previous Liberal government. From 2003 to 2018, altogether 15 years: Line 1, Sheppard West to Vaughan, altogether six subway stations, in 15 years.

Now, our PC government: We have a plan, the Building Transit Faster Act. We have a plan of building 12 subway stations in 10 years, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this government has a track record and also a plan to move the province forward efficiently and effectively. We need to provide more and better transportation options for commuters in the GTA. The Building Transit Faster Act will provide the province with the tools to expedite the construction process that has delayed major projects in the past. The legislation would remove roadblocks and give the province the ability needed to deliver projects faster. Relocating utilities will be delivered more efficiently, while treating business fairly and ensuring costs are not passed on to customers or consumers. The legislation will allow Ontario to inspect and remove physical barriers with appropriate notification to property owners, while ensuring timely access to municipal services and rights-of-way.

This motion also authorizes the Legislature to sit on a number of days in June and July. And each of these sitting days, we will also have question periods to facilitate the important responsibility of the opposition to hold the government to account.

The health and well-being of Ontarians is our government's top priority, and as the situation changes, our government is continuously monitoring and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. All action we have taken to date has been based on the advice of the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health. Therefore, in order to allow the full participation of the members while maintaining safe physical distancing, the government is proposing that new voting procedures be implemented for the recorded votes in the Legislature.

We will continue to take steps necessary to protect all the members, communities, and our loved ones. Since the beginning of this pandemic, we have been listening and following the advice from our health experts. Our government has moved in swift action to ensure the health and well-being of Ontarians comes first. From Ontario declaring a state of emergency on March 17, limiting mass gatherings to five people; closing non-essential businesses; initiating a recommendation of six feet, or two metres, of physical distance in public; recommending to the general public to wear non-surgical coverings and

masks if physical distancing is not possible; to ramping up and expanding lab tests and contact tracing—all of this has been in an effort to fight the virus and contain the spread.

1550

Mr. Speaker, it is an essential motion to allow our government to continue the summer House sitting. While we are doing our part in containing this deadly virus, at the same time, Ontarians expect that the Legislature will continue to function. And time is of the essence. Ontarians expect their elected members of provincial Parliament to continue serving their ridings and continue addressing their needs and inquiries. Summer sittings will allow the government to introduce important legislation as may be required in order to help Ontario recover and rebuild in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to get things moving again in a safe and timely manner and with health protocols in place. We will continue to respect the physical distancing guidelines and we will seek to continue the limit of the number of members in the chamber House.

I have had the honour of serving Markham–Unionville, as they elected me as the member of the provincial government in the year 2018. As a long-time resident of Markham–Unionville, this riding has a very special place in my heart. Over the months, I have heard and talked to the constituents of Markham–Unionville online, Mr. Speaker. Constituents have reached out and shared with me their concerns, their frustrations and their uncertainties. To date, I have hosted round tables to communicate and hear directly from my constituents—virtually again, blessed by 21st-century technology.

At my economic recovery consultation round table, I was joined by the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, MPP Stan Cho, to hear directly from the business owners of Markham–Unionville on the impact that COVID-19 has had on their hard work and built businesses. Employee layoffs, commercial rent, revenue loss and future uncertainties were the topics and concerns that we discussed during the round table, just to name a few.

I have also had the opportunity to host a Markham–Unionville parents' round table, where I was joined by the Minister of Education, the Honourable Stephen Lecce, to hear from concerned parents and the questions they may be having during the COVID-19 outbreak on their children's education. Some of the questions included online learning, summer learning programs, health protocols when schools reopen, the next school year, learning support for students with special needs, and early childhood programs. I believe that the round table offered some clarification and information for parents in my community. For questions or themes that did not get the opportunity to be answered, I always encourage parents to email or call my office instead of using social media because, through the emails and phone calls it is a point-to-point communication, person to person, where their concerns and questions can be furthermore heard and addressed.

In these uncertain times, I am proud to represent the riding of Markham–Unionville. I see businesses, families and organizations coming together and helping our

province address needs and concerns. Take, for example, St. Maurice and St. Verena Coptic Orthodox Church, who created a “meals for our heroes” campaign. Through their campaign, the meals were sent to York Regional Police and Mackenzie Health long-term-care facilities, to name a few, to continue supporting our front-line and health care workers.

Chapel Ridge Funeral Home, a local business in Markham–Unionville, bought \$7,000 worth of personal protective equipment and delivered it directly to four long-term-care centres in Markham–Unionville, three seniors’ homes and Participation House in Markham. The PPE included gloves, gowns, masks, custom-made face shields made by the Middleton Group in Markham and vinyl disposable aprons. Chapel Ridge Funeral Home was also able to source the PPE through funeral supply companies and, in addition, drove to a dental supply place in Concord to pick up hundreds of gowns and deliver them to the facilities that needed them the most.

Day in and day out, constituents of Markham–Unionville come to me to offer their helping hands to the community. I couldn’t be more proud of our friends and family in the Markham–Unionville neighbourhood, especially during this COVID-19 crisis, when many of us follow the advice of public health and lend a helping hand and also pitch in to help, while showing love and kindness during and around this difficult time.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, Ontario is in dire need of unity at this unprecedented time, as all three levels of government have come together in order to contain and beat this deadly virus, while keeping Ontarians safe and working towards a better tomorrow for everyone, including students, parents, stakeholders and all Ontarians. By virtually passing the above-mentioned motions and working on the Building Transit Faster Act, we will in turn make life for Ontarians easier while combatting this deadly virus. This is our priority.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: It really is a pleasure to stand here today and speak to this motion. When I was leaving the house this morning, my teenage daughters looked at me and said, “What’s wrong? What are you doing?” because I was dressed for work in a way they hadn’t seen in a while. They only get to see it every couple of weeks now with the way this schedule is working.

Of course, it is such a privilege to be able to be here in so many respects, first of all because we are able to stand here in this House and represent our constituents in the way that we have been elected to do, but also, I think, at this particular time, when so many people are experiencing such hardship, to be able to bring their voices and their stories here to this Legislature, and to also acknowledge that we have a privilege in that we are elected, that we are receiving a paycheque at a time when a lot of people are losing their employment and their jobs.

I have to say at the start that I do find it very disconcerting, Mr. Speaker, to hear the government members’ refusal to sit just one more day a week over the summer.

We know, those of us in this House—maybe those watching may not be aware of this, but that is the one day when private members’ bills can be debated. So it’s actually an opportunity to look at what individual members, on all sides, are bringing forward. We could all, I think, come to some understanding about bringing forward priority pieces of legislation that will actually be really important and do good work in this particular time, so I find it very disconcerting that the members opposite would not agree to that. I hope they’ll reconsider. I think it would be very important that we sit as long as we possibly can in this Legislature, throughout the summer, as many days as possible.

1600

I want to acknowledge—I really do believe every one of us here; I know how hard everybody has been working. I know how hard everyone has been working, because we all get the calls. Our staff—let’s hear it for our staff, who are working—

Applause.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, yes—from home. They’re working from home as well. They’re dealing with the most difficult casework, the most difficult calls, people who are really struggling. It happens and it comes in waves. One week, it’s a crisis in rent; the next week, it’s, “Where am I going to get food?”; and the next week, it’s, “My small business is closing,” and it’s just on and on. We are all working, I think, so hard to come up with solutions that work for people in our communities. I want to acknowledge that because I think it’s really important to say that we are all working really hard here together.

I want to say, as well, that one of the things I think we’ve all been doing, and I also appreciate as a local MPP how important this is, is speaking to all levels of government—working with your municipal colleagues, working with your federal colleagues, of whatever political stripe, to try to do the best for our communities. How important has that been? Speaking with those levels of government, working to try to patch together sources of personal protective equipment, for example, which we have all, I know, been doing in our communities, when those stockpiles turned out to be somewhat fictional, when supplies expired or shipments were faulty—the work that has happened in our communities to try to patch together solutions has been tremendous. Literally, in my community, we are bringing gloves from one centre to a food bank and we’re organizing volunteers to do those things—and I know that’s happening everywhere—just to make sure that those supplies get there, because that’s all that really matters.

We’ve been working with small businesses, the very heart of our communities, to signal to the provincial and federal governments that the current programs that are being offered are failing. They are failing, and they are faulty. They are not going to work. Yesterday, I want to tell you, Mr. Speaker, I spoke with my MP, who is a government MP, and I actually raised these issues, along with my city councillor, who happens to be the deputy mayor of Toronto. We raised some of these issues around

constant concerns about whether or not this program to support, to provide rent relief, but through the opt-in of landlords—how this could possibly work. Because we've heard from BIAs, we've heard from chambers, we've heard from small businesses directly that this is not working. The response we got was, "Well, we're taking a wait-and-see approach." And we're looking at what people like Rod Phillips said. It's the same sort of thing: "We're just going to take a wait-and-see approach. It just opened up. We'll see." And we're saying: "No. Don't listen to us; listen to them if you have to. They're telling us that it's not working. They're not applying. It's a failure. Do something else."

We cannot afford to wait. What are we waiting for? Because I can tell you that the eviction signs are going up. They're going up across my riding. Every day, there are new eviction signs going up on businesses, on storefronts. I get the alarmed calls, not just from the business owners, but from the community members.

I want to mention DeSotos on St. Clair West and Dave's. I want to talk about the Lansdowne Cone, which is a great little ice cream joint on Lansdowne. They're trying really hard to work on a solution with their landlord. They're not just a great ice cream spot, but they provide important employment opportunities for youth who face other kinds of obstacles to employment. They do great things in our community. They're operating, as of today, I think, temporarily until June 1. They're really hoping they can come up with a solution. Thank goodness that they were able to reopen. But other businesses are reopening and then they're getting an eviction notice on the door, and they are closed again. They have barely had a chance. So we cannot wait. We cannot afford to wait for government to decide that now is the time when already half of the businesses in our communities have shut down. I can tell you, that's what's going to happen in large parts of this city of Toronto.

It's very difficult, because these are our community members. They're our neighbours. They're the little corner stores that you get used to going to. They're the pubs that everybody comes together at for their community association nights. These are the hearts of our community. We say that all the time. It sounds so cliché, but it is so true. It's also what makes our community so very distinct, so it's very important.

Honestly, if we could work here every single day, I'd be happy to. I look around, and I think we'd all do that. Oh boy, would we. And I'm sure all of you would too. I think you would. So I don't understand what the resistance is to having that extra day. I think it's really important.

I want to tell you—the kinds of people who expect us to come and work that extra day. At the Oasis Dufferin Community Centre—it's called a community centre, but it's really a community food centre—in my community, on Dufferin, north of Bloor. It's a food bank. It's really operating solely as a food bank right now. The call goes out every day for what they need. They need things like diapers because there have been babies born in the neighbourhoods—newborns—and people need newborn

diapers. The number of families lining up has become a traffic issue in our community—20 to 30 new families a week accessing this one tiny food bank in my neighbourhood. This is very much an urgent issue.

And I hear the words of hope and, boy—I tell you honestly, I really am an optimist. I really do hope—boy, do I hope—that we get through this. But I think we're just seeing the beginning of it. And I think if we don't act very, very quickly and in profound ways, in bold ways, we are not going to get through this. Those families are definitely not going to get through this. They want more than words; they want action.

What I don't want to do—I'll tell you what I don't want to do—is stand here and debate bills that not only don't focus on the issues that we're facing today, but also bills like the housing bill that this government rushed through shamefully, that is actually going to make it easier to evict tenants. I was actually quite shocked when I heard that yesterday. I could not believe that that would have made its way into this House at this moment, when tenants in my riding are ending up homeless, when families are losing their homes because they've lost their jobs because of this pandemic. That we would consider making it easier for landlords to evict tenants, that is shameful. You should be extending the moratorium on evictions. You should be providing direct relief to those tenants.

One of the things that I have been hearing a lot over the last little while is that it is not enough to come back to "normal" without learning from this current situation. I want to take us there for a moment, and I'll tell you why. The COVID-19 situation has pulled back the curtain in many areas for us to see and understand some of the inequities that exist in our communities that perhaps have never been as obvious as they are now.

I'll tell you, as the education critic, I have looked specifically at education and where those inequities have been revealed, because they were always there. They were always there, but now, they have become more obvious, and we cannot look back. We have to think now about how we are going to address those going forward, when our students and our staff, for example, return to school, perhaps in September, in whatever way that happens.

I mentioned this today in an opinion piece that was published, and I've raised this with the minister as well. We need to, yes, deal with the nuts and bolts of the issues, but we also have to look back and acknowledge the inequities that have been revealed in this system: the underfunding, the understaffing, the massive classrooms, the capital backlogs, the impact that has on different communities. We have to acknowledge that the system wasn't working well for everyone. So if we're going to go back, let's talk not just about the nuts and the bolts; let's talk about how we can do better.

1610

I think, very sadly, that COVID-19 has revealed, and in the most heartbreaking and devastating way, an issue that we've raised repeatedly in this House over many years but certainly today, my colleagues and I, which is the failure of our long-term-care system, and, let's face it, our failures

just generally in terms of taking care of seniors and of vulnerable people.

Let's also acknowledge that this was a system that was privatized under the Harris government—privatization was expanded extensively under the Harris government. The next government in power failed dramatically to do anything to fix it, and now a system that, under this current government—and I heard the minister and I've heard others here today say numerous times, "We couldn't have seen what was coming." "Oh, my goodness, we didn't know." "COVID-19, a pandemic like we've never seen." I agree with you there, but I'll tell you, we could have been more prepared.

I tell you, every single day I feel guilt as just a member of this society, of our community, for the fact that we did not prepare to protect those people in those homes. It is shocking; it is appalling. But do you know what? You shouldn't be shocked that we weren't prepared, because you should have known, because everybody here in this House was warned. If you were elected in the last election, this was discussed. If you've been around in this province for the last 30 years at some point, this issue has been raised.

I was a researcher in the early 2000s, and one of the areas I covered was health care. I was looking at long-term-care inspections and nursing home inspections. Let me tell you, these exact issues were raised then, and they are raised here again. To say that there has been an attempt to fix this is absurd when, at the same time, you have reduced the number of inspections so dramatically.

I raise that, and I digress a little, because this legislation would move forward the debate on Bill 175, which I think is called An Act to amend and repeal various Acts respecting home care and community services. I tell you, if there was ever an issue that we should be taking a deep breath and looking at really closely in relation to the lessons of this pandemic, it is that legislation.

This is not government as usual, okay? I don't think I have to tell any of you that. We all know that. For goodness' sake, let's learn from what is happening right now: vermin in our long-term-care facilities; people reusing needles; and staff who feel like they shouldn't take protective equipment or supplies because they're so worried about budgetary restrictions.

We all know, I think, if it wasn't clear, why all of those workers and all of those experts and we in the opposition and many others had been saying for years and years and years that it was a problem that the staff in long-term-care facilities and in the community sector and in home care were paid so little and didn't have good, strong workplace protection etc.—why that would be a problem in the end. It wasn't just about paying somebody a decent wage and giving them a decent job—all those general protections that workers should have—but it's also about the fact that the impact, as we're seeing now, is that people have to work in multiple locations to patch together a living, and that the industry, particularly the for-profit side of this industry—by the way, again, something that was expanded dramatically under the Harris regime, and, in fact,

now that former Premier is profiting quite immensely from it, I gather.

So you've got a for-profit industry that is profiting from these centres where we have vermin running rampant and where staff are worried about budget constraints and not using equipment. It's astonishing. It makes me very emotional. I find it very upsetting, and I'm sure a lot of us do here. Seven hundred people are dead. Seven hundred people are dead in our long-term-care homes alone, and I think that's just the residents. I don't think that number even includes the staff; I might be wrong. And we are just seeing the tip of this, I believe. I said it this morning, but I really do.

I remember early on, and I felt kind of bad saying it because it sounded so doom and gloom, but we saw what was coming. It was going to be a massacre in those facilities of the aged, of the vulnerable. So don't say that the alarms weren't—those flags were raised, and that is why we need a full and independent public inquiry. My colleague pointed this out brilliantly: SARS, Walkerton, Ipperwash. My friends, a public inquiry is going to happen. The question is whether or not you are going to be brave enough to do it yourselves, because if it doesn't happen under this government, it will happen under the next government. My goodness, I hope it is us and we get to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to share with you, if I have a few more minutes, a letter that I shared this morning. I mentioned it when I was asking, in question period, the Minister of Long-Term Care why she wasn't resigning. I'll tell you, again, when I was a researcher years and years ago, I remember very clearly a minister under the Harris government stepped down. He resigned. It was Bob Runciman, a fine member of this House. Bob Runciman resigned. He was Solicitor General. He resigned because—I think it was in the throne speech—the name of a young offender was written into the throne speech and therefore read out. The Solicitor General under that government stepped down over that.

Can you imagine? It seems almost absurd, in this current context. It seems like such a small matter. It isn't, by the way. It's a very significant thing. But you know what? It is one of those things that, as elected officials, and certainly as cabinet members, to take responsibility, to say the buck stops here, to be accountable—it's so critical, and it's critical to the people of Ontario to know that you're taking it that seriously, that there is accountability, that there is transparency. It's absolutely essential, and I was very disappointed it didn't happen here.

I have this letter that I sent on April 28, which is almost exactly one month ago, and I have not yet received a response. This was a month ago, so I listed out a whole bunch of examples of people who had contacted me. I was going to read it out. I don't think I have time now. A resident whose 95-year-old father had contracted COVID-19 at Mon Sheong Home for the Aged, a home that tried and failed to get personal protective equipment from authorities before the outbreak and only received it after making the issue public—that family.

I've also heard from so many, numerous, numerous families—I know we all have—who are concerned about ongoing issues, about the lack of testing, about the lack of protective equipment, about how late the government waited to stop the movement of staff between facilities, and the continuation of the movement of staff who were contract workers. We need to do better. We need to work here for that extra day, because the people of this province expect us to.

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

Mr. Sherif Sabawy: I am honoured to rise today to support the government motion. We are adding more sitting time to allow us to move fast to address the issues which we need to tackle. Mr. Speaker, all the members of this Legislative Assembly have been very busy since the start of this COVID-19, especially when it comes to addressing cases and requests from constituencies, helping food banks, addressing PPE needs for different service providers in their ridings, and participating in various virtual town hall meetings to consult or inform our constituents about different imminent issues affecting their day-to-day lives.

Problems across the ridings vary from tenant-landlord issues to employee-employer issues, health issues, seniors' issues or housing issues. Mr. Speaker, the load of constituency cases would double or even at times triple the amount we are used to. Conducting and organizing meetings takes more time as we are all overwhelmed, especially our ministers, who are doing an amazing job during this pandemic. I believe it's a great initiative from government to step up and give this respected Legislature more sitting time to move important bills along and aid Ontarians faster and more efficiently.

1620

It would be much easier for us to go back to our ridings, but that's not the way we want to do it. It's our government's top priority to put Ontarians first, and we would like to be available to work day to day to debate different pieces of legislation as needed.

I have a hard time understanding why the opposition would be against us working longer for the benefit of our constituents. We are requesting to have the Legislative Assembly sitting in June and July to make up for the lost time that we incurred as a result of COVID-19. But Mr. Speaker, it seems that the opposition wants to close it and go home.

Every member of this side of the House is involved in their riding, involved in discussions and consultations to reopen Ontario for business, and are providing recommendations to secure the safety of the people of Ontario. How can we provide the relief for the impacted businesses, small shops, restaurants, stakeholders and corporations from the hardship that COVID-19 has brought?

As PA to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, we are consulting with all the verticals under our ministry to help Ontario go back to business. We conduct weekly virtual meetings with municipalities—councillors, mayors—federal MPs, health authorities and

health agencies, hospitals, community leaders, big employers, corporations and different verticals and industries in our ridings.

This week only, we did two virtual town hall meetings with some of the religious leaders of the Christian faith, consulting and getting some recommendations about worship space and plans to open the space for worship for 25 different churches representing between 100,000 to 200,000 concerned Ontarians.

And despite all this tremendous amount of hard work we all put in every day, we are asking to get the chance to do more and to continue putting Ontarians first. I would have assumed that in extraordinary times of crisis like COVID-19, different parties and different levels of government should work together. Put everything behind us. The people of Ontario deserve to be, and should be, our main concern. Everyone—government, opposition, public service providers, even people who are volunteering or donors who are stepping up to support Ontario and support our front-line workers—has to work together.

I'm asking the opposition to co-operate now as we are one team called Ontario representatives—non-partisan. The people of Ontario are watching us. All other provinces are watching what we are doing here in Ontario.

I want to also remind you that we are in such unprecedented times. I want you to ask yourself, 10 years from today, did you do enough? Did you represent your constituents to the best of your abilities? Did you put the health and safety of your constituents above anything else? If any of these answers are no, then we need to step up and look for ways to ensure that this is the case. That's what this motion is going to ensure for the people of Ontario.

Talking personally, I would like our government to be remembered as a government that worked tirelessly and endlessly for the health and safety of our constituents. All of us, from our energetic Premier, who is all over the map, to our sleepless ministers, our members, even our struggling staff who work unlimited hours to prepare everything for us—meetings, appointments, calls, information, background research, and working on enormous loads of cases. Nevertheless, we still want to extend our session so that we can do what we were elected to do in the first place: provide a voice for our constituents at Queen's Park and make them our top priority.

Finally, I would like to take a moment to reflect on technology and virtualization. Talking from my background of 34 years in technology, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight and praise our government's vision about the online learning. COVID-19 showed us that the technology, online virtualization, is ready and here to stay and gives us the ability to continue our lives with COVID-19. I would like every member here to take a moment to imagine that we don't have these virtual town hall meetings; we don't have these conferences; we don't have online ordering, online food ordering or online business, which we can reach out to from our phones and order stuff.

Talking about myself, I did virtual meetings in 2000, 20 years ago, so the technology is not lacking. There was a

lot of fear about taking the step, but it happened. I don't think that history will go back; the clock's arms never go back. Technology is here to help us make our lives easier, to help us do a better job and a faster job, and more work to be done. I really commend our government for taking the early steps. We asked for only two courses online during the negotiation for the education. I, of course, would like to commend the Minister of Education for taking the heat for that. Now all the schools, colleges and universities are online, and I would like to hear somebody objecting about that now. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): On a point of order, the member for Davenport.

Ms. Marit Stiles: On a point of order, I'd like to correct the record. Incorrectly, I was looking at the statistics from April 28 when I referred to the number of deaths in long-term care instead of May 27. On April 28, it was 700, but the actual number today is 1,587 residents and patients in long-term care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. That is a point of order, and you have every right to correct your record.

Further debate?

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's certainly a pleasure to rise in the House today to bring forward the voices of the people in my community in Toronto Centre.

Speaker, today I want to talk about priorities. Ontario is in the midst of a state of emergency, a global pandemic that's impacting all of our communities in unfathomable ways. We're here debating a motion to move forward with summer sittings precisely because we have to figure out how to do our work in this Legislature in new and adaptive ways—the same way that our communities are trying to find new and adaptive ways to survive the pandemic, to survive as tenants, as small businesses and as community organizations, supporting the most vulnerable people in our communities.

I'd like to share with this House the priorities that I have for my community and that I'm hearing from my constituents in Toronto Centre—the priorities that I hope this government brings forward over the course of the summer session; the issues that I need immediately addressed, immediately dealt with to ensure that not a single person in my community is left behind as a result of COVID-19.

1630

Over the summer sitting, I need this House to address supports for tenants, many of whom have not been able to pay their rent through no fault of their own. I've heard from tenants in my riding that despite the temporary ban on evictions, they're still receiving eviction notices. They're worried about what happens when they fall behind on rent and what happens when those eviction hearings resume at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

This government has done nothing to protect tenants during this crisis and has, in fact, made things worse. Just this morning, instead of focusing on the priorities that we need to be dealing with, this government tried to quietly

and quickly ram through a bill that will make it easier for landlords to evict their tenants in the midst of a public health crisis. Tenants deserve so much better than being abandoned in their time of need and to be put on the fast track to eviction. It's shameful, Speaker.

One tenant, Emily, that I spoke to lives in an Akelius building. I'm sure many of my colleagues are familiar with Akelius. They're a large multinational landlord that was recently rebuked by the UN special rapporteur on the right to housing. Emily's rent is \$1,500 for a small apartment in downtown Toronto. I believe she said, when we spoke, that it was only about 350 or 400 square feet. Emily is currently receiving the CERB benefit. If she were to pay her rent in full at \$1,500, she would only have \$500 left at the end of the month to pay her phone bill, to pay her Internet, to buy a month's worth of food. To make matters worse, she recently had to undergo emergency dental surgery, a surgery that cost her \$1,000 and left her with expensive medications.

She didn't want to fall far behind on her rent, though, and so she did her budget and she figured out that she could pay \$1,100 of the \$1,500 she owed her landlord. She made that offer, that she was willing to pay \$1,100 so as not to fall far behind, and if she could make a payment plan to get caught up. Within an hour, she had an N4 on her door. An N4 is a notice to terminate tenancy from the Landlord and Tenant Board for non-payment of rent. She received this notice from her landlord despite the fact that evictions are currently banned in the province of Ontario, and for only falling \$400 behind on her rent. Within an hour she had this notice.

When Emily called the Landlord and Tenant Board to confirm her rights, she was told that landlords are just getting their ducks in order so that they can evict tenants as soon as they are legally allowed to at the Landlord and Tenant Board. They're already lining up in the queues, issuing notices, just waiting for the second that the Landlord and Tenant Board reopens. Now this government wants to make it even easier to fast-track evictions, and it's shameful. Emily deserves a government with priorities that include getting us all through this pandemic and getting us all through this pandemic housed, not passing legislation that will hurt our communities more and forcing it through.

We need get to work on the actual priorities before us. That looks like actual legislated protections against evictions. It looks like a rent subsidy for tenants who have lost their jobs as a result of COVID-19. And it looks like this government walking back your disastrous rent control loophole that's leaving tenants in my communities paying rent increases in a time of a global pandemic, when they simply cannot afford it. That's what I need this House to address over the summer session.

Speaker, I need this House to address supports for small businesses over the summer sitting of the House. I'm terrified about the future of cultural main streets in our communities, like, for example, the Church and Wellesley Village in my riding. I spoke about that community in question period this morning. The Village is more than a

collection of shops, organizations, restaurants, cafés or bars. It's a historic space for queer and trans organizing and has offered refuge to the 2SLGBTQ+ community for decades in Ontario.

It's a community that's not just there for the people in my riding. It's a safe haven for queer and trans people from all of your communities. When they need that safe space, they come into the Village to be themselves, to find their identities, to do that organizing work. Queer and trans folks in all of your communities are coming here and accessing those safe spaces and those organizations. All of your constituents have a space in the Village. The Village is all of ours.

The small businesses that I've spoken to don't know how they're going to survive this pandemic. Their landlords are not opting into the only commercial rent relief program that's being offered, and many are facing unthinkable decisions, between taking on tens of thousands of dollars of debt—in some cases hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt—or closing their doors forever.

I'd like to share part of a letter that I received from Christopher Hudspeth. Christopher is the owner of Pegasus on Church Street. It's a popular bar and gathering place in the Village, and they were forced to close their doors as a result of COVID-19 in March. Christopher is also the president of the Church and Wellesley BIA. The letter that he sent me reads:

“Small businesses in Canada are extremely important to the local economy. All across this country small businesses are working hard to stay alive. Many of us will have even more struggles to get reopened in the future. Bars and other gathering spots will be some of the last to be able to restart. We need help! The other government programs have had issues. Many of them have been corrected. I ask today that the provincial and federal government step up and fix the CECRA program so it will work for the commercial tenants. The federal government has put the money aside; give tenants some way to access this help if the landlord won't. Small businesses are the backbone of this country.”

My community needs more than what this government is offering. For a government that likes to chant how much they're open for business and supporting the small business community, I have watched you sit on your hands for months and do nothing to support the small businesses in my community that are on the verge of bankruptcy and on the verge of closing their doors. These aren't just small businesses; these are historic spaces in the Church-Wellesley Village that we cannot afford to lose.

My community needs commercial rent subsidies. We need a ban on commercial evictions and we need a real plan to save cultural main streets like the Village—but not just the Village. We're talking about cultural main streets with mom-and-pop shops that have been around for decades, and in some cases generations. They need to survive this, and you need to help them survive this.

Speaker, over the summer sitting, I also need this House to address the lack of funding and supports for municipalities across this province who are struggling to respond to

the crisis, with limited resources and an inability to run a deficit like other levels of government are able to. In my community, this looks like municipal shelters that are pushed to the brink. They are over capacity, they are overcrowded, they are underfunded, and the dedicated staff who work there are doing the very best that they can without enough PPE to make their workplaces safe.

The crisis that we are experiencing with COVID-19 has intersected with the homelessness crisis and with the opioid crisis in unimaginable ways. In my community in Toronto's downtown east, we are seeing a crisis on top of a crisis on top of a crisis, and we can't take it anymore. We didn't have enough resources when we were only dealing with the homelessness crisis, with the worst homelessness situation we've seen in decades. When we were only dealing with the opioid crisis, we didn't have enough resources. Now, when you add those layers on top of COVID-19, my community can't take any more. We need help, and you are not showing up with the supports that we need.

The emergency spending that the city of Toronto has had to put in place to try to get us through the COVID-19 crisis together has pushed the city's budget to the brink. Unlike other levels of government, as I said before, municipalities cannot carry deficits the way that provincial and federal governments can. Toronto's mayor has come out and said that he will have to make massive cuts and stop vital services in my city if they don't get the help that they need from this provincial government. Speaker, I need this Legislature, this government, to prioritize supports for municipalities over this summer session.

These are the priorities of my community in Toronto Centre, but I don't see these priorities reflected in the actions of this government. So here we are, in the midst of a global pandemic, and instead of prioritizing these issues that require our urgent attention—like tenant relief, like supports for the homelessness crisis, like supports for the opioid crisis, like supports for municipalities, and the absolute shame of the situation in our long-term-care homes—we're here debating a motion so that you can fast-track several pieces of legislation through this House under the cover of COVID-19.

Speaker, while the issues that I've spoken to here so far are indeed critical issues locally in my community, in Toronto Centre, I'd like to focus the remainder of my time today on what I see as really the number one issue before this House today—an issue that, quite frankly, as the opposition in this House, we are not going to let you off the hook on. And that's the state of long-term care in this province, as it directly relates to this bill before us, through the time allocation of Bill 175, which seeks to reorganize community care in this province in the midst of an absolute crisis.

1640

Really, where attention needs to be today, where we need to be fully and completely focused is on the bombshell report that we received from the Canadian Armed Forces. This contains a heartbreaking picture of the state of long-term care in Ontario. As my colleague said

before—earlier, my colleague from Davenport—1,587 residents of long-term-care homes have died as a direct result of COVID-19 since this crisis started. That's 1,587 of our seniors, of our elders, our grandmas and our grandpas, our aunts and our uncles—1,587.

I want to start by thanking the Canadian Armed Forces for shining a light on what we know has been a problem in our long-term-care sector for a very, very long time now. I'd like to read into the record a few excerpts, a few highlights—I guess I should say lowlights—from this report, because I think it's important that every single member in this chamber and every single person who is watching these proceedings from home knows the reality of what's happening on the front lines of our long-term-care homes right now.

When the Armed Forces went into Grace Manor, a home in Brampton, where, I have to say, 11 people have died since the beginning of this crisis, CAF reports staff moving from COVID-positive units to other units without changing contaminated PPE. There was no staff break room on the COVID-positive floor where staff could remove their personal protective equipment safely. That was from Grace Manor in Brampton.

When we look at Eatonville in Etobicoke, 42 of our elders have died at Eatonville in Etobicoke. When we look at the report, some of the issues that were raised at that specific home were issues with isolation, with COVID-19 residents in the home being allowed to wander the home and the facility, putting not only other residents, but other staff at risk of contracting COVID-19. We saw reusing of compromised equipment, including catheters that had been left out on the floors. They found nearly a dozen incidents of bleeding fungal infections in residents. There were issues with a lack of soaker pads. Residents who routinely soiled their bed despite having incontinence products were not permitted to have an extra soaker pad or towel in the bed to help protect the sheets or blankets from soiling. They were left to lay in their own soiled sheets because they couldn't be bothered to give them an extra pad.

There was a general culture of fear among the staff, a fear of using equipment because of the costs. We've allowed a pillar of our health care system to put costs before the care of our elders, of our seniors. They also found that key supplies were often under lock and key and saw instances of expired medication.

Staff were improperly trained and morale was low. There was a really disturbing issue where the staffing is such that it's impossible to provide care that is appropriate to each resident to allow them any kind of independence. An example that was listed is that a resident states that he would like to ambulate to the toilets and the PSW said, "No, I just changed him." Imagine not even having enough free will to be able to go to the bathroom, enough support from the people that are supposed to be providing you care to have enough dignity to be able to use the bathroom.

When we look at Hawthorne Place in North York, 43 of our elders have died at Hawthorne Place. The report says that there was little to no disinfection being conducted

in the facility before the CAF arrived. They delayed the changing of soiled residents, leading to severe skin breakdowns in multiple residents—forced and aggressive transfer, forced feedings, narcotics not being given properly and residents having not been bathed for several weeks.

I want you to think about your moms and your dads, your grandparents, sitting in a bed, unbathed, for weeks on end, and tell me that you think that that's okay and that you think a closed-door inquiry into this is okay.

When we move to Altamont in Scarborough, 52 people have died at the Altamont facility in Scarborough. This report speaks to inadequate nutrition due to significant staffing issues, and most residents were reported not having received three meals per day and a significant delay in meals. A significant number of residents also have ulcers—stage 2, 3, and 4—as a result of prolonged bedrest. It goes on to say that at this facility, residents have no way to receive additional personal supplies. Since the lockdown, they've been unable to receive things like shampoo or snacks or the newspaper.

I want you think about what it's been like to be cooped up in our homes for these last months. Imagine not even being able to get the shampoo that you need, to get the newspaper to know what's going on in the world, and how disconnected you'd feel in this shutdown without these basic creature comforts of life.

In the Orchard Villa section of the report—Orchard Villa is a home in Pickering; 77 people have died at Orchard Villa—the CAF report said they found cockroaches and flies, rotten food, patients left in soiled diapers, an incident of a fractured hip that was never addressed by staff and liquid oxygen generators that had never been filled, sitting unused in the basement.

Speaker, these are our elders. They deserve the highest level of respect and dignity that can be provided to them. Now, there's a path forward here, but you have to be willing to take it. We need a full public inquiry into the state of our long-term-care homes. We need investigations; we need inspections. We heard this morning from the Leader of the Opposition that you've slashed inspections of these homes across the province, and in the last year, only nine homes of the 626 across the province have received an inspection. That's less than 2% of long-term-care homes. And then you sit here and look surprised and shocked at the results that have been highlighted in this report. This is shameful, and our communities deserve so, so much better.

Lastly, I have a few emails from some constituents that I do want to read into the record, and I know that I only have about a minute and a half left on my time, so I'll try my best to do that. I have one email from a constituent named Paul, whose father is in palliative care in a long-term-care home, and he hasn't been able to see his father except through a window since COVID-19 started. Paul says, "Why don't you have a public inquiry into long-term care instead of an internal review? In fact, Ontario needs a public inquiry into our care for the elderly, encompassing the spectrum of home care, retirement homes, long-term-care homes and hospitals." I agree wholeheartedly, Paul.

I also heard from another constituent, Cory, who lives in the Corktown neighbourhood in my riding. Cory wrote to me and said, “I sympathize with those who have a parent in a care facility, or have to look after elderly family members at home. The reason for this email is to add my support to an investigation, and I hope that all aspects of operations are looked into. This is because a family member of mine is a front-line worker who, for several years, has not been able to find a full-time job, although well-qualified. The main issue is that hospitals, long-term-care and retirement home facilities tend to offer mostly ‘casual’ or ‘on-call’ work in order to not provide benefits. Therefore, workers are forced to take on multiple jobs to make a living. I hope that this investigation results in regulations that add stability to these workers’ lives, and operational improvements that result in improved care of elders.”

I want to thank that constituent for their email.

Again, I can see that I’m out of time, so I’d like to thank the House for the ability to raise these issues today and, again, to the government members: Do better. Do better. I can’t—

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

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I’d like to start with just thanking all our paramedics. This is a reminder that this is paramedic week. When March break came upon us, it was a different world. My friend Gino and his wife, Louise—Gino is a paramedic, and his wife, Louise, is a nurse. We had plans to get our families—my stepdaughters—together for a March break weekend. Unfortunately, when things happened, he was called back to work immediately, and we have not seen them since. We actually haven’t seen our stepdaughters since, because they live in a different community. I just want to thank all those paramedics out there who are doing their jobs, looking after us, looking after our loved ones, because they are there for us on the front lines. When duty calls, they’re there for us. So thank you to Gino and thank you to his wife, Louise.

1650

I also want to thank our constituency staff. Our constituency staff have done a lot of work differently, just as we have, just as a lot of businesses have. A lot of them are working from home. A lot of them are trying to figure it out. Everybody has a different way of working. Everyone’s office is different. Every community is different. But we represent all of Ontario, so we have to make sure that they’re safe in their jobs, and I know we all—it doesn’t matter what political stripe—want to make sure our staff feel safe. They also are taking their time to work in the evenings; they’re working on weekends. And also, don’t forget the staff here in the Legislature who are always here to support us. Thank you. Thank you to all of them.

I just want to thank them for their hard work, especially my staff in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. A shout-out to Andrew and Sujay, who have gone that extra mile to help me and my constituents, to make sure when my constituents write in—you know what? Everybody was in a crisis. Everyone was concerned. No one really knew what to do, and they

were there and they helped make sure those emails and those phone calls were responded to promptly. So thank you.

We were all elected. Many of us worked our whole lives or dreamt our whole lives to take a seat in the Ontario Legislature. It is an absolute privilege to be able to sit here in one of these chairs. I used to be a staffer here many, many years ago, and to see the day that I actually was able to take a seat—someone said to me, “There’s no bad seat in the Legislature,” and that’s true. There is no bad seat, because we all have the privilege to serve and we worked hard to earn these positions that we have, to have that opportunity to stand here in the Legislature and debate legislation, debate ideas, debate concepts and thoughts that are brought forward to us by our members.

That’s why it’s so important that we’re here today. It’s important that we’re here throughout the summer to continue these debates, because we ran an election with a mandate and those people who voted for us expect us to deliver on that mandate. That’s why it’s important to continue these dialogues that we have started.

We talk about Bill 171, Building Transit Faster. How better is it to have that bill debated now? We need to get transit built faster. That’s something that creates jobs. I represent Etobicoke–Lakeshore. We need to continue to build our transit hubs. We need to contribute. My riding is growing. It is growing so quickly. We have to make sure that people can get to work on time. We have to make sure that our transit is built so people have a way to get to work.

It’s different when you’re from different parts of Ontario. You may not see transit to be as important as we do here in Toronto, but that transit is extremely important. We have growing ridings. We want to make sure we can create jobs. What better opportunity to create jobs, when people are losing their jobs?

Building transit faster helps create jobs in our community, and it also encourages investment. Toronto is a hub. We need to continue to create these jobs in the future. What better than to start getting transit built so we can be attractive to other people when they start looking at jobs and where these jobs are going to be? We want them to come to Etobicoke. We want to make sure they’re in Toronto. We want to make sure that we are an attractive place for people to come and work because we know, as members have mentioned, that people have lost their jobs. Some of these jobs won’t be there for them in the future, so we have to think creatively about what kinds of jobs will be in our community. Let’s make our communities more attractive by having better transit.

One thing my colleague from Flamborough–Glanbrook mentioned was about transfer trucks. Where do those transfer trucks on the highway go? Well, they come to the great riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, because they come to our food terminal. I want to do a shout-out to all our folks who work at the Ontario Food Terminal, right in my riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. They didn’t stop working. They continued to make sure those trucks were serviced, and they wanted to make sure that that food got to our grocery stores and got to our homes. Thank you to

everybody who worked very hard at the Ontario Food Terminal. You know what? It's probably getting there a little faster with less traffic these days.

My colleague from Flamborough–Glanbrook talked about her commute to work. I grew up in northern Ontario. Since 1995, I've lived here in Toronto. When I tell people that I live 13 kilometres from my place of business, which is here at the Legislature, and it takes me an hour, they can't believe it. But that's fact. That's a fact of living in Toronto: 13 kilometres, one hour. Today may be a little different. It may be only 17 minutes—which is great, I appreciate that—but it will come back to the day when we will get back to that gridlock. We want to make things better, and to do that, we need to improve our transit. So I would really like to see this bill get debated here in the Legislature.

I don't think anyone can disagree that our justice system is outdated and antiquated. The system is broken, and we need to fix it. Our Attorney General has put forward a very good bill, Bill 161, which is in the committee stage right now, I believe. It is in the Standing Committee on Justice Policy. Wouldn't it be better if we could start having those discussions right now so we can move this legislation forward and get this looked at? We can all agree that transit needs to be fixed. We can all agree that our justice system can be fixed. We can do things better.

As I mentioned, it is an honour and a privilege to stand in this House and serve the people of Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I believe it is important that we have that opportunity and, since we missed a little bit of time, that we take that time in the month of July to sit here and continue those debates.

One thing we say to each other—and I'm sure you all do in your own constituency: We are going to get through this. We're going to get through this. Life is going to be a little different. We have to be patient, we have to be careful and we have to look out for one another. I want to applaud our Premier, I want to applaud our Minister of Health, and I really want to applaud our Minister of Long-Term Care, who has held her position for less than a year, for the work that they are doing to protect the citizens of Ontario. We have a mandate, we have a goal, we have an opportunity to continue what we were elected to do. Yes, COVID-19 happened. We are getting through it, and we are getting through it together. We will continue to get through it together. We will work with one another to make sure it happens. But debating some of this legislation—we have to have life after COVID-19. We have to have legislation after COVID-19. We must continue to have a future, and one thing we have to have is hope.

One thing our businesses say to me when I have these Zoom calls is, "What's the next step?" That's why it's so important that we continue having these discussions—because our economy has to move. Ontario is the economic engine of this country. It has to continue to go. It has to continue to move. And if we're not here debating legislation and moving things forward and getting these ideas up, then what are we doing? Why did we run in these elections? We can't let COVID-19 stop us. We have to

continue. We have to make sure that we have a better future for tomorrow.

I thank everyone for their time. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the members of Sudbury and on behalf of the province as well.

Before I start, Speaker, just in terms of good news, I want to share this with the House. I read this the first thing this morning in the news. Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, who is our medical officer of health in Sudbury for the public health unit, announced that she believes that Sudbury is near the end of the first wave of COVID-19. We've done very, very well on social isolation and following the rules from public health. We have very few cases, and we're doing a very good job. I just want to celebrate with the House how well we're doing in Sudbury with COVID-19. I know that we're having a difficult time.

I've got some notes written down, and I want to talk about the notes in general for people watching—and just understand that what has happened over the last couple of days has been sort of unique in that, while we've been here, we're in different spots. I normally sit over there; now I'm over here. I don't have access to my regular equipment. We usually prepare before we come in. Yesterday we had these bills arrive with no notice, no preparation—and you're on House duty and you're not sure what's happening. All of my notes are in my desk, over there, but I can't get there because of social isolation, so I have to wander through it. Luckily, yesterday, I wasn't up for debate. But I just want to explain how different the tone has been. It changed like that. We had this sense of collaboration, working together and discussing stuff, and I don't know what happened to change it all of a sudden.

Then, at the end of the day yesterday, we got these five pages to cover—this motion out of nowhere. I read it last night. I've got to tell you, last night—and all of us, I know, work hard. I'm not going to throw stones. I might make a joke or two, but I'm not going to throw stones. We all work hard. But last night, I was doing consultations with working groups about how we get out of COVID. This is a request from the government. I'm doing another one tonight and I'm doing another one tomorrow night. But on top of that, I've got to read this five-page debate and prepare for it and get some notes and think about it. At the end of the day, when you finish the consultation at 8:30 at night, it's not enough time to prepare effectively to talk about what's best for the province. It's frustrating, Speaker.

1700

Why are we here? I talked about the five-page motion, and I'm not going to go into it. I might later, if there's time, but I just want to talk about the amendment because that's what we're debating. In the motion, it says, "Let's sit for three days a week." The amendment basically says, "Let's sit for four days a week." The government keeps arguing that we don't want to sit. I want to be very clear: We want

to sit. We want to sit an extra day. We normally sit four days a week. We go back to our constituency offices for Friday and through the weekend. What we're saying is, let's resume business the way we used to. We do want to sit, but instead of three days we want to sit for four days, and that makes sense. They had a motion for more sitting time. The amendment was saying, "Let's sit even more."

All the previous debates where people got up and read their notes and said, "I don't know why the NDP, the opposition, doesn't want to work"—it's not true. You've got to listen. We've got to listen to each other.

Earlier, there was a comment made. I apologize; I forget your riding. People aren't in their normal seats. I know your name; I can't think of your riding, but my apologies. The member opposite talked about paramedics. Only half of the room clapped. We all are proud of paramedics, but we start getting zoned; we start getting isolated and thinking of our team and their team. We've got to get out of this rut. We want to be here sitting, working and debating. I agree with the government that we should be working.

I've got to tell you, Speaker: Last year, I really agreed that we should have been working, because last year we didn't sit here for five months. I don't remember a single member of the government saying, "We should be here—three days, two days, one day." We were here no days, for five months. So there is a lot of work to get done and caught up on, and I want to be here.

I've got to tell you: I come from a working-class family, and I'm proud of it. I'm proud of my roots and I'm proud of the people I work with. I have a feeling that this summer is going to be like my old job because, before the election, I worked for the smelter. We dealt with heat and we dealt with hot face masks and we dealt with hard work and long hours. So if you want me to come, I'm coming. I can't wait to be here. I love to be here.

I've got to tell you: My role there was with safety. We'd start our meetings, where I worked, with safety messages.

I have to tell you—and I'm not saying this in a partisan way—what you did during that vote was incredibly unsafe. Those masks that you're wearing, the paper or fabric masks: I come from a world where we wore masks because chemicals are dangerous. Those are not protecting you. They're limiting and they're reducing the risk, but man, I'm really concerned about you and your family's safety. I'm concerned with what you did.

I've got to tell you: I do love coming here. I love it. I feel like this is a place where people like me don't get to come and represent their constituents a lot. We joke around a lot about being knuckle-draggers, blue-collar workers, and there's a bunch of us on our side of the aisle. The member from Mushkegowuk-James Bond—Bay; that's even better: James Bond—is a blue-collar worker. The member from Niagara is a blue-collar worker. Hamilton—Miller; sorry, Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is obviously a blue-collar worker. I think he has broken every finger he has. They're all curved in different directions. And you get to speak for those people whom you don't get to hear from.

Earlier, there were members across the aisle talking about farmers. I'm from a mining town. We have farmers around our city, but I don't know as much about farmers as somebody who lives in a farming community. We need to hear all those voices. It's important.

I want to remind you, Speaker: What we're saying in the amendment—the government is saying, "Let's come to work and let's work hard," and we're saying, "Yes, let's come to work all four days, not three days." We're basically saying, "Yeah, let's come to work and work hard."

The real reason I think we're doing this, Speaker, the reason we're having this debate today, has to do with long-term care. This report showed up yesterday. It's pretty damning. It's a little embarrassing. It's frustrating to me that in question period the minister sort of implied that they didn't know; how could they know? I have a newspaper; I knew. Before I was elected, I knew because I spoke with families and workers. Workers haven't been quiet about this. Families haven't been quiet about this. Any of us in the last election who were knocking on doors—I know in my city, the top three: hydro, health care and long-term care.

There's a member who didn't vote for me, a Conservative member, when I was knocking on doors, who told me, "I'm not voting for you; I'm Conservative. But we have to fix long-term care. Those personal support workers are family when family is not there." That sticks in my head. That was two years ago. I still remember. I can knock on the same door and tell the person.

Personal support workers are family who are not there. We've created an environment where they can't make enough money to work in a single place. We don't treat them properly. I don't want to get into blame, but we've got to fix this. We can sit around and say this government, the previous government, the one before—we can go all the way back. Every time I hear someone say "Bob Rae," I feel like my head is going to explode. I couldn't even vote when Bob Rae was elected. Look how old I am. How far back are we going to go? It's ridiculous.

I want to tell you a story, Speaker, about listening. This is a story from the smelter. I worked with a superintendent for years named Rick Melanson. He recently retired, and congratulations again, Rick, on the retirement. If I know Rick, he'll probably come back as a contractor, but congratulations for whatever week or two you were retired.

So Rick and I were involved with safety for years, and we had an issue with lighting. It was dark. You would think, with the smelter and the hot metal, it would be bright, but it was dark, and there were concerns with lighting. We couldn't get it around. In the early days of LED lighting, Rick took a real bold step and he invested in some new lighting. He had people come in on overtime on the weekend and put lighting all over the place. We literally showed up on Monday morning waiting for high-fives. It was like a John Woo film where we're walking in slow motion with doves behind us.

We were expecting all these people to be excited, but we screwed up. We put lights where they were in people's faces. We put lights where they couldn't see what they

were trying to do. Everybody was angry at us. That happened maybe a dozen years ago and it sits in my head as a reminder to listen—to listen to everybody. Even when you think you're right, you might get it wrong if you don't listen to everybody. We need to listen to everybody.

Members at home, people at home watching this might be wondering why we want to go for four days. On the one hand, we can have more debate and more conversation, and I think that's important. But on the other hand as well, there are private members' motions, there are private members' bills. There are some important bills for us to discuss and move forward on. They're valuable. They're important. It's why we're elected. A lot of them are brought—my private member's bill this year was brought to me by members of my constituency. They told me, "This is what I want from you." The one I had last year about declaring an emergency because of the opioid crisis—it was an idea that came from my community. It was from town halls. People in my community said, "We need your help. We've got to do something." It was their idea.

These are valuable things for us to bring up. People expect us to. That's why they elect us. We're their voice. We amplify their voice, all of us in our ridings. It's all important to us.

Right now in my riding, the voice I hear the loudest is small businesses. They're the loudest right now. And as we march toward the first of the month, when rent is due, or the end of the month, when rent is due, their voices get louder and louder.

As a government—I'm not saying this as a criticism; I'm saying this as a positive thing: As a government, we shut down many small businesses because of COVID-19. That was a bold step to take. It was an important step to take. Probably one of the reasons we're celebrating the success in Sudbury that I mentioned earlier is because we decided to shut business down.

And they made a sacrifice. They're losing money hand over fist. Their hopes, their dreams, all the things that you speak to as values about small business—they're all true. They're relevant. My mom had a small business. I've lived this. I get it. But these small businesses are struggling, and they're desperate for help and for rent, and the package that is out there is not working for them. They can't just be phoning my office. They have to be phoning yours as well.

Speaker, they're so desperate; they're so worried. And when they phone me, they tell me they're optimistic: "If you help me, if you can help me, if the government can help today, I know I'll get back on my feet. I just can't get on my feet before I'm evicted." We have the power to do this. You want to run through legislation? We'll come back tomorrow and vote it through. Put some money in the pockets of these small businesses so they don't fail. That's what they need from you. That's what they need.

We've been talking about technology, and I mentioned to the member across from me here—we were talking about how good technology is. In the motion they talk about having people come in June to depute, to come and

speak and tell their story. The government said several times that they can do it by technology. In the north, you can't. I'm in the riding of Sudbury and around my riding—we joke that I'm the Timbit and she's the doughnut; Nickel Belt is the riding around mine. I'm on several calls because Sudbury is sort of the hub. Often the member from Nickel Belt cuts out because Internet access is so poor. I can drive to her house in 20 minutes, but Internet access is poor.

1710

Let's listen to each other. When somebody has access to high-speed Internet, like I do in Sudbury, they need to listen to people from other ridings, rural areas, northern areas, who don't, who want to have a voice, who want to depute, but maybe—one of these has to do with farming, and I know it's important because I worked on farms as a kid. But I think summertime is really busy for farms. I think that's why they hired me in the summer, because it's really busy. It may not be the best time to come down, especially during a pandemic when they're probably worried about how they're going to harvest, how they're going to bring people on to the land, how they're going to care for their animals with social distancing. Let's give them the voice they want. Let's not drive it through because we want to, because it's our party. Let's make it theirs.

I'm running short on time, Speaker. I had an opportunity this morning to have—we ran out of time. I'm not going to ask the question, but there's part of it that stands out to me. I just want to read part of it. For reference, both my dad and my grandfather are retired from the military. They're both veterans. I know first-hand how brave they are, how hard-working they are—our armed forces in Canada. I used to joke all the time that my dad would jump out of perfectly good planes. It takes a lot of bravery to jump out of a plane that isn't crashing.

Our armed forces went into long-term-care facilities, Speaker, and they found stuff that devastated them. They're horror stories. I can't imagine a soldier being overwhelmed in a long-term-care facility, and I'm proud that they brought it forward. But we really dropped the ball. We did. Like I said earlier, I'm not blaming the government or the previous government or the one before. I'm saying we have an opportunity to fix it. If anyone in this room thinks that we were elected to blame someone else and not fix the problem that's here, you're wrong. You're wrong. The reason there was such an overwhelming change is because they were fed up and they wanted it fixed. That's what they want from us: to fix it.

I was distracted working on notes for this because I keep thinking of the other work that we're doing. I keep thinking of COVID-related things in my riding and ways to help people connect. I keep thinking of people trying to educate their kids while working from home—those who are fortunate enough to be working from home. Other people are trying to figure out how they're going to put food on their table for their kids. Other people are worrying about how they're going to pay for the Internet, because they need the Internet now so their kids can go to school—and the struggle and constant stress.

I keep thinking about my friend who told me that his wife, who's a nurse, goes to work all day incredibly stressed, and on the drive home is relaxed for about 15 minutes, and spends the next 15 minutes of the drive home worried about what she's going to do when she gets home. She goes into the garage and washes herself with Lysol wipes, puts all of her clothes into a bag in the garage and hopes she doesn't give it to her family when she gets home.

That's the reality for people in Ontario. That's what they want us to work on and focus on. When you tell me the priority for people in Ontario right now is TTC subway stops—my apologies to the Toronto members, but unless you're running a spur line to Manitoulin Island, that's not the priority. I can't believe that in Toronto, people are calling their MPP and saying, "When are you going to expand the TTC?" They can't be. I keep hearing members talking about small businesses closing down, people losing their livelihoods. I don't know how people make ends meet. I don't know how it happens. These are things that we can tackle and we can fix. When we talk about expanding, coming here for four days instead of three, those are the things we can tackle and we can work on. That's what we should be doing together.

I just want to talk about a couple of things in the original motion. There's a whole motion about a voting procedure, and I want to talk about that, because it's important in terms of why we want to debate, why we want to have things ahead of time, to fully understand them. I read this and it didn't make sense to me.

Right now, when we vote, we stand here and we all stand together. We saw earlier how that could be hazardous with COVID-19. The motion, basically, is that we'll vote in the lobbies. There are rooms behind here, and we'll vote in here. I don't understand how we would do that. I don't know how we'd socially isolate. It probably makes sense to the government, and I want to listen to them and understand how it makes sense, but all I have is this piece of paper. I can't wrap my head around it. How will we figure that out? How will I walk there and back without coming into contact with somebody else? I could have COVID at any time, like any of us could.

The very first case of COVID in Sudbury was someone who was around 50 years old, who was at the PDAC conference in Toronto. I'm around 50 years old. I was at the PDAC conference in Toronto. I spent 14 days in Toronto before going home, because I didn't want to bring it to someone at home. You don't know; you might have it. So we've got to take the precautionary principle and ensure that we don't have it.

The other thing I saw in here—I'm going to run out of time. I want to keep others safe, as well, and keep our staff safe. I want to keep our table Clerks and our security safe. There was something in here that caught my eye, and I thought it was funny. Just give me one minute; sorry, Speaker. Do you know what? I'm going to skip over it. There was something in there that caught my eye, and I thought it was funny. It was just the wording of it, but it's not worth sharing. What's important right now is the debate that we're having about the amendment.

We want to come to work. I know sometimes we sit on different sides and we think that whatever party is different, they're not as hard-working or smart or whatever it is as us. I know you're here to represent your constituents. I know it. I talk to you guys all the time in the hallway, and I know how busy you are. You're saying, "Let's come to work through the summer. Let's make up for lost time." We're saying, "Yes, but instead of three days, let's do it four days." Let's be proud of the work that we're doing. Let's work as hard as Ontario is going to have to work to get back on their feet, because there's no one in Ontario who is going to say, "Yeah, you guys really crushed it with your three days a week. You're really working hard."

Obviously, Speaker, I'm speaking in favour of the motion. I support the motion. Let's get back to work. Let's do the hard work that people expect from us. Let's continue to work hard, four days a week.

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

Mrs. Nina Tangri: It's my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak on today's motion, introduced by our esteemed member from Barrie—Innisfil.

Speaker, I don't doubt for one moment that all members of this House wish to represent their constituents and their needs. We were all elected to ensure that the business of this House—that is, to pass legislation to improve the lives of all Ontarians. Our government was elected with a mandate to build better transit, which affects many members in the opposition and would allow them to get from point A to point B in a much better way.

As we're going through such a trying time with COVID-19, allowing the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly to study Bill 175, Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, 2020, should be at the top of mind for the members of the opposition. As I said earlier, I truly, truly believe that all of us in this House are here to represent their constituents, and I'd like to take a moment just to speak a little bit about the areas where people in the community have really stepped up during this very difficult time.

I worked with many different community agencies and organizations. We've helped raise funds for, as an example, the Yogi Divine Society. They've been providing groceries for families and international students. We've donated food to Eden Food for Change, with Global-Medic. The Queen's Manor event space, for example, gave the food bank a chunk of their space so they could store a lot of their items that are used for wintertime. They've taken that there to open that space up for those needy families who need to have that right now. I think it has just been amazing, some of the work that a lot of the people have been doing here.

1720

The Canada India Foundation: I've joined them numerous times to provide and continue to provide meals to our front-line health care workers all across the GTA. They've included hospitals, long-term-care facilities. They've been to the police and gave it to them, the paramedics. We really want to thank them for their ongoing services.

And as we heard earlier today, there are many members across this House that have done so much work during this time. My esteemed member from Mississauga–Lakeshore has done an unbelievable amount of work each and every day. Not once, but many times, he has gone out with people in the truck to the Ontario Food Terminal, picked up food, delivered to food banks, delivered to organizations. It has just been so reassuring and so comforting to see members of this House do some great here.

Our member here from Mississauga–Malton: He's been working with Sai Dham Food Bank, delivering meals with them continually, each and every day. It's times like this where we look around in our communities, and sometimes people who were very affluent before are very needy right now, and vice versa. It's very, very, very difficult. So to see a lot of people just around this House and the community come together to support each other is very comforting. It's times like that where I'm so proud that I'm a Canadian and I'm Ontarian, and that I live in a place where we don't have to worry about where the next meal is coming from, because somebody will be there to help. So thank you to each and every one here that's been doing that.

But also, Speaker, my staff and I continue to support and work with, of course, our constituents. In order for us to fully represent those we serve, we need to also be here in this House to introduce, to debate and to pass legislation on important issues. Earlier, we heard from our House leader about the work we continue to do whilst we're not in the House. I'll give you a small sample of the work and the round tables that I've hosting over the last two months.

Initially, right after the House rose, I hosted a round table with the Mississauga Board of Trade with the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. At that time, we had no idea what was going to be happening with our businesses. He was there and comforting to those businesses. They're from a very wide range of different types of businesses, large and small. It was something they needed to hear from the minister at that time.

Since then, since we announced the joint economic recovery committee, I hosted another one with the Mississauga Board of Trade and heard from them. I asked them to let me know and let our government know what they could be doing in their industries to allow us to reopen. For example, I've talked to barbershops, I've talked to faith communities and just many different areas on what they could be doing for us to be able to—with the health and safety, of course, of our constituents—open up again.

I moderated a conference call with our Minister of Tourism, for those who are in the tourism industry. We all know that's an industry that has been suffering dramatically. There are no flights going. People have only been receiving vouchers and not refunds. It really has been a very difficult time for anyone in the tourism industry right now, but they did give us some fantastic feedback. They came back to us with ideas and solutions, which are what we really need to be saying. It's not just the complaints, but real, real solutions, so I really want to thank the

minister for the great work she has been doing and is continuing to do. We hosted another one with her on high-performance sports, and that was very successful, to listen to ways and we can try and find ways that we can reopen those in the sports and fitness industry.

One morning—it was quite difficult because of the time difference—to continue to still do the work in our office of the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade, I was talking with a member of our trade office in India, with a company that is interested in investing right here in Ontario, a very large investment. So we spoke numerous times, and sometimes it was seven in the morning for me here and late at night for them, and sometimes it was vice versa, but we do it. We do it because we know that we need that investment and we need that confidence in Ontario for those people to come here and invest.

I spend a lot of time working with people in the media to make sure that the information that's getting out to the public on COVID-19 is accurate. It changes, and not just daily; it sometimes changes by the hour, so we need to make sure that we are up to date on the information coming out from our government, from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and that we're passing that information on to the public in an accurate and important manner, so that's something that's been continually going on, each and every day.

I've been working a lot with students and families and just helping them manoeuvre things like some of the government supports that are out there right now. We have the CERB; we have the wage subsidy; OCECRA, as we call it; different loan programs. It can be extremely confusing, whether you're an individual or a business. There's always going to be someone who doesn't fit into any of those categories. Each individual, each family, each business is very unique. There have been, for a lot of it, some small businesses that just did not fit into any of those categories. I agree with the member from Sudbury that there are going to be some falling through the cracks, and we really have to be there for them.

I really want to thank our Premier, who has been working with the federal government, day in and day out, on talking about supports for those people in Ontario, and across this country, quite frankly, and really pushing to make sure we do get those supports for everyone who needs them. So I really wanted to thank him. I want to thank our Minister of Health and our Minister of Long-Term Care, who have really been out there working for all of us. It's been comforting knowing that they are there all the time.

The six MPPs from Mississauga—we talk amongst ourselves at least on a weekly basis. We have calls. We talk about what's happening. We hosted a virtual town hall with our Minister of Finance to talk about the industry. Anyone was able to come in and call in and ask questions. We actually received a lot of—it wasn't just questions of us. They were giving us feedback on things where we as a government could help. I know our Minister of Finance really took that information and we've moved with a lot of those.

We have a weekly update with the Trillium Health Partners—not just the Mississauga MPPs, but also our esteemed member of Parliament from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, because one of the hospitals falls in her riding as well. Every Friday, they give us an update on capacity and the patients, how many are in ICU, how many are on ventilators, and where we are on potentially reopening elective surgeries. We're up to date on that information so that we can take that information back, again, to the public and reassure people that we're there, we're working for them and we're available. We're always available for our constituents.

But I also, Speaker, spent a lot of time speaking to companies who have really stepped up to the plate during this time; for example, to build ventilators and personal protective equipment. I want to talk about a company called Medtronic, in the south of Brampton. It's a global company, and one of the things they build is ventilators. Because the ventilators are actually manufactured in Ireland, they had to prioritize where the ventilators—where they were making 300 a week, they're now making 1,000. So they had to prioritize globally where they were sending them. Of course, it was, first, Asia, Africa, then Europe, and now North America. They weren't able to meet our demand quickly enough, so they gave their intellectual property to us and allowed companies to take the specifications of the ventilators and build them right here. Danby have taken that and worked with a number of other companies to build those ventilators. They've been built and are at the bedsides in hospitals, ready to use if needed.

So when we look at how the people of Ontario and the companies of Ontario have really stepped up to the plate, it has been quite amazing watching all of this happen.

I know everybody, probably, in the House—all members have heard from constituents about only being able to fill a prescription for 30 days rather than a 90-day supply. We know that supply can be an issue. I actually took time out to speak to Jim Keon, the president of the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association, to talk about the drug supply. I asked: Do we really have a drug supply shortage on generic drugs? Is there a real issue out there? It's unfortunate that we're asking our seniors to not go out, yet they're only able to get a 30-day supply, so now they're having to go three times where they would only normally go once for that supply. He said that we don't have a shortage right now, but the issue that we face is the logistics. Not all of our generics are manufactured here in Canada. If it's coming from China, for example, or from India, there's that logistical issue of, first, are they willing to let the supply out of the country; and second, how many flights are coming out of there—and the very few flights that are coming out there, to secure that space on that flight to get those drugs out. So as of now, thankfully, we don't have an issue, but we had to have that supply only at 30 days just in case. It really has been difficult for many. I've had a lot of seniors who have contacted my office with this issue alone—because we're not talking about one drug, in some circumstances, for many seniors and many people, it

could be two, three or more drugs, as well. So that was something I wanted to reach out and talk to him about.

1730

I also held virtual meetings and conversations, for example, with Bayer. They're partnering with the Population Health Research Institute to launch a trial to prevent health decline in COVID-19 patients. They have a study of chloroquine, azithromycin and betaseron, which could potentially prevent hospital admissions and the need for ventilation. For those of us who may get COVID-19, to take that at an early stage—and early trials are looking very promising on that. We've heard from many different trials that are taking place across Canada right now and here in Ontario, but also globally, that are showing great potential, but we are in early days. We don't have a vaccine yet, we don't have a cure, but we're looking to those in the industry to work hard for us and try and find a way to help us all with COVID-19.

I also held a virtual round table with Life Sciences Ontario on how the sector can contribute to Ontario's post-COVID-19 economic recovery. That included pharma, medical technology, regenerative medicine, venture capital and diagnostics. I truly believe that we need to work diligently with the sector to build a much-longer-term strategy. We need to learn from COVID-19 and what we faced and what could potentially happen in another pandemic, and be prepared.

We've talked a lot about personal protective equipment. I don't think many people in this House heard that term that much before COVID-19, but it's something we talk about each and every day. Now we have to understand, as we're reopening the economy, how important it is to have that PPE for everyone. We're not just talking about N95 masks, but the masks that some of us—I think everyone in the House has worn a mask today at some point. But now, as we're opening businesses, as we're going to the stores, as businesses are going to be working, manufacturing is going to be open, factories are going to be open, people are going to need masks, gloves, goggles, visors, whatever it may be, so we need a much larger supply. So we're looking to industry to build that, and build that supply right here in Ontario. I think it's really important.

I've spent quite a bit of time picking up and delivering masks myself to hospitals, long-term-care facilities and to community members.

Soon after COVID-19 began, I picked up the phone and I called a company called Kruger to inquire about the possible shortage of what was important to all of us, which was toilet tissue. We had heard a lot about hoarding taking place as soon as COVID-19 began, so I called them—they're in my riding—and had a great conversation with them. I said, "So do we have an issue with toilet tissue?" And they said, "For the normal general supply, there's absolutely no issue. The problem that we have is that people are hoarding it. They're buying it and taking it off the shelves, which means some people are not getting the supply." Anyway, I think we're okay for now on toilet tissue, so that's really important. I actually spoke to them just a couple of weeks ago, so our supply is still in good shape.

I have spent time speaking with fitness and gym leaders, barbers, faith leaders from every denomination. For a lot of people, being able to go to church, to the temple, to the mosque, to the synagogue—sometimes that's the only social interaction that they have. So for them to be able to visit those places is so important. What do we as a government, what does our Chief Medical Officer of Health—how can we reopen these institutions so that people can once again get back to practising their faith together as a community? They've been coming back to me with some great ideas and great solutions on the one-way-in, one-way-out, on having two or three congregations where they would normally only have one. It's heart-warming when you see people come together and bring you some really great information.

I've had conversations with our Peel police just a couple of days ago, with the deputy chief, Marc Andrews, who gave me an update on where we've been hearing a lot about domestic abuse going up. However, because people are stuck at home, sometimes there's no access to a phone where they can actually call for help. There are a lot of different sides to what we're hearing.

Neha Sharma, a pharmacist, has a compounding licence. In her own pharmacy, she made sanitizer with 95% alcohol—great quality. We took them ourselves and delivered them to our great paramedics, who we've been talking a lot about today, and to a long-term-care home in my riding.

I spent time, soon after being elected, and shadowed some PSWs in a long-term-care centre. I can't tell you how—I understood how difficult it was, the job that they do, and the immense amount of respect we all have for our PSWs. I think there's a lot of work that we can do, we need to do and we must do to support those in that industry.

I know there's not much time left, so I'm going to be very quick. But Speaker, I just want to say again that I'm so proud of my colleagues in this House and the work that we've all been doing in our ridings. I know that we've also just come through Ramadan and Eid, and the Muslim community has been really stepping up to the plate and supporting the community with food deliveries and helping out our food banks. I know that.

I've just mentioned some of the few virtual meetings that I have done and I will continue to do, but we must always continue to govern to help get through this difficult time—and we will get through it. But I do ask the opposition to work with us for the benefit of all of the people in Ontario.

Once again, to all the members of this House, thank you for all the work that all of you are doing to support all of your communities. Thank you for the opportunity for me to rise today.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a joy to take my place and be here in my seat, away from the beautiful riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, but definitely speaking on behalf of the good people. I need to inform the people back

home that, indeed, the tone has changed here at the Legislature.

I want to go back a little bit so that we can just piecemeal some of the issues that have happened over the last couple of months that have brought us to this point we're at. There are a lot of things I'd prefer to talk about, but I think it's important to give a little bit of that history so the people back home can look at and get a better appreciation of what has led us to changing this tone.

I'm so happy that my friend across the way—I stood with him I believe it was yesterday. Was it this morning that we stood in front of the mace and we complimented each other with regard to how all of our colleagues were working extremely hard in their ridings. And although we weren't in our seats here at Queen's Park—the work had changed, but the level of work and the amount of work was still the same for all of us, whether we were here at Queen's Park or back home in our offices. I remember we had a very extensive conversation in front of the door, where he actually informed me that he recognized a lot of the work that my colleagues had been doing back home and the fact that we were all working toward advancing and bettering this province. I had to share the same conversation with him. I said it's remarkable that I spoke to some of the ministers in congratulating them and making sure that some of their staff members—we all have liaison relationships with some of those individuals who are behind the ministers and behind the ministries, who respond to all of our inquiries, and the amount of work that they had been doing. The fact that there was one particular individual—and I won't mention that individual, but I did talk to your minister a couple of days ago to give you a shout-out. Every single time I called him, he picked up the phone. He had an answer for me, and if he didn't have it there, it was within, I would say, about 45 minutes that I got a return call to get those issues resolved.

Anyway, it was nice, because I was standing right there in front of the mace with the House leader, and then, this afternoon and yesterday, I was dumbfounded with the messaging that he was putting out: that apparently, we don't want to work; that apparently, we don't want to be here. According to his words, the NDP is the new NDP as far as what they are looking at doing is wanting to go away and not work, effective—I think it was June 3 he had mentioned.

1740

Well, I enjoy being here at work at Queen's Park. I enjoy the work that we can do here. I always enjoy bringing the views and the points of people from back home. There's a lot of gamesmanship that has been going on. I often use this term, and I wrote it down just to make sure that I don't forget it: It's called a bait and switch. A bait and switch is kind of, "We want to try to talk about something else, to change the channel, so we're going to put in different subjects that we're going to talk about because we want to get away from, really, what is important to Ontarians right now and what is on their minds."

What is on their minds right now is long-term-care facilities. What is on their minds is small businesses that,

after years and years and years of working and building their lives and building their relationships and building their business, have been left hanging by this government with no assistance, with no help.

The other thing is that there are 1,587 reasons why we should be here today talking about long-term-care facilities, 1,587 reasons why we should be here not just two days a week, not just three days a week, but four out of five days a week—and I'm willing. Let's get here and do it in the evening. Let's take the time that we absolutely need in order to get this right, to get the discussions going and to get to the priorities that Ontarians really want us to talk about.

But what we have here is that we were presented with a surprise motion, and what led to this motion is—let's go back. I stated earlier that I wanted to put it into a time frame as to what led us here. I remember being in my seat here when my leader, Andrea Horwath, was talking about the shortfalls that this government was not meeting with the supports and the PPE that we were going to need for our front-line workers—our PSWs, our doctors, our RNs, our RPNs, paramedics—the shortfalls that were within our long-term-care facilities. The reason why we were raising those alarm bells is because, an ocean away, there was an illness; there was a disease; there was an infection that we really didn't take the necessary steps in advance to prepare ourselves for. It found its way to us.

We had a Premier who stood in this place and said, "Oh, you guys are fearmongering. You should be able to go out and enjoy, and don't you worry about it. We have all the PPE that we need, and we're going to sustain. You are fearmongering, and you shouldn't have to worry about this." Well, lo and behold, not that long ago we heard the Premier stand up and say that he was concerned that we were going to have some shortfalls on the PPE that is required, and indeed, we are still going through that. We still are experiencing long-term-care homes, health care facilities, people who are our front-line workers who are being denied the equipment that they absolutely need in order to provide the proper health care for seniors who are in long-term-care facilities or in our hospitals and making sure that everything is there that we needed.

It comes in. We're now into March and now the House recesses, and now we put this front, all of us in here together, that we're going to work towards the best avenues and making the best decisions for all Ontarians. So that's what we do, and we go back home and we start working towards this. We were one group. We were all working together.

Then, something in the tone recently changed. What recently changed is the results that we got, and thank goodness that the Canadian Armed Forces went into five—only five, Speaker—of these homes, and they provided us with horrific stories. There are several hundred other homes across this province, long-term-care homes, and they were only in five. Now, if there is a reason to have a full, independent, public inquiry, there's the reason. There are also 1,587 other reasons that we need to have that full, independent, public inquiry. But why aren't we

talking about that right now? Because—I go back to the term I used earlier—it's the bait and switch. Let's switch the channel. Let's put other issues that are going forward.

In the motion that the government—there's Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply. There are a lot of important issues that need to be dealt with in that bill. But is this the time that we need to talk about it, right now?

I know that I've reached out to my farm communities, and I've had the opportunity to chat with them. But this bill never came up once as an urgent matter that they wanted to talk about. But do you want to know what they did talk to me about? The Risk Management Program and the fact that they're still waiting for this government to live up to the 40% of their commitment that they had said they would put towards the risk management. Beef farmers are selling their meats at a third of the price that they were getting last year. That's an urgent matter that they want to talk about.

During these hearings, as well—there are going to be virtual hearings. Our deputy House leader talked about the challenges of these hearings that we're going to have and the fact that these are untested. Here's the reality—the member from Sudbury mentioned it a little bit earlier, and I know my friend from Mushkegowuk—James Bay will also attest to this. In northern Ontario, we have farmers, we have cattlemen, we have agricultural people, we have cash crops. We have all kinds of farmers, all kinds of agricultural industry throughout northern Ontario. But the thing we don't have is consistent and reliable broadband Internet, where individuals would have the ability—because we're in June, and everybody has been forced to make drastic decisions in regard to, "How am I going to plant? What am I going to plant? How am I going to be able to bring my produce to the processors?" We've seen a lot of alarming news that has come up in regard to major producers that are no longer in operation. We see that happening in other provinces. We see that happening in other countries.

How is that going to impact us? It will, and there are some severe discussions and severe impacts that this will have on our food chains. Those are the types of things that I'm hearing from the agricultural sector, that they want to talk about.

I'm not trying to take away from Bill 156. It is important, but it is not a priority right now.

We have Bill 171, an act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act. Heck, I'm from northern Ontario. Can you just try to snowplow our roads properly? That's what I would like to see. That's a priority. We're going to be in June in a couple of days, so that's what I would like to see.

Over the course of the summer, we're going to be talking about Bill 175, respecting home care. My colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo, she just provided me with a very good note, which I put right here—here it is. You would think that in the middle of the pandemic that we're in right now, the focus would be on long-term-care homes. She provided me with this little footnote: In the 2019 annual report of the Auditor General—chapter 3, I

believe—the Auditor General identified a food diet of \$1.77 per day per resident as the increase that the government had offered. It doesn't sound like much, right—\$1.77. Was that adequate? Is that not something that we would like to have a greater discussion on? And, oh, that \$1.77 was not just for the food; it was for other elevated costs that were within the entire industry. Is that something that we want to open up a parade and say, “Wow, it's fixed”? No, it's not. It gives us greater cause to have further discussions.

1750

The amendment that we have put forward is one that we're asking to—let's have more discussions. Let me go on to the purpose and the role that we all want to do while we're here, which is the Thursday afternoons, where we do have the ability to expand our discussions here, where we as an opposition can bring new subjects to the discussion and not just have it be downloaded to us by the government. This is a majority government and they have that ability. This government, with a majority, has the ability to do as they see fit, as they want, and they have been and they will continue to do that. I've accepted that, as an opposition member. I will continue to voice my views. I will continue to bring the opinions and share the concerns from people that I represent across northern Ontario, whether they support me as an NDP guy or not. I do go out to those doors and I'll take the calls where we can agree to disagree. But I will continue to bring those views forward.

The fact that we're not talking about the crisis or having more discussions in regard to the crisis that small businesses are going through—I don't have his authorization for me to share his business name or him as an individual, but I will share the story. At a family-run business, he had over 40 employees prior to COVID-19. He had been 27 years in business. His ultimate ask from this government is, “Help us. Give us something. We can almost get by, but we need some help.” Some of the federal government grants coming down and the funding that is there are not meeting their needs. They need this province to step up. After 27 years, they've used all of their reserves that they've had. They've now utilized the dollars that they've had set aside for retirement. They're faced with the choice of, “We might as well just shut down, because when we do reopen, or if we do reopen, we'll be reopening at, what, 50%? Our fixed costs are going to be the same. Our business won't be able to sustain it. So what happens to our family?” When they say “family,” they're looking at all their family of 40 employees. So how do they proceed?

I'm surprised that we're not talking about more challenges. There are many issues that I have in my riding,

and I'll end off with one story from a young lady who's struggling. She's a single mom. She has her son with her. Her son was diagnosed with cancer. She comes up to Toronto from Espanola every two weeks. She's very fortunate. Her name is Kaylie Bond. They travel up here, they do their treatment and then they go back. Her employer has been very accommodating to her and provides her with the leave that she needs in order to get up here.

She has done everything right and she continues to provide as best as she can for her child, but she's faced with the ultimate challenge of not having a home in the next couple of months. Why? Because due to reasons that are not fully understood by her, her landlord has put in an eviction notice, and she's going to be forced to move out of her home.

One of the challenges that she has is finding a new home as a single mom in the Espanola area. She has gone to the banks. They won't provide her with any help because she needs 25% down. She has looked at her parents because her parents have a business of their own, but they don't have an actual salary. They can't get a bank loan. She has done everything. She has gone to Habitat for Humanity. She has done everything that she possibly can. I'd like to be talking about how we help a person like Kaylie.

On Thursday afternoon, going back to the motion—I wanted to end with the amendment to the motion that we put forward. We need that extra day. I'll tell you a couple of the reasons why—for the success the member had in putting her private member's bill with the defibrillators. I remember putting a private member's bill myself which provided grandparents with the opportunity to have access to their grandchildren. We had unanimous support for that bill in this House, for something that was in the best interests of the child, to provide them an opportunity to visit with their grandparents. There are lots of those that have gone around this House, but those are the things that we do on Thursdays in private members' business.

Again, we don't want to be here just to occupy a seat. We want to be here, as everybody else is, to work through this. If there's one reason to be here which is going to be the most important thing over the next few days to come—there's not just one; there's not just two reasons; there's not just three. There are, to date, 1,587 reasons why we should be here, and that number is growing.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now close to 6 o'clock. This House will stand adjourned until Tuesday, June 2, at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
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Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates
Lorne Coe, Wayne Gates
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece
Kaleed Rasheed, Peter Tabuns
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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
Jill Andrew, Ian Arthur
Stephen Blais, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
Randy Hillier, Mitzie Hunter
Andrea Khanjin, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Billy Pang
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Parm Gill, Natalia Kusendova
Suze Morrison, Lindsey Park
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
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Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
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Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
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Toby Barrett, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
John Fraser, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Norman Miller
Michael Parsa
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum