

Legislative  
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of Ontario



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of Debates  
(Hansard)**

No. 6

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(Hansard)**

N° 6

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Mardi  
19 octobre 2021

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Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 October 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 octobre 2021

*The House met at 0900.*

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

*Prayers.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** I move, seconded by Ms. Skelly, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Mr. Pettapiece has moved, seconded by Ms. Skelly, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

Further debate?

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Speaker, it has always been an honour to rise in this chamber to represent the good people of Perth–Wellington. I will be sharing my time with the government House leader, the Associate Minister of Transportation, and the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook.

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Like the member for Perth–Wellington, it is always an honour to rise. Mr. Speaker, I know the throne speech has a lot of tradition that comes with a speech from the throne. One of those things, of course, is the address and the motion to move that address. The honour of moving that is given to a member of the House. In this instance, it's a long-serving member who has done great work for his community, somebody I know that all of us on this side of the House, and I know

members across the aisle, have always come to respect and honour for his incredible work. I thank him for that, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, as I said, a throne speech is an important time in the life of a Parliament and it's an important time also in the life of a government. Throne speeches can signify the beginning of a brand new Parliament following an election or the transition from one phase to another phase in the life of a government. Of course, in this instance it is that transition from one phase of governing to another phase of governing.

I think it's important for us to take a look at where we have been over the last couple of years as we look at the importance of the throne speech to the government going forward. When we came to office in 2018, Mr. Speaker, it was following 15 years of governing from the Liberal Party, and there were a number of things that the people of the province of Ontario asked this Parliament to address. We were seeing a province that was burdened, that was overregulated, too much red tape. We saw a province that was driving out jobs by the thousands. I think by the time we took office in 2018, over 300,000 manufacturing jobs had left the province of Ontario. We saw a province that had gone from a jurisdiction with some of the lowest electricity rates in North America to a jurisdiction with some of the highest electricity rates. And it wasn't because the people of the province of Ontario didn't understand how to continue giving the people of this province the lowest rates; it was because the previous government decided to go down a path that changed forever—not forever, but for a long time to come—everybody's perspective on hydro rates and the importance of it in building a strong economy. I think it bears noting, is worth noting, what that meant for the people of the province of Ontario and how difficult it made it for a new government back in 2018 to begin to attract jobs.

Let's be very clear, Mr. Speaker: We all support the transition to a green economy; we all support or understand the importance of ensuring that we use alternative energies—wind and solar. These are very, very important elements in building a strong electricity sector, a sector that is one of the greenest in North America. But the way it was done by the previous Liberal government obviously drove out jobs from the province of Ontario, drove those rates up. Equally importantly, it really put pressure on homeowners, and we're starting—not starting, but we have seen that pressure increase constantly.

One of the things we also got elected on was a commitment to end hallway health care. Now, what did that mean? What is hallway health care? Because every

single government—we heard it from the Liberals in 2003, we heard it again in 2007, and we heard it from the Liberals in 2011 and in 2014 that they were going to do their best to end hallway health care but never did anything about it.

I said it yesterday in question period, and I think it bears repeating, because the people of the province of Ontario need to understand why we are where we're at today. I think that helps frame the discussion in the latter part of my speech with respect to where we are going. Investments in health care, or lack of investments in health care, have always put pressure on the people of the province of Ontario. It has led to backups in surgeries; it has led to challenges across the province. It is one of those things that also drives away jobs in the province of Ontario.

One of the things that helps attract people to this province—low cost of energy, the Liberals increased it; better health care systems, the Liberals failed to make investments; a strong education system, they failed to make investments in education, in fact closing down schools, I think over 600 schools in the province of Ontario. They failed our students when it came to the curriculum. We saw in maths and sciences, our kids were failing at them in record numbers. And it wasn't because our students weren't capable; it was because the systems that were put in place by the Liberals were failing them. It wasn't that our teachers weren't capable; it was because the Liberals failed to put in place systems that would support our teachers, that would support our students. That's part of the context that we saw in 2018 when we were campaigning and when we came to office.

We have talked a lot about long-term care. It is something that we talked about as a party prior to the election. We said it was very important that we begin to make investments in long-term care, and we saw—and have continued to see—during the pandemic how important it is that we make those investments, but how devastating it has been to the province of Ontario that for 15 years the Liberals failed to make those investments.

I have talked about it a number of times. The Minister of Long-Term Care has approved, in my riding alone, over 900 new long-term-care beds. That, of course, is significantly more than the Liberals built in their entire time in office—

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** In the province.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** In the whole province, yes. I thank the Minister of Labour for that. Province-wide.

**0910**

That's not just something from my riding; it's all of us. Every single member of this House suffered under 15 years of Liberal rule that failed to put investments in health care, that failed to put investments in ICU capacity, failed to put investments in critical care capacity, failed to put investments in long-term care. Every single riding in this province has suffered as a result of that, Mr. Speaker. That is the legacy of the previous Liberal government, and it is what has shaped us and put us in the position we are in today and that we were starting to fight when we came to office.

We've also heard—and it's something that we've talked about a lot; I know the Minister of Labour has brought this up many, many times. We were beginning to fail. The economy was beginning to fail because we did not have the skilled workers we needed to keep this economy going—skilled workers that, of course, for generations, have been the backbone of the Ontario economy, skilled workers that have given us a subway, skilled workers that have given us nuclear reactors. A tiny province like the province of Ontario at the time was able to build a Candu reactor, which gave us generations—and will continue to give us generations—of clean energy, the likes of which is the envy of the rest of the world. But as the Minister of Labour noted, we were failing in that department, again because the Liberals spent so much time on bureaucracy and not enough time on thinking of what we could do to actually encourage workers to come here. What was the result of that, Mr. Speaker?

The result of all of those things was that Ontario was one of the highest indebted jurisdictions in the world, one of the highest indebted sub-sovereign governments. We had a devastatingly large deficit. We needed investments in critical infrastructure; we didn't have the money to make those investments. Our education system was failing students. Our health care system was failing patients. Jobs were leaving the province of Ontario. Manufacturing was suffering. And the people of the province of Ontario were suffering under high debt. The cost of living was increasing, Speaker. We knew that we had to get going right away, and that's what we did.

We got going right away. We cut taxes for our small and medium job creators. We began to reform the education system, modernizing the curriculum so that our students could compete. We built new schools. We built new long-term care; we're building more long-term care. We're building roads. We're building transit. We're making the investments that are needed to make the Ontario economy strong, not just for today, but for tomorrow and for generations to come, Mr. Speaker. That's what governments do.

We do it, and we've heard from a lot of people. Admittedly, some Conservative partisans ask me why we're investing. Nobody on this side of the House has ever asked me, I'll tell you that. But some Conservative partisans would say to you, "Why are you investing in a subway in Toronto that goes through ridings you never win and might never win?" Because it's good for the economy of the province of Ontario, and that's what a good government does. We don't do what Liberals do. We don't govern for winning elections and then do nothing. We govern for the people of the province of Ontario, and that's what we're doing.

We suspect—and I know it to be true—that when you give the people of the province of Ontario good government, they will reward you for giving them good government. But it's not something that they hope for. It's an expectation that they have, that when they send us here to do things, we will do it on their behalf regardless of what that means to our political fortunes. Because the people

who are at home, the people who get up every single day, the people who were on the Don Valley with me this morning stuck behind a massive traffic jam because of an accident don't care about us winning our ridings. They care about the province moving forward. That's all they care about, and that's all they should care about, because that's why they sent us here to do the job we do.

But, obviously, everything changed for us when the pandemic hit. In March 2020, it changed, not just for us, but for all members of this Legislature. I've said it a number of times, and I'll say it again to the extent to which I'm allowed to be proud of a Legislature: This Parliament has done an exceptionally good job. We didn't do what other Parliaments did; we didn't run and hide and have a Zoom Parliament. We came here and we have done our jobs on both sides of the House. The opposition have held us accountable, and the government has moved forward with an agenda.

But we've seen what that lack of investments meant. I said it yesterday in question period. Imagine that the province of Ontario, one of the strongest economies in North America, a province that on its own would be a G20 economy, was brought to its knees, which suffered the longest lockdowns, the most severe restrictions to fight COVID-19 because of a lack of ICU capacity across the province of Ontario. Eight hundred people in ICUs across the province brought this province to a standstill for months, longer than other jurisdictions—completely, completely unacceptable. It's not just me saying it's unacceptable. It's our small, medium and large job creators who say it's unacceptable; it's the people of the province of Ontario who say it's unacceptable. That is why we began to increase that capacity before the pandemic, because we wanted to tackle hallway health care, because it was unreasonable that people would wait months for surgeries. We started to increase that. We continued that and we will continue to do that post-pandemic.

We fought the pandemic head-on, but we never once did what other jurisdictions did and decided, "Let's just make it only about COVID." There are other important things that are happening. The economy is very important, both while you're fighting COVID and as you come out of COVID, so we're continuing to make investments.

Speaker, I reference this: your hard work in your region. The hard work of the Speaker in his region to help secure a new hospital for his community, something that the Premier and the Minister of Health helped move on its way yesterday with a further investment. Again, Speaker, I congratulate you for years of hard work in making that happen, but this Parliament made that happen; the things that we did, the changes in the investments that we made have made that happen.

Now we move forward with a throne speech that looks at everything we have done since coming to office. It's not just about the hundred bills that we've passed, the record number of private members' bills that we've passed, the fact that this Parliament was willing to sit late into June, into July, in August. It's not all about that; it's about now moving forward. And that's what the throne speech does.

This was, of course, one of the longest first sessions in the history of the province of Ontario—three years—and so much accomplished. Now we've set down markers for the next phase of the fight on COVID, but also the next phase to repair the economy of Ontario as we come out of COVID. It is also a reflection on the fact that, of course, the people of the province of Ontario will have a decision to make in a number of months with respect to who will get the honour of serving them for the years ahead. I know some of the opposition are going to get up and say, "Well, it was a thin throne speech. It didn't have a lot to say on a lot of different areas," but the throne speech was a reflection of where we were, what we're doing and the fact that this Parliament will come to its end in May of next year for an election on June 2.

What do we have on offer in the throne speech? A continued focus on fighting the pandemic, yes, and that's what we're seeing. The Minister of Digital Government has brought forward—what I have heard from small businesses that have downloaded the app and some, I will say, very small businesses in my community that have been very, very challenged because of their disappointment that they've had to be closed longer than others, but who have said that the app—one said it was a game-changer, that it was a brilliant app and he didn't think that a government could actually get something like this done. I thank the Minister of Digital Government. That's part of what's important as we move forward. It's that app, it's the certificates that allow us to maintain and keep our businesses open. It's the fact that we're going to continue to fight COVID by continuing those investments that have given us the ability to move from 5,000 tests a day to 100,000. That's good news for the people of the province of Ontario. It's a recognition of the fact that we have to continue to make historic investments in transit and transportation, because as the member from Willowdale will know and the member for Burlington will know and the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges, who probably was delayed in getting here with me today because of an accident on the Don Valley, we have to continue making those investments. We need to get people moving around the province quicker, we need to build more roads, and we need to build more transit and transportation, because that's what's important to building an economy.

I was fortunate to be part of a government in Ottawa—well, not fortunate that there was a recession, the Great Recession, at the time. But one of the things that we decided to do to fight the recession in 2008, unlike many other jurisdictions around the world, one of the things that we decided to do in Ottawa at the time was to make important investments in infrastructure. We made important investments in arts and culture—in fact, one of the only G7 countries that decided that we have to make investments in arts and culture because it's important to the fabric of a society and also a massive economic driver.

**0920**

But the other thing we did, despite the fact that everybody told us we shouldn't, was we increased immigration, a massive increase in immigration in the time of a

recession. A lot of people told us at the time—and the member for Barrie–Innisfil will remember because she was working with us at the time—“You can’t do that in a recession. You can’t increase immigration in a time of recession.” But, Mr. Speaker, we did it. What we showed when we did that is that when you allow people to come to the province of Ontario, they will help build a province, they will help build a country.

That is also what we are going to do on this side of the House because we’ve seen that the investments we’re making, the changes that we’ve made to the economy, are leading to a revival of the economy the likes of which we have not seen in this province for decades. We have thousands of jobs that are going unfilled.

As I was coming here today, I had to veer off the road a few times. The signs on the sides of the road said, “We are hiring. We are hiring.” As I look in my riding, people are hiring. They can’t fill the jobs, Speaker.

We have made a commitment on this side of the House, and I hope that all members will support us on this, that we need to increase immigration to the province of Ontario, because if we don’t do that, we can’t fill the jobs—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** You should tell that to the Premier.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:**—the jobs that are needed for the people of the province of Ontario, the jobs that will help grow a strong economy. And I will tell that to the people who want to come to this province. I thank the member because she also knows how important it is, Mr. Speaker.

It’s not the fact that we’re surrounded by people who have come from different countries, but this economy needs people to come here. I say this very directly, in the context of the throne speech debate, that we need the federal government to take action, to open the borders, so that we can get immigrants—desperately needed immigrants—to the province of Ontario. This needs to happen now, Mr. Speaker. It is very, very important to us; it’s important to the economy, and I think all of us would agree on that.

I hope my Liberal friends would agree to take up that mantle as well. It is somewhat awkward that when the Liberal leader did set down his marker—I said it yesterday: The Liberal leader set down his marker on what his platform would be. So, at a time when we have thousands of jobs to fill, the Liberal leader wants to go to a four-day work week.

Also, his big proposal is to make it easier to elect Liberals. He wants to change the electoral system to make it easier to elect Liberals. I guess the fact that the people of the province of Ontario reduced them to seven seats sits poorly with him. It’s not a reflection of how bad a party they were or how bad a government they were; it’s more a mistake of the voting system, according to the leader of the Liberal Party.

I guess he thought that up as he was lounging by his illegal pool that he built. He was a minister for a short period of time. He didn’t know that you had to get a permit to build a pool on conservation lands. How could you

know that when you’ve been Minister of Transportation for that long?

Mr. Speaker, look, Ontario is in a good position. Ontario has done a lot of good things. The people of the province of Ontario have done a lot of good things. There is a lot of hard work left to come. The throne speech helps us talk about what we’ve done and where we’re going. I’m very excited about the future of the province of Ontario, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** When he kicked off the debate this morning, the member for Perth–Wellington did say he would be sharing his time. I turn to the Associate Minister of Transportation.

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Good morning. What a pleasure it is, especially to follow the government House leader after those remarks, but here we go.

Before I begin, and I’m not sure if I’m even allowed to do this or not, but I guess I’ll find out. I want to congratulate and welcome back Valerie to the Clerks’ table, and congratulate her on her little one.

You know, Speaker, I was walking up the south lawn of Queen’s Park this morning, as I often do, and just reflecting on what a 19 months this has been. I think some of my colleagues in this chamber will recall during our orientation back in 2018, three and a half years ago, the outgoing Speaker, Speaker Levac, reminded us all that since Ontario’s Legislature sat—and we are older than Canada itself; the first Legislature sitting in 1792—that only 3,000 or so individuals have had the privilege to call themselves members of provincial Parliament. We are in exclusive company and it really humbles you to think that we have a job to do, elected for our constituents, that not many people got to do.

That’s even more humbling when you consider the fact that we are living through a global pandemic, a situation, a tragedy that has affected everyone around the world. When you think back from 1792, how many points in history can we say that this has been the case in the Legislature? Not many times—the two great wars, some other tragedies throughout our history, but really, in that company, in that light, very few elected officials can say they had the honour of serving and making such important decisions during such a pivotal time in human history.

Speaker, it is with great humility and honour I stand this morning to debate the throne speech. My purpose and my remarks this morning will be twofold: to reminisce on what happened over this crazy year and a half and to look to the future, to look ahead at what’s to come, because there are some great things to come.

It was March 2020 when we decided to call a state of emergency in Ontario, and that meant making sure that we were ready for the unknown. Being ready for the unknown means being prudent in every single way, being adaptable.

I think back to when we were first elected, and the House leader mentioned this in his remarks: We formed government at a time when the people of Ontario absolutely needed us. The House leader mentioned a little bit of the fiscal situation we were in, but I want to remind members of this Legislature how dire that situation actually was.



The House leader mentioned that we were the most indebted sub-sovereign nation on the planet. What does that mean? We had a deficit of \$12 billion. What does that mean? It means we had a debt of \$300 billion. What does that mean? It means that the fourth-largest expenditure in our government, after health care, education and social services, was interest on our debt. That means we were spending almost \$400 a second—a second—on interest, the equivalent of flushing dollars down the toilet. That's unacceptable, because times were good in 2018. We had the potential to have a record economy here. The job growth under our government was staggering before the pandemic.

It always reminds me during those times of my life—growing up in Rexdale, my parents owned a convenience store. It was then that I learned the lesson of fiscal prudence. I'll never forget that day. I was eight years old, and the store was busy. I remember that very clearly. My mom and dad were in good spirits and I tried to take advantage of that moment and asked for some G.I. Joes—a brand new battleship, actually. It was a really expensive toy back then. My dad sat me down and he said, "Just because times are good, it doesn't mean that we go out and you buy all the toys you want and you get a free-for-all." I didn't really understand that until, two weeks later, sure enough, the basement of the store flooded and we had to close the store for a couple of weeks—no income. My parents relied on that store to put food on the table for me, my sister and my brother.

I remember that lesson very clearly, because my dad said, "This is why you save. This is why you put away when times are good, because you never know when the storm is going to come. You never know when you're going to have those rainy days." It was because of that prudence my parents taught me at a very young age that we were able to weather that storm, that we were able to get through that difficult time.

There's no difference when it comes to governing. When times are good, you have to be responsible with taxpayer money, because storms will come, and that's exactly why we were able to weather the storm that is COVID-19.

I want to talk about some of the measures that this government took when this pandemic hit. I look back to March 25, 2020. We put aside \$7 billion in additional resources for our health care system; direct supports for people and jobs; \$10 billion in support for people and businesses through tax credits, deferrals to help their cash flow—again, to weather the storm. That funding—to give tangible examples, a \$1-billion contingency fund. I know some members of the opposition mocked that contingency fund: "Get the dollars out the door right now." But imagine, in March 2020, if we had gotten all those dollars out the door without thinking about having a backup, about having reserves, about having contingencies.

**0930**

Well, I'll tell you, I remember, in March 2020, I had no idea that we would be standing here today, in October 2021, still fighting COVID-19. So, Speaker, thank goodness we did save and were prudent in March 2020, because

it was more than just increased hospital capacity at the time, \$341 million: \$243 million for long-term care and home emergency capacity; new virus containment measures; \$100 million for public health. It's a very long list. But as we move through the pandemic, it wasn't going away, sadly.

That's why in the November budget, tabled by the honourable Rod Phillips, there were further resources announced to make sure that we could care and protect and support the people of this province. We laid out another \$45 billion—a total of \$45 billion—in support over three years: again, health resources, business supports to weather the storm, to make sure that we were prepared for the unknown.

The last budget, March 24, 2021: total investments of \$16.3 billion. That total support, when you look at the health side and the protecting the jobs and the people side, well, that was \$51 billion in supports.

The biggest key in these resources is how we were able to adapt as the situation changed over the years. That's a big deal, because I remember some of the initiatives that the opposition didn't think we could deliver, such as fixing a broken long-term care system, which we are delivering on. I think to just one example of the \$4.9 billion allocated to make sure that we hit a nation-leading four hours of daily care in the long-term care sector. We're well on our way.

My riding of Willowdale—and I'm not sure if this is the case, but I think—is the smallest geographical riding in our entire country. I may be fact-checked on this, but if you walk from the east border to the west border, from Bayview to Bathurst, you're about six kilometres. I've done it. If you walk from Hullmark Centre at Sheppard all the way up to the north border of my riding, to Steeles, it's about six kilometres as well. I've walked it. A tiny little place, but they have tons of challenges, and long-term care was one of them. There were no beds being built. The last government: 15 years and 611 beds, with an aging population we knew was coming. It was that government who showed us the growth plan. So the ignorance of a growing and aging population is no excuse.

I have Carefree Lodge in my riding. I am proud to say that in just three and a half years, 233 beds in the smallest geographical riding, that I know of. The government House leader brought up something very important too, that this wasn't a partisan decision on where long-term-care beds are going. In the Leader of the Opposition's hometown of Hamilton: 988 long-term-care beds. That's more than the last government put together in all of 15 years across the entire province. This is progress.

I could use my time reminiscing on the measures and the supports that we've introduced for people and jobs in our health care sector, but I do want to spend some time talking about where we're going, because I have hopes that we are going to get through this pandemic, and soon. That means it's time to refocus our efforts on getting through this and making sure that we return back to those days of not just recovery but prosperity in Ontario. And I'm hopeful. Long-term care is one of those sectors, but let's talk about transportation as well.

Speaker, we have a booming population here. Yesterday in question period, I mentioned that who can blame people for wanting to move here. My parents did it, just like millions of Ontarians. This is the best place to live in the world. I truly believe that. One million more people are coming to Toronto in the next 25 years; three million are coming to the GTA in the same time period. In fact, by 2051, it's estimated that the greater Golden Horseshoe alone—not Ontario; just the GGH—is going to have a population the size of our province today: 15 million people. That's massive growth. That means we need to prepare for the future. If COVID has taught us anything, it has taught us how important it is to do just that, and we're doing that.

Let's talk about transit expansion, for example. I live in a neighbourhood—and I've said it many times in this Legislature. I can't think of another place in the world that has two subway lines that dead-end in one community: Finch station and Sheppard station on the Sheppard Line at Yonge—two dead ends. That's all changing, because this is the biggest investment into transit expansion in our country's history at \$28.5 billion: four priority projects to connect Scarborough to the airport, to make sure we finally have a downtown relief line in our great city. These are investments into the future, along with transportation expansion, making sure that we connect the grid. Nobody wants to wait two hours to get to Brampton to get home to their loved ones—nobody. That means you need to invest into the future. With that population growth coming, if you think traffic is bad today—status quo on our roads and highways? Well, it would be a nightmare tomorrow. That's why those investments are crucial, making sure that we invest into these pivotal infrastructure investments.

There are other investments that we're doing. I spoke a little earlier about how sometimes the pandemic and difficult times can force you to do things quicker, better. I don't think any member in this chamber is going to deny that sometimes government moves a little slower than real life, or perhaps not as efficiently, but our government is tackling that as well.

I remember when we were talking about the reforms to procurement, for example, that the President of the Treasury Board had introduced. Some members of the opposition mocked it. The analogy of buying in bulk wasn't good enough, but there are other reasons that we reformed procurement. Think of the health care system. Previously, doctors could use three, four surgical gloves going to the operating table. We heard this directly from doctors. But because of the procurement rules around the supply chain, those doctors had to use those gloves. And we had no reporting mechanism back that they were actually tripling or quadrupling up on the surgical gloves, when if you had purchased in the operating room a slightly more expensive glove, the life cycle would have been drastically increased.

These are the types of reforms we're talking about with procurement. I know it's a little boring, not sexy, when you're talking about surgical gloves and paying 20% more up front to have a life cycle cost that gives you a longer lifespan of gloves, but we're talking about millions of

dollars in savings in that one example alone over the years. Times that across the broader public sector with 191 agencies, boards and commissions, and you're talking billions upon billions. Forget buying in bulk alone, which alone is projected to save \$1 billion a year. Those savings matter, because that means we can invest into things like transit, transportation, health care and long-term care—all of those things that we expect the investments to be about.

Speaker, I do want to say—I could just read off the list of the investments that we're going to have into the future, but I remember in this chamber not too long ago that you shared a story about your mother and it really touched me. It really touched, I think, all members of this chamber. It was very special; it brought a tear to my eye, because it made me think not just about how difficult this pandemic has been on everybody, but the touching stories you shared of your mom really reminded me of my grandmother. I thank you for sharing that.

My grandmother—I've actually never spoken about her in this chamber. She was a strong, Christian lady, and her biggest fear—she would tell me every week when I saw her, and I visited her apartment every week at Jane and Finch. She would say, "My biggest fear in life is that I love you more than Jesus." From my grandmother, I mean—it just got routine at a point, but when she passed away on my 21st birthday, that's all I could hear. So your story reminded me of her story, and I thank you for that.

#### 0940

The reason I bring that up is because my grandmother went through a lot of hardships. She grew up in imperialist Japan-occupied South Korea, and you can imagine the difficulties she had gone through. But she had so many words of wisdom for me as I grew up, and not only did that shape the adult I became, but sometimes you realize how special words are later on in life. One of the sayings she taught me really is relevant to the pandemic, because she said, "You know, Stan"—she never actually called me Stan; my Korean name is Sung Hoon, so she always called me Sung Hoon—"sometimes human nature is like tea. You really don't know how strong it is until it's in hot water." And I believe that. I really do, because these have been some of the most difficult times humanity has ever been through, and look at the resolve of the people of this province.

We've made a ton of sacrifices. Had to wear a mask—difficult. We've lost loved ones. We've had to put off special occasions. We didn't even get to say goodbye to some of those loved ones that we lost. But Speaker, through it all, we're going to improve, not just the way we run government but our lives. We're going to appreciate that vacation we take. We're going to hug our loved ones we haven't seen in years a little bit tighter. We're going to get through this. We're going to be stronger for it, and people around the world will find out that we are some of the strongest people. We are some of the strongest tea on the planet.

So, Speaker, it's with great honour that I get to stand this morning to talk about the throne speech and some of our government's priorities moving forward, because

we're going to hit the resume button and start where we were before the pandemic: on the path to prosperity, on making sure that we invest into our core programs and services, that we get our finances under control, so that when I look at the pages and I look into the future generations of Ontarians, future Canadians coming to this country, we will protect them to make sure they have the same opportunities that my parents did so we can return to that path—not just to recovery, as I said, but to the days of prosperity in Ontario—and become the economic engine of North America at the same time.

*Interjections.*

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Thank you. And with that, my time is done, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity this morning. And again, to the people of this province, we'll get through this together, and there are brighter days on the horizon.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The other member mentioned by the member who said he'd be sharing his time, the member from Perth–Wellington, was the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook, who has the floor.

**Ms. Donna Skelly:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always such a delight to see you in the chair. Good morning.

I rise to highlight some of the key points in the speech from the throne, which was delivered in this House just two weeks ago. The most important point, and I think Ontarians would agree, is that pandemic recovery is our government's top priority. Our Premier has said repeatedly that avoiding future lockdowns is our ultimate goal, and we've taken many steps toward pandemic recovery.

One of the most significant support programs was the small business support grant. We have offered eligible small businesses grants of up to \$40,000 to help cover a decrease in revenue as a result of the province-wide shutdown. Our government recognized that throughout the pandemic, businesses deemed non-essential needed a little bit of help. They could use the grant money to pay employee wages or maintain their inventory, or in whatever way made sense to them. Dozens and dozens of business types were eligible for this grant, everything from campgrounds to veterinary services. Tens of thousands of small businesses took advantage of this program and it certainly helped sustain them through this very difficult period.

It also helped to sustain and to protect Ontario's economy, and there was an additional grant program for the hard-hit tourism sector. The Ontario Tourism and Travel Small Business Support Grant provided a one-time payment of up to \$20,000 for small businesses in the tourism and travel industry. The funds were made available to help small businesses recover from the economic impact of the pandemic and to protect and create jobs.

Our government recognized early on that giving businesses the opportunity to establish or expand an online presence could help them weather this pandemic storm. So our government invested \$10 million in the Digital Main Street program to help small businesses to expand or establish a digital presence and market their services online. The program has provided small businesses with

\$2,500 grants, technical training and digital resources to help them reach more customers in person and, of course, online.

I've heard numerous success stories. In one case, three Laurentian University students launched their clothing store with only an online presence. Another example is an interior design team who wanted to add to their business by selling home decor. A brick-and-mortar location was not a good move at the time, so in August, they launched their home decor shop exclusively online. They were elated by the customer interest in this online store.

To date, the Digital Main Street program has provided over 20,000 businesses with support for their digital expansion while generating jobs for more than 1,600 students and recent graduates. Through Digital Main Street, we are giving business owners and operators the tools they need to strengthen their online presence and to enhance their technical skills. This will position individual businesses for a strong recovery, and it will help the entire province in its pandemic recovery.

Along with providing assistance with expanding their digital presence, our government also expanded the number of businesses eligible for the main street relief grant, which offered them \$1,000 to offset the costs of personal protective equipment. The grant could be used to cover the costs of a variety of PPE, including installing Plexiglas or purchasing gloves and masks—anything that the business needed.

Our property tax and energy cost rebate program provided support to businesses that were required to close or significantly restrict services because of the provincial health measures. Eligible businesses could apply for rebates in the form of grants to help with their fixed costs.

I've spoken about our government's economic recovery efforts. Now, I would like to talk about our efforts to avoid any other future lockdowns. Our province's infectious disease experts, including Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, have stressed that the best way to avoid future lockdowns is to get at least 90% of the population fully vaccinated. To that end, our government has invested more than \$1 billion to support the administration, distribution and rollout of Ontario's COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Our government has gone to great lengths to guarantee that everyone who wants a vaccine can get a vaccine. We have mobilized the entire health care infrastructure, including public health units, hospitals, pharmacies, mass vaccination clinics, doctors' offices and mobile clinics in order to make vaccines accessible to everyone who wants to get a vaccine. That includes the GO-VAXX buses, which have been travelling around, through and to communities with lower rates of vaccine uptake.

Look at the results; they are absolutely amazing. Ontarians have stepped up to do their part in getting fully vaccinated in record numbers. Ontario has one of the highest vaccination rates around the globe. To date, more than 87% of the province has at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. More than 83% of eligible Ontarians are fully vaccinated. Reaching the goal of 90% of eligible Ontarians being fully vaccinated is so close. It really is within reach.

Our government continues to take every necessary step to stop the spread of COVID-19. We are making record investments in the health care system, and this brings our government's total investments to protect people's health since the start of the pandemic to over \$16 billion.

While the people of Ontario are getting vaccinated, our government is continuing to take urgent action to protect people from the spread of COVID-19. We are supporting the ongoing COVID-19 response with more than \$3.7 billion over two years for Ontario's comprehensive testing strategy. This includes \$2.3 billion this year to ensure timely access to testing; to target testing to vulnerable communities; to expand the capacity to process tests efficiently and effectively; and to protect people who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, such as those living in racially diverse, newcomer and low-income communities. We are doing this by investing more than \$50 million to support improved access to testing, community outreach, vaccine access and emergency income supports.

**0950**

Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Ontarians in Ontario is our top priority. To that end, our government committed an additional \$25 million to further improve ventilation in our schools. This additional funding brings the net new investments in school ventilation to \$600 million. This investment will ensure that all occupied classrooms, gyms, libraries and other instructional spaces without mechanical ventilation have stand-alone, high-efficiency HEPA filter units in place. These health and safety measures ensure that students have a more normal in-person learning environment, which is critical to their mental and physical well-being.

Supporting innovative projects like Niko Apparel is why our government has invested an additional \$50 million in the renewed Ontario Together Fund this year. The fund will continue to support local innovators and businesses to further enhance Ontario's domestic supply chain capacity. It will promote Ontario's med-tech ecosystem and build up our manufacturing sector to ensure that this province is well prepared for future challenges.

The renewed Ontario Together Fund is focused on supporting homegrown manufacturing and innovation to combat COVID-19 and to provide other goods that are critical to the health, safety and security of people in this province as we look beyond the pandemic. In total, over 70,000 ventilation devices have been deployed to help ensure that schools remain as safe as possible for students and for staff.

Protecting the most vulnerable in Ontario is our government's primary concern. The pandemic has further exposed long-standing problems in the long-term care health system. Residents, caregivers and staff, and their families deserve much better. That is why our government is investing an additional \$650 million in long-term care this year. This brings the total resources invested since the pandemic began to over \$2 billion to protect the most vulnerable in our province.

Our government is taking urgent action to fix the problems in long-term care. We are increasing long-term

care capacity, improving living conditions. We are increasing the average daily direct care for long-term care residents to four hours, something that people have wanted and something we, this government, are delivering. We have provided wage enhancements and are building staffing levels by providing training for more people to work in the long-term care sector.

Mr. Speaker, our government has done a lot to support health care, small business and the most vulnerable during the pandemic; however, the people who deserve the most credit are the everyday heroes in our communities who have supported others through the COVID crisis. I want to speak about some of the people in my community in Flamborough-Glanbrook who have truly shown Ontario spirit: individuals like Rebecca Fournier, a care coordinator at St. Elizabeth Retirement Residence in my riding of Flamborough-Glanbrook. Rebecca sacrificed time with her children by actually moving into the retirement home she was working for for months in the early days of the pandemic to protect her residents and staff against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Principal Josie Pini: another pandemic hero. Josie was preparing to retire in the spring of 2020, but she postponed her retirement to continue supporting her staff at St. Thérèse of Lisieux Catholic Elementary School in Hamilton throughout the challenges of the pandemic.

And it wasn't only educational staff who stepped up to help. Let me tell you about William and Olivia Pang. They are 12 and 8. The brother and sister are students at St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Elementary School in Waterdown. In an effort to keep their school community connected during the period when schools weren't open for in-person learning, William and Olivia organized a live, virtual trivia contest every Friday night, and they put so much work into it. They created their own questions. Virtual trivia night was so popular, it drew about 150 families to the game each week. Local pizza shop owners loved the idea so much that they got involved as well by offering free pizza to the top winners of the game.

In June, I hosted an awards ceremony for individuals who were nominated as pandemic heroes in my riding. Dozens and dozens of people were nominated for their service to the community. They have truly demonstrated what we call our Ontario spirit. Principals at Bellmoore Elementary in Binbrook, Balaclava School in Freerton, St. James the Apostle school in Stoney Creek, and St. Thérèse of Lisieux school in Hamilton nominated their entire school staff for their efforts in keeping everyone safe.

The volunteers at Food with Grace Waterdown Food Bank and the Food4Kids Hamilton volunteers who delivered food to children at area schools were recognized for their work.

And then there were numerous individuals who were acknowledged.

The women at St. James United Church who made over 4,000 masks: The proceeds from the mask sales were donated to local charities.

Kathleen Randle kept her community at Christ Church in Flamborough connected through a weekly coffee hour using Zoom calls and phone trees.

Barbara Fanson organized food drives, raised funds for the Alzheimer's walk and cleaned up the local playground to make it a little more inviting for the children.

Penny Rundle made homemade cards for the Case United Church in Mount Hope.

And Javid Mirza offered emotional support and was a calm presence during a time of chaos in his community. He reached out to the elderly, the vulnerable and supported Muslim youth as they delivered hot meals to the homeless.

Kevin Keyte has been a volunteer at Glanbrook Community Services for more than a decade. Throughout the pandemic, he has been delivering meals to people who are simply isolated and can't get out. Seeing Kevin's smiling face twice a week made their day.

So many heroes, so many people who have demonstrated the Ontario spirit.

And speaking of the Ontario spirit, hundreds of companies stepped up to help when the province was facing a crisis in the supply of PPE. We forget now as we sit in the Legislature with our masks. We forget when we first entered the first few weeks of the pandemic when we were struggling to even find masks and hand sanitizer. Eighteen months later, Ontario companies stepped up; they delivered. They did their part to keep Ontario safe.

One of those companies is Niko Apparel in Hamilton. Niko Apparel invested more than a quarter of a million dollars to manufacture surgical masks. The Ontario Together Fund provided \$125,000 towards that venture. Niko Apparel is a custom manufacturer of team uniforms and performance apparel, but company executive Joe Camillo was willing to step up and retool Niko's manufacturing capabilities to produce surgical masks that the province so urgently needed.

Another company in my hometown of Hamilton that demonstrated Ontario spirit is Coreprint Patterns. Coreprint Patterns is working on injection moulding plastic components for COVID-19 testing supplies. The company is developing production capabilities for two-millimetre deep-well plates, a necessary component for any lab-based COVID-19 PCR test. These components would be used to supply hospitals and laboratories across Ontario. Currently, there are no domestic manufacturers producing deep-well plates anywhere in Canada, and given the high volume of tests being conducted, there was a global shortage of these supplies.

1000

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade provided Coreprint Patterns with a grant of nearly \$860,000 from the Ontario Together Fund to support their eligible project investment of more than \$1 million. Supporting innovative projects like Coreprint Patterns is why our government has invested an additional \$50 million in the renewed Ontario Together Fund this year alone. The fund will continue to support local innovators and businesses to further enhance Ontario's domestic supply chain capacity. It will promote Ontario's medtech ecosystem and build up our manufacturing sector to ensure that this province is well prepared for future challenges. The renewed Ontario Together Fund

is focused on supporting homegrown manufacturing and innovation to combat COVID-19, and to provide other goods that are critical to the health, safety and security of people in this province as we look beyond this pandemic.

Since our government's initial call to action was issued, we have seen a tremendous response from businesses in Ontario who simply want to help. They've supported our front-line workers with medical supplies and equipment, and many more have come forward with numerous innovative solutions. Through the Ontario Together Fund, our government has mobilized our manufacturing fire-power and converted it into Canada's manufacturing workshop.

Let's turn to health, safety and security. Our government has done more to protect the health and safety of Ontarians than any other previous government. Mr. Speaker, we realize that after the pandemic has ended, Ontario's health care system will continue to face significant challenges. That is why we are acting now, so that people across the province can continue to access the care they need when and where they need it.

To ensure that Ontario's hospitals can continue to deliver high-quality care, our government is investing an additional \$5.1 billion to support hospitals, creating more than 3,100 additional hospital beds. That is the equivalent of six large community hospitals. This includes \$1.8 billion this year to continue providing care for COVID-19 patients, to address surgical backlogs and to keep pace with patient needs. We are putting patients first with a capital plan investment of more than \$30 billion over 10 years to build and renew hospital infrastructure.

To help the thousands of people struggling with mental health and addictions issues, our government is providing additional funding of \$175 million this year as part of our historic investment of over \$3 billion.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to reigniting our economy. Pandemic recovery is a top priority, and under the leadership of Premier Ford, Ontario will not only recover, it will—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I'm sorry to interrupt the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook, but your side was allocated one hour for the debate and your time has expired. So I turn to further debate.

I see a point of order from the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I just want to echo my colleague's comments in terms of how great the throne speech was, and I want to move adjournment of that debate. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member has moved adjournment of debate; however, I'm seeking advice from the table.

I'm advised that is not a point of order. You may stand and move what you want to move without saying it's a point of order. I turn back to the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Just on that point of order, Speaker, my colleague did move adjournment of debate in her speech but her mike was cut off.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Your colleague was supposed to move adjournment of the debate, but her time had expired before she moved adjournment of the debate, and then I called for further debate. I didn't see anyone, but I will ask again for further debate.

I turn to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you, Speaker. It's always an honour to rise in this House, particularly on behalf of the official opposition in response to the speech from the throne. It's customary for the debate to be adjourned after the government's initial debate so that the opposition has the actual time—I was listening here very thoughtfully—to actually digest what the government is saying so we can make a reasoned response.

The government, perhaps whether they have chosen to do it this way—I can't judge that, but we are ready to respond. We take the government at good faith, and we were told that the debate was going to be adjourned, and it wasn't. I'm sure that the House team from the other side is not happy about this; neither are we. But that's how this place has continued to work for the last couple of years. We were hoping that we were going to start with this throne speech on a different tone, and we are going to try, but this isn't a good way to start it. It really isn't.

Having said that, it is our job as the official opposition to hold the government to account. I listened very intently to the government House leader. The first time I talked to the government House leader was yesterday—we've been off for a while, and I wasn't here for the first cohort week—and we were joking that maybe in another life, we would get along. We probably would. Actually, we get along here too. He has a job to do; we have a job to do.

I'm just getting a note, Speaker. Can I do that? Could I move adjournment of the debate and can I restart? That's my question. I'm going to ask you as I'm standing. If I sit down, can I stand up again?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** You can move adjournment—

**Mr. John Vanthof:** No, I'm not taking it from you; I'm asking the table.

So I can move adjournment of the debate and then start again tomorrow?

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** If that is the case, Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** We got here in a convoluted kind of way, but we had to do it because there are rules we have to follow. I'm glad the table officers didn't allow the cross-aisle question and answer.

Mr. Vanthof has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Debate adjourned.*

#### REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I beg to inform the House that the following document was tabled: A report entitled Home Energy Spending in Ontario:

Income and Regional Distribution, from the Financial Accountability office of Ontario.

Orders of the day?

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** No further business.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 10:15.

*The House recessed from 1009 to 1015.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### EVENTS IN NICKEL BELT

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Although I was a little bit disappointed we did not return to the Legislature in September, it did allow me to spend more time in Nickel Belt, which I loved. I attended the USW Labour Day event, then went to Gogama. Gogama had a big fire. They were asked to declare a state of emergency, but because they're an LSB, they were not allowed to do this, and now they're stuck.

I also went to Mattagami First Nation. Mattagami First Nation would like to expand, but it is not easy to move the boundaries of a First Nation.

Then I took part in the Donna Spiegel rowing event. She was a long-time volunteer with the Northern Water Sports Centre.

Then I had the pleasure to attend the Lockerby Legion unveiling of their incredibly beautiful new cenotaph. I'm looking forward to Remembrance Day; this is just beautiful.

I'm also excited to share some upcoming events. Walden Cross Country will be celebrating the grand opening of their brand new gazebo, which means that you will be able to change and be outside at the same time—it makes it way easier with COVID. The opening takes place on Saturday, October 30, at noon, as part of the club's ski swap and open house. There are many activities coming up: the National Coaching Certification Program, the Ontario Cup—all of this takes place at the Walden Cross Country club. If you've never been there, please drop in. It is just beautiful. You'll love it, whether you go biking, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing. Come over, Speaker. Thank you.

### PORTRAITS OF GIVING

**Mrs. Daisy Wai:** We often come across leaders selflessly giving to the community, but they have not been recognized enough. Thanks to Karen Merk for introducing the Portraits of Giving to honour these leaders. Partnering with York region, leaders are nominated and selected for awards. They are openly recognized with a reception and photographic exhibit to capture each recipient with a personalized portrait and story of selfless giving.

The year 2021 marks 12 years of celebration of the leaders in our community. I am proud of the four recipients from Richmond Hill:

Raj Sethi received the lifetime achievement distinction. Raj founded the York Region Indian Seniors Club in 2006 and has been working tirelessly in the community.

Shanyn Godward received the honouree distinction for fire service. Not only does she protect us, she sets a great example through her service.

Delmanor Elgin Mills received an honouree distinction for their dedicated service to seniors.

Thank you to our leaders. We're very proud of them. Thank you, Karen, for such a great initiative. It inspires our community.

#### ELDER ABUSE

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I recently met with Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario, a provincial not-for-profit organization that is sounding the alarm on the urgent issues impacting the safety and security of older adults in Ontario. Ontario's seniors have experienced new and unimaginable levels of isolation during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, from isolation to neglect to physical abuse and financial fraud. In Ontario alone, EAPO's seniors safety line reported a 250% increase in elder abuse calls in 2020, almost 1,000 cases.

EAPO has six main calls to action:

- apply an elder abuse prevention lens and invest in prevention strategies when fixing elder care, and they would like to see their pre-pandemic funding reinstated;
- protect financial well-being and fraud prevention for older adults in Ontario;
- support a network of regional and local elder abuse prevention;
- demand a seniors' care transfer from the federal government;
- achieve funding stability to support programming for elder abuse prevention; and
- enhance accountability by naming a provincial advocate or ombudsman that reports directly to the Legislature.

#### 1020

Of note, our colleague in Kitchener Centre has introduced legislation that would create a seniors' advocate who would be an independent officer of the Legislature to fulfill this call to action.

I hope that all members of this Legislature will listen to these important calls to action and work together to address the rapid rise in incidents of elder abuse across Ontario.

I would like to sincerely thank the Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario group for doing important work to keep elders safe.

#### SCHOOL FACILITIES

**Ms. Goldie Ghamari:** Communities such as Findlay Creek and Stittsville are rapidly developing in my riding of Carleton. Currently, Catholic students in Findlay Creek are being bused to schools in surrounding areas because there's no Catholic elementary school in the community.

École secondaire catholique Paul-Desmarais in Stittsville is exceeding in its capacity, but this school stands out for their sports, arts and business streams. CIEL—creativity, innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership—opens doors for students to adapt and develop in a fast-paced, changing world.

A goal of mine is to see more schools built in Carleton in order to support the growing population of young families. Building the first Catholic elementary school in Findlay Creek and expanding École secondaire catholique Paul-Desmarais would alleviate the pressure on the surrounding schools in these communities.

On October 5, I released two petitions. The first petition is for our government to approve funding to build the first Catholic elementary school in Findlay Creek. The second petition is for the approval to fund a critical student expansion of École secondaire catholique Paul-Desmarais in Stittsville.

One of the reasons I ran for office is because I wanted to see more schools built in Carleton. I have already successfully secured funding to build four brand new schools. I've had several meetings with the school boards and with the minister to discuss the need for schools to support an expanding student population.

I encourage everyone to visit my website at [goldiempp.ca](http://goldiempp.ca) and sign these petitions.

#### SMALL BUSINESS

**Mr. Gilles Bisson:** We will all know, as members of this assembly, that small businesses across this province have been really having a hard time adjusting to what has happened in this pandemic. It has been tough for them on all kinds of levels, and that has really taken a toll on their bottom line. That's why we, under Andrea Horwath and New Democrats, have been calling on this government in order to increase the amount of funding available to the small business community so that they're able to adjust to what has happened to them.

Some of them have had to take on additional expenses as a result of screening—which is a good thing. Businesses in my community, as in yours, understand why this is necessary, but there is a certain amount of cost associated to it. And their traffic is down. They don't have the amount of business that they had before, especially with some of the limits that have been imposed on them. That's why the chamber of commerce of the city of Timmins has been asking us to ask the government to increase the funding available to small businesses.

These businesses are the backbone to our community. I think we all understand that. We need to make sure that we provide them with the support that's necessary to allow them to get through this particular phase of the pandemic.

Hopefully we're going to be out of this in the not too distant future, but we want to make sure that when we come out on the other side, the members of the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, those small businesses in our town that work so hard, are going to be there in order to benefit from the rebound that will happen at the end of this pandemic.

### COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Roman Baber:** What is happening in the province of Ontario and Canada and what has been happening for the last 19 months is unthinkable. Nurses, first responders and workers from every field are being fired for refusing to undergo a medical procedure. The government is dictating how many people we may host at our homes and which customers we may or may not serve in our businesses. We're forced to show ID and scan a QR code to sit down for a bowl of soup at Tim Hortons.

I submit that if government subjects us to these extreme measures, then we must insist that it does so on a basis of a fair narrative. COVID is a very serious respiratory virus. It can be very dangerous to some folks, mainly those with serious comorbidities, particularly diabetes. COVID is real and serious, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't objectively look at the data and craft public policy that's based on a fair narrative.

On October 15, Statistics Canada published its COVID excess mortality analysis for 2020. Over 80% of COVID-related deaths were in long-term care homes, where on average, statistically, residents are in their last year of life. Ninety per cent of deaths between March and July 2020 were among patients with at least one serious pre-existing condition, mostly dementia.

Every death is tragic and every life is precious, but it doesn't mean that we should redesign our lives and bodily autonomy, privacy and mobility when we know where the risk is. Government must protect long-term care homes and build hospital capacity, but end the alarmism, end the fearmongering and end the false narrative.

I'm asking the government: Own up to the narrative, leave Ontarians alone and end this nightmare.

### DENTAL HYGIENISTS

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I ask everyone to join us in celebrating Ontario dental hygienist week, which runs next week, from October 17 through the 23rd.

The growing evidence linking oral health to overall health highlights the importance of access to oral health, including regular dental and dental hygiene checkups. Dental hygienists have a distinctive clinical role in preventing gum disease and tooth decay, making a significant contribution to a person's well-being and overall health. Dental hygienists not only clean teeth, but they provide professional assessments that include oral cancer screening, treatment planning, individual oral care evaluations, customized preventive home care programs, and lastly, they offer advice on other health areas, such as nutrition and smoking cessation.

As regulated health care professionals, dental hygienists follow stringent rules and standards set by the regulatory college, ensuring the public receives safe and ongoing comprehensive oral care at all times, including during a pandemic. The Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association supports oral health care initiatives provided by the Ontario government, including the Ontario Seniors

Dental Care Program, which ensures Ontarians in need of support have access to oral health care services.

Again, I want to wish the Ontario dental hygienists all the best during Ontario Dental Hygiene Week and thank them for all their valuable contributions to the health care system in Ontario.

### COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

**Mr. Taras Natyshak:** As members would know, October is Community Support Month in the province of Ontario. Community support centres support over one million Ontarians each year, including seniors and people with disabilities. They help clients live independently in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and reduce the burden on families and family caregivers and the burden on our health care system.

As Ontario's population ages, community support services will become even more important. So it is my honour today to give a real big shout-out to the Essex community service centre, led by my good friend Tracey Bailey—incredible leadership there—and also Denise Cassidy, who has pivoted the organization through COVID to provide virtual care and support for residents; Samantha Hughes, who is the CareLink coordinator; Carly Wood, who is changing lives with diabetic foot care, giving people freedom and comfort; and Murray Tofflemire, who is the landlord of the facility but is also an incredible corporate sponsor who has made incredible donations to the community support centre. There are also over 300 volunteers who on a weekly or annual basis donate their time and volunteer their time to make that organization work.

Speaker, we are so better off for having the community support centre in Lakeshore and Essex county, and I know across the province in members' communities as well. We want to recognize them all today and give them a great big thank you. Thanks for making our communities a better and a healthier place to live.

### SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** October marks Small Business Week, and this government, from day one, has always had the backs of small businesses. We started off by lowering the small business tax and we went on to support these businesses during the global pandemic with programs like the small business grant and, of course, the Digital Main Street. I just heard over this past week, when I talked to Kevin Gee from the first aid and CPR training, that he benefited from the Digital Main Street program. I also want to thank him for all his work and all the things that he's doing in his business. Our downtown businesses, via the downtown BIA, have also benefited from the Digital Main Street program.

But this is also a week to commemorate the great entrepreneurship that is our community's, and I am so honoured to live and represent a community that is so dedicated to supporting our entrepreneurs.



**1030**

In fact, Barrie is home to the Xcelerate Summit, which is central Ontario's premier business event to attract hundreds and thousands of entrepreneurs. This year, it's the eighth annual virtual Xcelerate Summit. It's being run by Georgian's Henry Bernick Entrepreneurship Centre. Thank you, Sara Bentham, for all your work on that summit. It's done in partnership with Invest Barrie, which is co-sponsored by the Small Business Centre, Grow Vantage, the South Georgian Bay Small Business Enterprise Centre, the Barrie Chamber of Commerce, Invest Barrie and Innisfil Invests in You.

Speaker, this is really an example of the great might that is our small businesses in Barrie. This week, if you can, please support your small businesses, whether it's Deb and Ralph at Fork and Plate, Rob Saunders at Cove Café, Wild Wing in Barrie or Jennifer Dwyer at the Harbour House Grill. Please support your small businesses.

**MEREDITH "MERT" SCHNEIDER**

**Mr. Randy Pettapiece:** Meredith Schneider was a long-time Perth county councillor and former Perth county warden. He passed in June of this year.

Mert was a lifelong resident of the Wallace ward in North Perth, where he owned and operated a family farm. He truly was a dedicated and hard-working family man, farmer and public servant. In fact, his time as an elected official spanned 39 years. He served on municipal councils, including 10 as Wallace township reeve, 18 as Perth county councillor and two as Perth county warden.

I sat next to him during my time on North Perth council. Mert knew the importance of rural life. He knew first-hand how farmers contribute to Ontario's nutritional and economic well-being. It's no wonder that he was a champion of the agricultural sector.

He demonstrated his commitment by serving on the commerce and agricultural society, the Perth County Beef Farmers and as an advisory councillor with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. Residents of Perth county and those in the agricultural sector could not have asked for anyone more committed to their community. He represented them well.

I want to extend our condolences to his family and all those who knew him and worked with him.

**WEARING OF RIBBONS AND SHIRTS**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it a point of order?

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** No, I wanted to make a unanimous consent—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To request unanimous consent? Okay.

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** Thank you, Speaker. Because After Breast Cancer Shine a Light on Breast Cancer day took place last Friday, October 15, I'd like to ask all members of the House for unanimous consent so that we may wear all of the ribbons and T-shirts to remember and honour the many Ontarians who have been impacted by breast cancer.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Eglinton–Lawrence is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to wear a T-shirt as well as a ribbon with respect to breast cancer. Agreed? Agreed.

**LEGISLATIVE PAGES**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I am now going to ask our pages to assemble.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this group of legislative pages:

From the riding of Toronto Centre, Yamama Dahdal; from the riding of Mississauga–Malton, Lamees Elbayoumi; from the riding of Toronto–St. Paul's, Theo Guida; from the riding of Guelph, Fraser Litchfield; from Markham–Stouffville, Graden Lynch; from the riding of King–Vaughan, Emily Martin; from the riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, Noor Rasheed; from the riding of Brampton West, Tanvi Soni; from Oakville North–Burlington, Sujay Surya; and from the riding of Toronto–Danforth, Zada Wallace.

We are delighted to have you here. Thank you very much.

*Applause.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Now back to work.

**SANDIE BELLOWS**

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order, the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I, along with probably the member from St. Catharines, wanted to recognize the incredible contributions of our dearly departed friend, a friend of many in this assembly: Niagara regional councillor and the chair of the Niagara Parks Commission—which is an agency of my ministry—Sandie Bellows. We laid her to rest yesterday. Sandie had an incredible career of victims' advocacy and, of course, of public service. And although she ran as a Progressive Conservative not once but twice, the fact remains that she counted among her best friends Jennie Stevens and Jim Bradley.

**VISITORS**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Joining us today in the Speakers' gallery are Michelle Sloan and Danny Guida, parents of today's page captain Theo Guida, from the riding of Toronto–St. Paul's. Welcome to Queen's Park.

**QUESTION PERIOD****COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION**

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, my first question this morning is to the Premier. Yesterday we received some

great news: Pfizer has applied to Health Canada for vaccine approval for kids that are 5 to 11 years of age. As we all know, parents are very, very anxious to protect their children, to protect their education. They're very much chomping at the bit waiting for the announcement that those kids can get vaccinated.

We now, here in the province of Ontario, have a chance to get out ahead of this. We have a chance to prepare fully for the announcement that is inevitably going to come from Health Canada. My question is around the hope that this government is finally going to avoid the chaos, the scramble that has marked their response to COVID-19 thus far. And so, I'm asking the Premier straight up: Where is the plan for vaccinating our children?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I can advise the member opposite that our government is ahead of the issue with respect to the immunization of children aged 5 to 11. We are waiting for Health Canada approval, of course; however, we have asked all of the 34 public health units to provide us with their plan, which they have submitted. We are going through those plans right now. We are using a variety of sources in order to vaccinate children of this age, and we will be ready as soon as Health Canada gives it a go-ahead. We will be ready on the ground to deliver those vaccines, so parents need not be concerned.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** We have been calling for this plan since August. As we all know, British Columbia is already pre-registering their children to get the vaccines. They're making sure that their system is ready and parents have some certainty already as to what to expect. But here we are, still with nada in terms of information for parents about how their children, 5 to 11, can get vaccinated.

The question, again, is, where is this plan? Why are parents still waiting to hear from this government? Why is it always last-minute information and playing catch-up with what other provinces have already done?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, we are prepared for the vaccination of children aged 5 to 11. We know this is an issue of concern to parents. We also know that parents would be concerned that if a child of age 5 is going to be vaccinated, the parent wants to be with their child. That is only natural and we are providing for that. Whether it's going to be in primary care, whether it's going to be in pharmacies or whether it's going to be in schools—not necessarily within school hours; evenings and weekends when the entire family can go—this is something that we are preparing for. We are ready to go.

Of course, the circumstances differ in each of the 34 public health units, and one size doesn't fit all. We know that. We are working with each of the public health units to make sure that they are ready to go. We will be ready and we will have information out to parents in advance of the time when it is prepared to go via Health Canada.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Apparently, lots of questions remain. Parents really do need to know, so I hope this government has learned from its inadequacy around previous communications efforts and they are very clear, and very early on, letting parents know what the plan is, because that's something that we need.

In fact, the other thing we need is vaccines to be on the immunization list for schools. We have been calling for this since June. When this COVID vaccine for children gets approved, it needs to go on the immunization list. My question is, will the Premier get ahead of that and actually make sure the COVID vaccine is on the routine vaccination immunization list for school-aged children?

1040

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** In fact, one only needs to look at our success with respect to the vaccination campaign for adults. We now have over 87% of people aged 12 and over in Ontario having received their first dose of the vaccine and over 83% of people with the second dose. This is one of the largest campaigns around the world—not just in Canada but around the world.

We are going to apply the same policies and techniques as we did for the adult campaign to children, recognizing that children are different than adults and that there are different concerns that need to be brought to bear. But we will be ready, because this is one of the issues that is central to our government: protecting the health and well-being of all Ontarians. That, of course, includes small children. We will be ready to go as soon as Health Canada gives it a go.

#### AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the Premier, but I was asking when COVID-19 joins polio, pertussis, tetanus as a school-required vaccine. The minister didn't respond to that.

Look, we have a crisis unfolding in Windsor. Auto workers and their families—the entire community—are reeling from the announcement of yet more jobs being lost at the auto plant there, Stellantis—1,800 jobs. That's a lot of jobs, Speaker.

Of course, when 1,500 jobs were lost at the very same plant over a year ago now, this Premier had no plan, didn't do anything to save those jobs. These are well-paying, family-supporting jobs, jobs that not only help those families build a great life but really have a very positive, widespread impact on the economy in Windsor.

So where is the plan? Where is the Premier's plan to save these 1,800 good-paying jobs in Windsor?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Great to be here, Mr. Speaker. I had a great visit in Windsor—a great turnout.

You know something? When it comes to Stellantis, I had an opportunity to meet with Unifor, have a chat with them. I'm meeting with Stellantis today as well to discuss how we can twin moving forward with the investment, the hundreds of millions of dollars that we're investing along with the federal government, to bring Stellantis back to three shifts, not one shift.

I'm not blaming Stellantis; I'm not blaming anyone. It's semiconductors. Anywhere around the world, we have a problem with these chips. But once we get the chips in, we're going to be able to ramp up.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we are investing hundreds of millions of dollars, along with the federal government. Stellantis is investing \$1.5 billion to have the Stellantis plant in Windsor ramped up, going three shifts, not one shift. We're going to be there for the hard-working people of Windsor-Essex.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, had this government or frankly the Liberal government before them put together a made-in-Ontario auto strategy, we wouldn't be in this position yet again. That strategy needs to include local manufacturing of parts, things like the semiconductor chips the Premier is talking about. But this Premier says no to good jobs.

Remember GM, where 2,300 jobs were lost, and Oshawa families and the business community were absolutely devastated at that announcement. What did this Premier say? "There's nothing we can do." What did he say? He said, "The ship has already left the dock." But the community and the union, they kept fighting. They kept fighting and—no thanks to this Premier—jobs came back to that Oshawa plant.

My question is, when will this Premier stand with workers and fight for their jobs instead of rolling over and neglecting Windsor and Ontario's auto sector?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition, the reason these plants closed and were closing all across the province is because of 15 years of neglect and terror throughout the auto sector. We spoke to the CEO and they said this is the worst place in the entire world to do business because of the policies of the NDP and the Liberals with the high hydro rates, outrageous taxes, debt coming through the roof.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? In 18 months we turned this around and we were able to create jobs. We lowered the hydro rates by 16%. We are now competitive against anyone in the world.

Ford is going full steam ahead with the investment that we did of \$295 million. General Motors is now booming, actually booming in Oshawa, saying it's the quickest build they've ever done. They can't wait to get that up and going. In Woodstock, in St. Catharines and with Stellantis, we're going to be there for the workers. We have turned the auto sector around. We will be the number one manufacturer of electric vehicles anywhere in North America—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock. Order. Restart the clock.

Final supplementary.

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** What this government really has done is seen 5,600 auto jobs in Oshawa and Windsor walk out of Ontario. That's this government's record.

A real made-in-Ontario forward-looking strategy would have spurred investment in Ontario already. But this

Premier was not interested. The first thing he did was tear out electric vehicle charging stations. He got rid of the incentive for electric vehicles, which reduced the sales of electric vehicles by 50% here in our province. So let's not make up the past, Speaker. Let's be clear about this Premier's record.

He has not believed in the future of EV auto-making here in Ontario. So when are we going to stop lurching from crisis to crisis and fallacy to fallacy and actually put a made-in-Ontario, forward-looking EV manufacturing strategy into our province, an auto manufacturing strategy?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats. The Premier to reply.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, let me remind the leader of the NDP and the leader of the Liberals they destroyed this province. They lost 300,000 jobs. In 18 months, we created the environment and the condition to create 307,000 jobs. The auto sector has never been stronger, under our government, than it is today.

We're investing hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars into the auto sector. No matter if it's Toyota, Honda, Ford, Chrysler or GM, they're all going to be booming non-stop because of our policies of low hydro rates. We took \$7 billion of burden off the backs of these companies to create more jobs.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this will be the capital of the electric vehicles in North America right here in Ontario because of our policies.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I can wait all day long.

Start the clock. The next question?

#### PREMIER'S COMMENTS

**Ms. Doly Begum:** Speaker, yesterday during a press conference, our Premier made certain comments about immigrants. His comments were callous, discriminatory, dismissive, and offensive to thousands of immigrants who came to Ontario for a better future, many of whom have helped build this province. His words undermine the uphill battle that immigrants face when they come to this country, like the struggles my family faced when they came here with the hope for a better life. His words undermine the thousands of new Canadians who have helped Ontario through the past year and a half.

My question is simple, Mr. Speaker: Will the Premier apologize for his reckless comments?

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Members will please take their seats. The Premier to reply.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Thank you for the question. Through you, Mr. Speaker, let me just inform the opposition: you know, I am pro-immigration. I have been pro-immigration from day one.

We are short 290,000 people. I was the only government that wrote letter after letter to the Prime Minister saying we need more people. But when these more people come here—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I'm going to ask the member for Essex to come to order. I'm going to ask the member for Ottawa South to come to order and ask the Leader of the Opposition to come to order.

The Premier to conclude his reply.

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, we have 290,000 jobs waiting for people around the world. I don't care where they come from; they're going to come here.

But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They need a place to live. The NDP and the Liberals voted against making sure that we have affordable housing moving faster. They voted against making sure we build highways and bridges to make sure people get from point A to point B. They voted against the transit system that people will be on, the subway system, getting from point A to point B—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you. The Premier will take his seat.

*Interjection.*

1050

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Premier will take his seat.

The supplementary question?

**Ms. Doly Begum:** The Premier told new Canadians to work their tails off, yet thousands of highly qualified immigrants—and he talked about how we need thousands of workers right now—many of whom are doctors, lawyers, nurses, professors with years of experience, are unable to find work in their field because of the barriers to foreign credential recognition, something I've talked about in this House many, many times.

I have heard from many of these experienced doctors, for example, who in an attempt to use their skills and support the province volunteered on the front lines during this pandemic and, after trying to make ends meet with minimum wage jobs, have given up finding work in Ontario and have actually left this province.

If the Premier is serious about supporting immigrants, will he commit today to addressing the challenges that immigrants face, help foreign-trained professionals find jobs in their field and make it easier for them to find work and actively contribute to this province?

**Hon. Doug Ford:** Mr. Speaker, last night and this morning, my phone was blowing up with messages, and guess who the messages were from? They were from new Canadians, first-generation immigrants who came here. They told me story after story last night.

One story was how their parents came over, and their father worked in a gold mine to put him through school, through university. Another person told me the story about his first job as a dishwasher, but guess what? He owns his own restaurant now, employing 30 to 40 people. Another person told me that he came over and took a job sweeping and cleaning up at a factory. Now he owns his own factory that employs 100 people. These are the stories I hear.

Mr. Speaker, all you have to do is come to a Ford Fest. You'll see the support from people around the world who come there. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? I'll tell you how Ford Nation was created. They came to this country. They couldn't get hold of any NDP or Liberal leaders, but they got hold of the mayor of Toronto and they got hold of the Premier. We would show up to their door. We would return their calls—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Premier will please take his seat. Thank you very much.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for York Centre will come to order.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** That's the truth.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development will come to order.

Let's try again. Start the clock.

## SMALL BUSINESS

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** My question is to the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction. Small businesses in my community of Oakville North–Burlington and across the province have not had an easy year. Through the second, third and fourth waves of the pandemic, they have had to overcome hardships beyond the normal challenges that come with running a business. They have met these challenges and continue to serve their communities.

Small businesses are the backbone of our economy and our province, and they need to know their government supports them. Would the minister tell this House what the government is doing to support small businesses and to create an environment in which they can grow and succeed?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you to the member for Oakville North–Burlington for the question. Speaker, she's absolutely right: Ontario's small businesses are a vital part of this province's economy. It's why we've supported them throughout the pandemic and will continue to assist them as we combat COVID-19.

It's why we've now introduced five high-impact red tape reduction bills throughout the pandemic. And it's why we've invested an additional \$10 million in the Digital Main Street program this year to help businesses create or enhance their digital presence and invest in digital tools.

It's why we partnered with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to distribute rapid antigen testing to any businesses with 150 employees or less to minimize the chance of transmission, distributing more than 2.5 million tests to over 20,000 small businesses and medium-sized businesses.

It's why we will continue to engage with and listen to the business community as we move forward.

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

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** It's important to note that 98% of all businesses in Ontario are small businesses. When they succeed, we all succeed.

Meeting with small business owners in my community, I've heard how programs like Digital Main Street and other measures have helped them during the pandemic. As this week is Small Business Week, can the minister tell us what else the minister and the government are doing to support small businesses in Ontario?

**Hon. Nina Tangri:** Thank you again to the member for Oakville North–Burlington for the question and her advocacy on behalf of small businesses.

Our government continues to work hard to help small businesses succeed. We've been monitoring the temporary changes made to support businesses throughout the pandemic, and through our fall 2021 red tape reduction package, we intend to make some of them permanent: for example, allowing licensed bars and restaurants to more easily create or extend outdoor patio areas and allowing store deliveries to occur overnight, ensuring that goods can be delivered efficiently and non-disruptively. Both of these changes made a tremendous difference to businesses, and we want to keep them.

This Small Business Week, I encourage members on all sides of the House and all Ontarians to support small businesses within their communities and shop local safely.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** My question is to the Premier. We are seeing a disturbing trend as seniors in our community are being pushed out of Niagara through no fault of their own. Ursula Hudson, a resident in St. Catharines, lives in an apartment building that has recently been purchased by out-of-area speculators a few months back. Now, like clockwork, they are all receiving notices that they have to leave their units because the new landlord, Halcyon Shores properties, wants to renovate. This building houses only—only—seniors. One has lived in the building for almost 30 years, and another, a grandmother, is almost 90 years old. Most of them do not have Internet. They have no defence when threatening letters and LTB forms are sent to scare them.

Will the Premier do something to protect the seniors from wealthy speculators and remove incentives to profiteers so they will no longer try to evict the same seniors that helped build the community in St. Catharines and across Ontario?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To respond, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I thank the member opposite for that question. We know that keeping Ontarians healthy during these challenging times is providing them with safe access to stable and affordable housing. This is an unprecedented time. This is why, last fall, we passed Bill

204, the Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, to freeze rents at 2020 levels. We have taken steps through this bill to make sure that landlords are fined if they do not follow the rules and they are putting people out of their homes because of renovations under false pretenses.

We have done more for tenants in this province than anybody has done in over 70 years. The combined rent increase over the last two years is the lowest since beyond 1970. This province will take no lessons from the members opposite. We've showed up for tenants in this province, and we will continue to do so.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Photo op after photo op in St. Catharines is not what we have coming into my office. I have letters from new owners using the same strategy at buildings on Napier Street, on Welland Avenue, on Church Street—all across St. Catharines, Mr. Speaker. It is a crisis and it has to be dealt with now. There are solutions, and this should not be a partisan issue.

To the Premier: Everyone knows the housing crisis is worse now than when you were elected four years ago. It's been long enough, and we need action today: taxing speculators more; rent control; removing incentives for no-fault evictions; making it harder for the wealthier speculators to outbid our young families coming into our areas for homes. Will this Premier declare a crisis in affordability for housing today and act against wealthy speculators like these, or move aside so someone else can get the job done?

*Interjections.*

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

To reply, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

1100

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I reaffirm the record of this government and the steps it has taken. Through Bill 204, we've done more. We've increased fines to \$50,000 on landlords who don't follow the rules, and corporations to \$250,000. Those are substantial increases over the previous government's legislation. So we've taken steps. We've taken steps to increase the adjudicators on the Landlord and Tenant Board to make sure they're properly heard. We've also made it fairer for landlords, because it is a two-way street.

We want to make sure that there are more rental units in this province to handle the increasing population that we've seen over the last 20 years in this province, because there have been no rental units built. In the year we came into power, we saw a record increase in rental units in this province, which all go to lowering the price of rent. This government has taken action. Again, we will take—

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

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member from St. Catharines, come to order.

The next question.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

**Mr. Roman Baber:** My question is for the Minister of Finance. We all know that the science is different in Ontario. It is different than in Far East Asia, eastern Europe, Africa, Latin America, and it's different in at least 30 states south of the border. But I could never imagine that the science could be so different just blocks away on Bremner Boulevard, home of Raptors Way. For you see, MLSE restaurants on Bremner Boulevard are permitted to operate at full capacity, but at Hoops, a restaurant one block west on Bremner Boulevard, capacity is limited because of physical distancing. Because we all know that one is more likely to transmit COVID at Hoops than at the Hot Stove or at the Platinum Club. It's science.

This government decimated Ontario's dining industry. Lives and families are ruined. Can the Minister of Finance please tell the House what is the science—or the political science—behind this double standard?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I appreciate the member opposite's question. Obviously, the government has been working directly with the restaurant industry as well as all of the stakeholders that have been hardest hit within the sectors of heritage, sport, tourism and culture industries. We've been working hand in glove with the Ministry of Health, in addition to the Chief Medical Officer of Health. In fact, the restaurant working group that we established has had eight meetings, four of which I was able to attend. We also invited other ministers, such as the minister of Treasury Board, the Minister of Labour, and of course the Minister of the Attorney General, to see how, on outer years and outer months and outer weeks, we're going to be able to sustain not only their operations but allow them to thrive in a post-pandemic environment.

We continue to do that work. The Premier, myself and all of our colleagues are working hard to ensure that their voices are heard around the table. We will continue to make that commitment that their voices will be heard and that we will be able to, at some point in the near future, allow them to see greater capacity limits.

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

**Mr. Roman Baber:** My follow-up is to the Solicitor General. The double standard, the hypocrisy of this government is not just shameful, it carries—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member will withdraw his unparliamentary comment.

**Mr. Roman Baber:** Withdraw.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And conclude his question.

**Mr. Roman Baber:** The double standard is not just shameful, it carries hallmarks of totalitarian oppression and the stifling of democratic dissent. It's completely safe for 19,000 fans to pack every seat at Scotiabank Arena without physical distancing and without masks when drinking beer or peanuts for three periods. But holding a demonstration against government measures with 101

people outdoors, where the risk of transmission is almost non-existent—that's dangerous to public health. That's also science.

How does the Solicitor General justify 19,000 screaming fans, unmasked and not physically distant indoors, while threatening to ticket and arrest 101 peaceful protesters outdoors? And will she end the irrational restrictions on peaceful assembly outdoors?

**Hon. Lisa MacLeod:** I can assure the member opposite that we have been working, as I said, hand in glove with the Ministry of Health and the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We've had numerous stakeholder meetings with all of these organizations and groups that he's talking about. I can assure him that when you go into a Senators, Leafs, Raptors, CFL and OHL game, there has to be proof of vaccination in order to be there. I had the opportunity the other evening to tour the venue that the Leafs play out of to see the actual work that they're doing with the QR codes. I give my colleague the Associate Minister of Digital Government a lot of credit for the work he is doing.

But I will say this with respect to restaurants—and I had some troubling information today from Ottawa Public Health, where 30% of restaurants in the city of Ottawa fail to comply with the vaccination requirements at this point in time. So we're going to continue to work with the sectors that we are responsible for, whether that is sports and entertainment or whether that is our small businesses with respect to the hospitality sector. We will be there as we have been every single step of the way for the past 19 months. And I ask the member opposite—

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

## LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. It is no secret that the front-line heroes that work in our long-term care homes are the backbone of this sector. Throughout the pandemic, I have seen first-hand all the great work the nurses and PSWs working in my riding of Mississauga—Erin Mills have done.

Despite all this great work, I have heard a lot of comments about staffing problems in the long-term care sector. Can the minister please inform this House what you are doing to address these concerns about staffing?

**Hon. Rod Phillips:** I would like to thank the member from Mississauga—Erin Mills for his question and his fabulous advocacy for the people of Mississauga.

After decades of previous governments neglecting the long-term care sector, we are making historic investments. A key pillar of that plan is investment in 27,000 new long-term care staff. That will increase the daily direct care from 2.7 hours to four hours of care, the leading hours in Canada.

I was just recently at George Brown College, where I announced \$270 million for 4,050 new staff this year. In Mississauga—Erin Mills alone, the member's riding, that will mean \$1.5 million this year, Mr. Speaker, and \$8 million across all of Mississauga. And by 2024, our

government will be investing \$50 million just in Mississauga. We're committed to making sure that we protect our elders.

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

**Mr. Sheref Sabawy:** Thank you to the minister for his and this government's commitment to fixing long-term care. This newly hired staff will go a long way to providing high-end care to our residents in long-term care and in my riding of Mississauga-Erin Mills.

I understand that this \$270 million is just the first part of our government's long-term care plan to invest \$4.9 billion over four years to hire 27,000 new staff. This new staff is needed to provide an average of four hours of direct care per resident per day. This historic investment will transform the way long-term care is delivered in Ontario.

Speaker, would the minister break down what this investment will mean for a typical long-term care home in Ontario?

**Hon. Rod Phillips:** The member is right, Mr. Speaker. We talk about dollars a lot: \$270 million this year; \$4.9 billion over four years. But let's put it into terms about people, because that's what long-term care is about.

A 160-bed home like Silverthorn Care Community in Mississauga-Erin Mills will get \$595,000 just this year. By 2024, that's \$3.4 million for more PSWs and nurses. In terms of people, in terms of care, that means six more registered nurses, that means six more registered practical nurses, and that means 23 more PSWs to support our valued elders. Mr. Speaker, it's going to be more people, more staff, more care for seniors in Ontario.

#### AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:** My question is to the Premier. Auto insurance companies have made record profits during the pandemic, as claim payments dropped by half. It would be fair to assume that our auto insurance premiums were reduced by a similar margin. Instead, my constituents have told me they have seen increases in their auto insurance premiums throughout this pandemic.

These Ontarians have been doing their part, Mr. Speaker. They have been staying home, travelling when necessary. They have even had clean driving records, but they are still being price-gouged by auto insurance companies because of their postal code.

This is not an issue that we can't fix. This price-gouging could have easily been stopped if this government mandated lower auto insurance premiums. The official opposition introduced bills to provide Ontario drivers relief from sky-high auto insurance rates, but this government voted them down time and time again.

In a time when Ontarians are struggling and need relief the most, why has this government allowed auto insurance companies to keep charging high premiums and rake in record profits?

1110

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply, the parliamentary assistant.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** I thank the member opposite for the question. Since the start of the pandemic, our government has been closely watching to make sure that insurance companies are treating the people of Ontario fairly. Prior to our intervention, insurance companies were prohibited by legislation from offering rebates to consumers. Our government took action to allow insurance to offer rebates and look for ways to provide meaningful relief to consumers province-wide.

By removing these barriers, all of the 14 largest auto insurance companies in Ontario, who control 97% of the market, have provided some form of relief. In fact, the amendments that we have made have enabled auto insurance to provide premium rebates for 12 months after this state of emergency. In June 2020, FSRA announced that \$685 million in consumer relief was provided, benefiting 70% of insurance customers. In April of 2021, FSRA provided an update to the government that almost \$1 billion—

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you very much. I'll ask the member to take his seat.

Supplementary?

**Mr. Kevin Yarde:** The member opposite talks about fairness. In my riding of Brampton North, we pay over \$3,000 for auto insurance. There is nothing fair about paying that for your auto insurance.

These auto insurance companies are gouging all Ontarians, and that includes our truck and taxi drivers. These folks are essential workers. They make up a big part of our economy, not just in Brampton but right across Ontario. Their auto insurance rates have skyrocketed. Many of them have chosen to park their vehicles on their driveways, but they continue to pay their operating expenses. These folks need relief, and they need relief now.

The current auto insurance price-gouging is killing small businesses. They've tried reaching out to this government many times, but each time their concerns were ignored. I've raised concerns, as well as the member here from Brampton East, about the government not doing enough to help Ontarians lower their auto insurance.

I'd like to ask the Premier: Whose side is the government on, our small businesses' that are being price-gouged or the auto insurance companies' that are raking in record profits?

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Again, I thank the member for their question. Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear: We will always stand with the people of Ontario every step of the way. I want to just remind the member that it was our government, the first jurisdiction in Canada, to amend regulations that posed barriers for auto insurance and kept them from being able to provide Ontarians with support when they needed it during these unprecedented times.

I referenced FSRA's update to the government, which provided almost \$1 billion of relief to Ontarians during the pandemic. But that's not where we started. It's important to point out that when we started as government, we identified that rates were high in the province of Ontario. We started serving the people of Ontario prior to this, when we had 51,000 people—stakeholders, Ontario

drivers—come in and work with us to reduce rates for Ontarians.

The last government didn't do anything. The NDP completely supported them every step of the way. We will fight for Ontarians every single day to make life more affordable for them every single—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Stop the clock.

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Member for Brampton North, come to order.

Start the clock. The member for Ottawa–Vanier.

#### AUTISM TREATMENT

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** My question is for the Premier. Since the government cancelled the previous autism program and introduced its own program back in 2019, access to care for children with autism has been reduced significantly across the province.

Early childhood development is a key factor in determining one's health for the rest of their life. We know that the earlier children with autism are diagnosed and receive evidence-based therapy tailored to their needs, the more likely they can achieve their full potential and thrive. Right now, families with children with autism are left to fend for themselves in trying to somehow find the money and the resources for treatment for their children.

My question is, will the Premier follow the recommendations from the Ontario Autism Program Advisory Panel and fully implement a needs-based system and remove the age-based gap on funding?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The parliamentary assistant, the member for Ottawa West–Nepean.

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** Thank you to the member opposite for this important question. Our government is proud that we have doubled the Ontario Autism Program budget from \$300 million to \$600 million, the largest amount spent on the Ontario Autism Program in Ontario history. On top of that, we're proud that we have brought together a group of experts—parents, agency heads, clinicians, self-advocates—on our Ontario autism panel to design a program made by the community, for the community. We are currently implementing this plan.

There has been incredibly exciting work done to date on foundational services, on early intervention, on the launch of core services. We are going to continue moving forward on this plan—again, designed by the community, for the community—with the largest budget for an Ontario autism program in—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member will take his seat.

The member for Hamilton Mountain will come to order.

Supplementary question.

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** Mr. Speaker, more than two years ago the government promised to reduce long wait times and provide funding for children diagnosed with

autism. Since then, the wait-list has more than doubled. The most recent numbers say that more than 50,000 children are registered and waiting to enter the autism program.

Parents have reached out to me and shared their despair about the negative impact online learning has already had on their children. The wait for support is taking an increasing toll on their mental health, and urgent action is needed. I don't know what to tell these parents to give them hope. Is help on the way? What is the government's plan to address the Ontario Autism Program's wait-list?

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** As we know, the Ontario Autism Program has been a challenging file for governments of all stripes for a number of years. When we look at where this program was three years ago, we see that it was a program that was underfunded. We see that it was a program with a long wait-list, with no support provided to those individuals on the wait-list. We see that kids couldn't receive a range of clinical services beyond behavioural therapy, and we see a program where behavioural therapists weren't regulated.

Now today, Speaker, we see that folks on the wait-list are receiving interim support as we roll out the new core services program designed by the community. We see program funding is the largest in Ontario's history, with our doubled \$600-million budget. We see a range of clinical services being offered through core services, expanded from behavioural services to speech language pathology, occupational therapy and mental health services. And we see behavioural therapists being regulated for the first time in Ontario history.

Tremendous progress has been made. Lots of work still to be done—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member will take his seat.

The member for Hamilton Mountain, come to order.

The next question.

#### MUNICIPAL PLANNING

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** My question is for the Associate Minister of Transportation. In the last decade, home prices in Toronto have exploded, rising 120%, making it very difficult for many, in particular young people and young families, to get on the property ladder. My constituents in Eglinton–Lawrence bring this issue up all the time in conversations and in correspondence.

I know our government is committed to increasing housing supply in several ways, including by building vibrant neighbourhoods around transit. Could the minister please explain the work that he is doing on transit-oriented communities?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** Thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for that very important question. I know that keeping housing accessible for generations to come is a top priority for that member, so I appreciate this question.

The concept of transit-oriented communities is quite simple, Speaker: Build transit, and then build a vibrant,



multi-purpose community around it. We're talking about housing, retail stores, libraries, restaurants, pubs, parks, core services, all within walking distance of transit. These are new neighbourhoods, Speaker, 20-minute communities, if you will. It's time we evolved from just planning for asphalt deserts like park-and-ride parking lots around transit stations, and bring people closer to the station stops.

This is about smart city planning. It means increasing the supply of housing throughout the GTA so that more people in our province have places to call home. We're excited. We're going to make progress on this and we're going to keep the dream of home ownership alive for generations to come.

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

1120

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I thank the minister for his response. Under the previous Liberal government, short-sighted thinking and band-aid solutions caused the skyrocketing housing crisis, so it is refreshing to hear about the minister's long-term planning on this issue.

I know that our government has shown true leadership on transit by committing \$28.5 billion, the biggest investment in transit in Canadian history, and this includes funding for the Ontario Line, which will add over 15 kilometres to Toronto's subway system—finally.

Can the minister update the House on the transit-oriented communities that will be anchored by this historic project?

**Hon. Stan Cho:** The member is correct: This is a very historic project. Consultations are ongoing on the transit-oriented communities, or TOCs, along the Ontario Line. We're talking about East Harbour station, Corktown, Queen-Spadina, King-Bathurst and Exhibition. We've reached out to tens of thousands of residents and received great feedback on these proposals through these open houses. The feedback has been very positive.

At East Harbour alone, there will be 5,000 housing units for families to live, and office space that could support up to 50,000 jobs. It would be an economic engine for Toronto's downtown east end.

For 15 years, Speaker, the Liberal and the NDP MPPs who represented Toronto had an opportunity to help with the housing crisis. There was no action on transit and no action on the housing supply. Speaker, this is what happens when the people of Toronto vote for Progressive Conservatives: transformative projects that will house more people and get more people from point A to point B.

#### MEDICAL INTERPRETERS

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. Our community was shocked to learn that the Ontario government is planning to cut funding for the provincially funded medical interpreter program in Waterloo-Wellington. It is unacceptable that you would stop funding medical interpreters for doctors while we welcome refugees from Afghanistan, including those who worked for the Canadian military.

This program was launched by the former LHIN as a pilot program three years ago, in collaboration with organizations that work directly with newcomers. But rather than invest in the expansion of this program to take it from a successful pilot in Waterloo region to province-wide, the province is inexplicably citing equity as the reason to cut the program, because it doesn't exist everywhere.

Speaker, through you to the Premier: Can you please explain how newcomers are going to navigate Ontario's health care system without access to medical interpreters?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** There are a variety of ways that medical interpretation can be provided, not necessarily as a result of this pilot study. You're absolutely right: It is important because there are many people for whom English is not their first language. But there are other programs that we are investing in. The creation of the local Ontario health teams is going to identify those needs, because with the Connecting Care Act, we are dedicated to making sure we have an inclusive policy that ensures that all people in Ontario who require health care services will be able to receive them. So the local Ontario health teams are going to be key to this interpretation in the future, making sure that wherever they are and whatever the needs are, those teams will be able to address them.

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

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Speaker, my colleague from Kitchener Centre has correctly pointed out the great inequity in refusing to provide language interpretation services: 800 appointments a month and 120 medical professionals using the service. Using trained interpreters is the only way we can provide equitable service and obtain informed consent with limited English speakers.

This program actually saves money—I want to make that point—reducing readmissions to hospital, reducing unnecessary tests, and ensuring appropriate use of medications. Without access to medical interpreters, we know that children will have to translate medical appointments for their family members. That is simply not fair. We know that folks will end up needing care in emergency rooms or, even worse, will not seek medical care at all.

Speaker, why is this government dismantling such a successful medical interpretation program as our community anticipates the arrival of more refugees from Afghanistan? They deserve the best from Ontario. We need to deliver it to them.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** The one thing I can agree with the member opposite is that every person in Ontario deserves access to high-quality medical services, and to make sure that they can be provided in their first language.

However, Speaker, the member is referring to a pilot project. That does not mean that there are no medical interpretation services available. They certainly are, and they will continue to be provided. They will be provided with the assistance of the local Ontario health teams. We want to make sure that across Ontario, not just in one specific location, these services can be provided. That is

what we've indicated through the Connecting Care Act that we will provide, and that's certainly what we are going to do.

#### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** My question is to the Premier. For the past seven weeks, I've been receiving phone calls, emails and letters from hundreds of distraught Ontarians who do not want to receive the experimental drugs—or vaccines, as some would call them. These people will be fired with cause from their jobs if they don't get the jab. That means no severance or EI benefits—nothing. Families are desperate and in danger of losing not only their jobs, but their homes, their marriages. They can't even watch their kids play hockey in an empty arena because they aren't vaxed. Sound a bit crazy?

Vaccination must be about freedom of choice, and people must be respected for their choice. Workplaces were safe before. What changed yesterday to today?

Premier, respectfully, will you introduce legislation denouncing mandatory vaccination policies in the workplace? If you don't, you will be creating a crisis in health care, EMS and firefighting, and shortages in both private and public sectors. You were for the people; now you have a chance to save the people.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And to reply, the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** I do want to thank the member opposite for that question. Before I answer, I want to say, on behalf of all of the people in our region and southwestern Ontario, thank you to the member for serving the residents of Chatham-Kent–Leamington for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to remind the member opposite, and everyone out there, that vaccinations are available to those people who want them. In fact, we're proud that more than 22 million vaccinations have been given out to date. That's why, as a province, we've come so far together. In fact, more than 87% of people have had at least once dose and more than 83% have had a second dose.

We continue to urge employers and employees to work together. I know that locally in southwestern Ontario, the overwhelming majority of our residents have received a vaccination, and we do know because of the science that it is the best way to defeat COVID-19 once and for all.

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

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** Speaker, back to the Premier: You speak about safety, and you've spoken in the past about not wanting to implement vaccine passports, even after I was removed from caucus. We've talked about how these vax passes would cause two separate societies, causing people to reveal their confidential medical records to strangers. There's nothing confidential about that, although now most people know of my status due to a leak from the Premier's office, after I had told that individual specifically that my status is confidential.

You've stated that vax passes will only be temporary, despite the fact that PM Trudeau enticed provinces with \$1 billion in total of taxpayer money to help offset the costs. He's simply freewheeling. That's not right, nor is it responsible.

To the Premier: What changed, causing you to reverse your decision to have vax passports?

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** Again, Mr. Speaker, we've come so far together as a province. We don't want to go back to the days of locking down businesses. That's why we continue to encourage everyone to get vaccinated.

We're doing so well. I mean, the case count today was literally around a few hundred people, with less numbers in ICU and hospitalizations from this disease, so we encourage everyone: Get vaccinated. Get a shot.

We want to congratulate and thank all of those public health units that are working every single day to improve the lives and the health and the well-being of the people of Ontario. I do believe it's a responsibility of every member of provincial Parliament to encourage people to follow the science and get vaccinated.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** My question is to the Premier. Back in August, I met with the Ontario Association of Optometrists and heard their concerns of having adequate funding to perform their valuable services. Eye care is health care, and families in Ontario now no longer have access to OHIP-covered eye exams.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking the government to negotiate in good faith with optometrists in providing the funding needed so that children and seniors receive the care they need now.

1130

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you very much to the member for the question. First, let me say that all OHIP-funded services for both children and seniors are available. This government is continuing to pay for those programs.

However, we are disappointed that the Ontario Association of Optometrists has refused to come back to the table, to come back to mediation with us. As I've indicated before, you can't mediate when there's only one party at the table. We are asking the optometrists to come back to the table, for the association to do that. We are interested in working with them. Besides the \$39 million payment for past losses that have already been paid, we want to look at future losses, back to April 1, where we've indicated we are prepared to pay increases at 8.4%. We also want to understand about their overhead expenses, but we won't learn more about it if they won't come back to the table.

So, would you please urge the people you're speaking with to urge the association to come back to the table so we can get working together?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Question?

**Mr. Faisal Hassan:** My question is back to the Premier. My office has been flooded with letters and calls

from families whose children and elders are suffering right now from no access to vision care. This is an unacceptable situation and it started back in 2004 when the Liberals delisted routine eye exams from OHIP. This government has continued the legacy of cuts, and optometrists now trail the rest of the country in receiving fair compensation for their professional services.

When is this government going to make a serious attempt to put an end to this unnecessary situation and act with the urgency that is required, Mr. Speaker?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Well, certainly one thing that I can agree with the member upon is the fact that the previous contract for the optometrists expired in 2011 and nothing was done by the previous government for many, many, many years. That is something this government is trying to work on and to restore. That is why we have been asking the optometrists to come back to the table.

We are continuing to fund those OHIP services for children and for seniors. We want the optometrists to come back to the table so we can understand all of their issues. We have already dealt with the funding losses that they've had since 2011 to the present. We've gone retroactively to increase payments by 8.48% from April 1 of this year. We want to establish a working group to truly understand what their overhead costs are.

We are more than willing to come back to the table. We urge the Ontario Association of Optometrists to do the same so that we can restore these issues and make sure everyone has the eye care—

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

## GARDE D'ENFANTS

### CHILD CARE

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Monsieur le Président, le premier ministre se pète les bretelles à la télévision de toujours dire oui quand on le sait tous ici très bien que, dans la vraie vie, avec lui, c'est constamment non.

Ici en Ontario, où nous avons le service de garderie le plus cher au pays, le premier ministre continue de dire non à une entente avec le gouvernement fédéral qui nous permettrait d'offrir un service de garde à 10 \$ par jour—10 \$ par jour, monsieur le Président. Avec cette entente, les familles économiseraient plus de 10 000 \$ par année pour les petits, beaucoup plus que n'importe quelle province. Pourquoi le gouvernement continue-t-il de refuser exactement ce dont nos familles et notre économie ont besoin?

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

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I think we can both agree that child care is too expensive in this province. That is an inherited legacy of the former Liberal government, where child care rose by 40%. That is just an objective fact. I think any observer would agree that is indefensible.

Now, what we also know is that child care is inaccessible in Ontario, so the Premier of this province invested a billion dollars to build 30,000 new spaces. We've actually already approved 20,000 of them; 10,000 will be within new schools.

With respect to affordability, in the first budget under our government's leadership we introduced a tax credit that was enriched to represent roughly 90% of eligible expenses for child care, but we know that's not enough. It's why we have been negotiating with the federal Liberal government.

What I will note, though, Speaker, is that the federal government is not acknowledging the \$3.6 billion that this province funds for all-day kindergarten, a unique reality for Ontario, unlike most provinces in the federation that do not provide care for children aged four and five within our schools. We want a better deal, and we hope the Liberal Party will stand up for Ontarians and join this government—

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

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Le ministre sait très bien que les crédits d'impôt favorisent tout simplement les familles les plus aisées.

Le service de garde d'enfants abordable était nécessaire avant la pandémie et sera encore plus essentiel post-pandémie pour la reprise économique et la croissance de l'Ontario.

Les autres provinces profitent de services de garde à 10 \$ par jour. L'Ontario doit se joindre à elles et conclure une entente avec le gouvernement fédéral, qui leur offre le tout sur un plateau d'argent.

Monsieur le Président, pourquoi le premier ministre continue-t-il de dire non et de priver les familles ontariennes de service de garde d'enfants abordable? Injustifiable.

**Hon. Stephen Lecce:** We are absolutely committed to getting a good deal for the people of Ontario, but as you can appreciate, in negotiation we want to make sure that we extract the largest investment over a long period of time so it is sustainable. I think what we're trying to avoid is a short-term investment by the federal government that does indeed reduce costs for families and then there is an end date where those costs rise sharply. That's what we're trying to avoid. That's what I would argue all of us should seek to avert in a negotiation. We want a long-term commitment from the federal Liberal government.

What we also want, unlike many of the provinces who have agreed to that outcome, is a recognition that this province, unlike the overwhelming majority in the federation, funds all-day kindergarten at a quantum of \$3.6 billion per year of investment. We want that recognized. We want members of the other parties to stop posturing, stand with Ontario families and get a better deal from this federal Liberal government.

## ADDICTION SERVICES

**Miss Monique Taylor:** My question is for the Premier. The opioid crisis has hit all of our communities hard

during COVID-19. According to the science table, the province has seen a 60% increase in fatal overdoses from opioid use since March of last year. Hamilton saw 88 emergency room visits in one week from October 4 to October 10—in one week, 88 visits to the emergency room—and we have seen in Hamilton alone 75 deaths this year.

This government has continued to cap the number of safe injection sites and is dragging its feet on reducing harm in our communities. I am happy to say that the Hamilton AIDS Network is working with community partners to apply for a new safe consumption and treatment facility in Hamilton, and they already have the space to fill this need. This is more urgent than ever with this crisis continuing to grow.

Why does the Premier refuse to save lives by creating more safe injection sites? Will they look at this site in Hamilton and ensure the proper facilities that are so necessary are in our communities to save lives?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I can assure the member opposite that our government takes the opioid use situation and crisis very, very seriously. That is why, to begin with, we set up the consumption and treatment services. We have funded 16 so far. There is still room for more to be approved. If the city of Hamilton has already submitted an application, of course we will take a look at it. We want to make sure that we can have these sites in locations across the province of Ontario. As I indicated, there is still room for more and we will of course be looking at it.

We have also invested another \$32 million just recently to deal with the situation to make sure we can create that continuum of care throughout the entire system. What we've done is we've added \$2.5 million to explore expanding the rapid access addiction medicine, or RAAM, clinics. We've also expanded to make sure people can have residential services if they need them. We've invested \$30 million to provide 30 more spaces at the Pine River Institute for young people and we've just received, further to a request for proposal, applications to provide more adult in-patient rehabilitation beds.

We are taking every step necessary to make sure that people can get the help they need.

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

## DEFERRED VOTES

### TIME ALLOCATION

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** We now have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 4, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater.

The bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which members may cast their ballots. I will ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1140 to 1210.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The vote on government notice of motion number 4, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater, has taken place.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 34; the nays are 18.

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

*Motion agreed to.*

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

*The House recessed from 1211 to 1500.*

## REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

### STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated October 19, 2021, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

*Report deemed adopted.*

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### RENT STABILIZATION ACT, 2021

#### LOI DE 2021

### SUR LA STABILISATION DES LOYERS

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill:  
Bill 23, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 to implement various measures to stabilize rent /  
Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation afin de mettre en oeuvre diverses mesures destinées à stabiliser les loyers.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*First reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member for Parkdale–High Park care to briefly explain her bill?

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** Yes, thank you, Speaker. We have an eviction crisis. Tenants everywhere are receiving eviction notices, even if they have paid their rent on time and lived in their unit for decades, all because in 1996, Conservative Premier Mike Harris introduced vacancy decontrol, a mechanism that allows landlords to raise the rent with no limit when a unit is vacated, thus creating an incentive for bad landlords to unfairly evict tenants and drive rents skyrocketing. This measure is still in place to date.

The Rent Stabilization Act amends the Residential Tenancies Act to require the Landlord and Tenant Board to create and maintain a rent registry, and that information be made available to anyone who requests it, so that tenants are confident knowing that their rent has not suddenly skyrocketed. The Rent Stabilization Act will stabilize rents and end the incentive for unfair evictions.

Tenants cannot afford to live with the fear of unfair evictions and skyrocketing rents, and Ontario cannot afford this problem.

## PETITIONS

### HIGHWAY SAFETY

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Mrs. Tina Whitmore from Leveck in my riding for these petitions.

“Make Highway 144 at Marina Road safe....”

“Whereas residents of Leveck, Onaping and Cartier, as well as any individual who travels Highway 144, are concerned about the safety of a stretch of Highway 144 in the vicinity of Marina Road and would like to prevent further accidents and fatalities; and

“Whereas three more accidents occurred”—it’s actually four now—“in summer 2021 resulting in severe injury, diesel fuel spilling into the waterways, the closure of Highway 144 for several hours delaying traffic and stranding residents; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has completed a review of this stretch of Highway 144, has made some improvement and has committed to re-evaluate and ensure the highway is safe;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... that the Ministry of Transportation review Highway 144 at Marina Road immediately and commit to making it safe, as soon as possible, and no later than December 2021.”

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

### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition, titled “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario,” has been signed by over 600 constituents, residents from Parkdale–High Park. I would like to thank Dr. Mierzynski, Dr. Tam-Wai and Dr. Burroughs from Bloor West Optometry, and Dr. Majewski from Owl Optometry on Roncesvalles. The petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mr. John Vanthof:** “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I fully agree with this petition and will give it to page Lamees to give to the table. It’s great to have the pages back.

### GASOLINE PRICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Joffre Labelle from Hanmer in my riding for these petitions. They read as follows:

“Gas prices.

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Emily to bring it to the Clerk.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition is titled “Demand \$10-Per-Day Child Care” in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas several provinces and territories, including British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Yukon, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador have implemented a \$10-per-day child care program;

“Whereas Ontario has some of the highest child care costs in the country and the costs have made quality child care hard to access for many families;

“Whereas the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the child care sector;

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

“To immediately negotiate an agreement with the federal government to introduce a \$10-per-day child care plan in Ontario; improve wages for ECEs and child care; and invest in child care capacity to support the recovery from COVID-19.”

1510

I fully support this petition. I will affix my signature to it.

#### SERVICES D’OPTOMÉTRIE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Marcel Lemieux from Val Therese in my riding for this petition.

« Les enfants et les aînés ont besoin de soins oculaires

« Alors que le gouvernement Ford permet que le retrait des soins oculaires aux enfants de l’Ontario continue, ce qui nuit à leur capacité d’apprendre à l’école, de fonctionner librement dans leur vie quotidienne et les mets à risque de troubles de vision permanents;

« Alors que l’inaction du gouvernement Ford envers l’accès aux soins oculaires pour les personnes âgées de l’Ontario nuit à leur capacité de maintenir un mode de vie autonome et actif; et a augmenté le risque de complications permanentes de problèmes oculaires dégénératifs. »

Ils demandent à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario « de demander au gouvernement ... de s’engager à conclure une entente officielle équitable avec les optométristes de l’Ontario afin que les enfants et les personnes âgées de l’Ontario reçoivent les soins oculaires préventifs et diagnostiques essentiels qu’ils et elles méritent. »

J’appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et la remettre à Fraser, mon page, pour la table des greffiers.

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** This petition is entitled “Real Rent Control Now.”

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the average rent has increased by over 50% in the last 10 years;

“Whereas average monthly rent in Ontario is now over \$2,000; and

“Whereas nearly half of Ontarians pay unaffordable rental housing costs because they spend more than a third of their income on rent;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the” Rent Stabilization Act, “to establish:

“—rent control that operates during and between tenancies, so that a new tenant pays the same rent as a former tenant, with allowable annual rent increases calculated by the government of Ontario and based on annual inflation;

“—a public rent registry so tenants can find out what a former tenant paid in rent;

“—access to legal aid for tenants that want to contest an illegal rent hike; and

“—stronger enforcement and tougher penalties for landlords who do not properly maintain a renter’s home.”

On behalf of all the tenants in Parkdale–High Park, I table and I support this petition.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Samantha Barne from Wahnapiatae in my riding for these petitions.

“Ban Retirement Home PPE Charges.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s retirement homes are largely privately owned corporations; and

“Whereas these businesses have a responsibility to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to their employees; and

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

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

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

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

I fully support this petition, Speaker. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Lamees to give it to the Clerk.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**Mr. John Vanthof:** “Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I wholeheartedly agree. I affix my signature and send it with page Fraser.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I would like to thank Chris Wisson from Azilda in my riding for these petitions.

“Vulnerable Children and Seniors Need Eye Care....

“Whereas the Ford government is allowing the withdrawal of eye care to Ontario’s children to continue, which has impaired their ability to learn in school, function freely in their daily lives and risks lifelong vision impairment;

“Whereas the lack of action from the ... government regarding access to eye care for Ontario seniors has impaired their ability to maintain an independent and active lifestyle; and has increased the risk of permanent complications from manageable degenerative eye conditions...;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“To call on the Ford government to commit to a fair formal agreement with Ontario optometrists so that Ontario children and seniors get the preventative and diagnostic eye care they deserve.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Yamama to bring it to the Clerk.

#### OPTOMETRY SERVICES

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** I have these petitions that come from Chelmsford Eyecare. Dr. Kusnierczyk and Dr. Leroux have sent, I would say, hundreds of petitions.

“Petition to Save Eye Care in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas the government only pays on average \$44.65 for an OHIP-insured visit—the lowest rate in Canada; and

“Whereas optometrists are being forced to pay substantially out of their own pocket to provide over four million services each year to Ontarians under OHIP; and

“Whereas optometrists have never been given a formal negotiation process with the government; and

“Whereas the government’s continued neglect resulted in 96% of Ontario optometrists voting to withdraw OHIP services beginning September 1, 2021;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately commit to legally binding, formal negotiations to ensure any future OHIP-insured optometry services are, at a minimum, funded at the cost of delivery.”

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Lamees to bring it to the Clerk.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### YORK REGION

##### WASTEWATER ACT, 2021

##### LOI DE 2021 SUR LES EAUX USÉES DANS LA RÉGION DE YORK

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 7, 2021, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater /  
Projet de loi 5, Loi concernant les eaux usées dans la région de York.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, the bells will now ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. I will ask the Clerks to please prepare the lobbies.

*The division bells rang from 1520 to 1550.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The vote was held on the motion for second reading of Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater.

**The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker):** The ayes are 41; the nays are 10.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I declare the motion carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, the bill is now ordered for third reading.

YORK REGION  
WASTEWATER ACT, 2021  
LOI DE 2021 SUR LES EAUX USÉES  
DANS LA RÉGION DE YORK

Mr. Piccini moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater /  
Projet de loi 5, Loi concernant les eaux usées dans la  
région de York.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I return to Mr. Piccini to lead off the debate.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I appreciate the opportunity, as always, to rise before the Legislature, and to begin third reading debate on Bill 5, the York Region Wastewater Act, 2021. I introduced the bill into the Legislature on Tuesday, October 5. At second reading, I had the opportunity to provide a fulsome overview of the proposed act within the context of our government's commitment to improving the unparalleled quality of life of the people of Ontario. It's a commitment we take very seriously, Speaker. It motivates us every day and guides the actions that we take as a government. It's also the impetus for every action I take as Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks to protect the air, water and land, reduce waste and litter in this province, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, tackle climate change, and create communities that are resilient against the effect of climate change. I believe that the York Region Wastewater Act, 2021, is a strong piece of legislation that will contribute to achieving these goals for the residents of the regional municipality of York.

I'd like to begin with a few words about the region, which is, as my colleagues in this Legislature well know, one of the largest, most vibrant and fastest-growing communities across the province of Ontario. I'll take everybody down memory lane, back into the early 1990s, when the original EA was first moved for growth in this community and their waste water needs. This was something that the previous government dragged on for days. But, Speaker, I'm not here to talk about the previous government and the stale, decades-old EA, the fact that the terms of reference in 2010 were amended for reasons we can only speculate on; I'm here to talk about the future and this piece of legislation—the future that includes a panel of expertise, the future that gives a narrow window of 12 months in which we will work hard on looking at alternatives for this fast-growing community, one that consults Indigenous communities, one that engages with expertise in planning, one that looks at this vibrant, growing community and holds their hand in terms of where we go as a community and how we develop and the waste water needs of that community. It's so important to how we grow as a province. It's so important to us as a government.

In anticipation of the infrastructure needs, as I said, with such a rapidly growing community, York region's investigations originally led to the proposal of a new facility that would be connected to the York-Durham sewage system shared with Durham region. The waste water would be treated at the existing Duffin Creek water pollution plant in Pickering—that plant treats more than

80% of the waste water generated by homes and businesses in York region. The regional municipalities of York and Durham jointly own the plant, which discharges treated effluent into Lake Ontario.

To look at the wide-ranging issues involved in York region's project, the Minister of the Environment at the time—taking us down memory lane—required the region to undertake a full environmental assessment of the proposal, including an assessment of alternatives to the proposed infrastructure. The proposal provided by York region in 2014 calls for a new waste water treatment facility to be built in the town of East Gwillimbury to treat about 40 million litres of sewage per day. The facility is referred to as a water reclamation centre, and its process would involve four levels of treatment for waste water, including microfiltration and reverse-osmosis waste water treatment technology.

The Upper York Sewage Solutions environmental assessment application has been the subject of consultation since its submission. Of particular note have been lengthy discussions and important discussions I've had recently with the Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation, who have had concerns with the proposal. More engagement with that community is needed to get this right, and more current information is needed from experts to give us a better understanding of the potential environmental, social and financial impacts of any waste water servicing solution for York region—surely in this House we can all agree on that, Speaker.

Like all Ontarians, York region residents need to be confident that their water resources are protected, now and into the future, by good decisions based on the best and most up-to-date information, and we do not believe this process has gotten to the point where they can have this confidence.

In fact, Speaker, I'm a new minister; I recently became minister four months ago, and talking about what this panel will do, I mean things like—I'm diverting, but to another vital infrastructure project—that's what this is—I think to another community, Hiawatha First Nation in my riding; when we were talking about the repairs they're doing to Paudash Street and the LIFE Services Centre. I forget whether it was the LIFE Services Centre or the repairs to Paudash Street—both of which the government of Ontario has worked in close partnership to support—but they were talking about work that they were doing with the federal government and repairs for fibre. Can you imagine digging up a street, repaving and then digging it up again to install fibre? Surely we agree in this place that that can and must be done effectively and efficiently at the same time.

These are some of the things I've spoken with the ministry about and why I felt it's important. We're a growing community. We can't wait 10 years. We need expertise. We need to look at the servicing needs. To be blunt, it's pivotal here in waste water, but we've also got to look at growing fibre needs. Let's not connect sewage needs for a community that we can't connect to Internet. Let's look at how we service this. This panel is going to



do just that. It will allow the spirit and requirements of our comprehensive environmental assessment process to be completed in a way that ensures the best outcome for York region and the other regions impacted. The environmental assessment process includes analysis of the environmental impacts of a project, its technical aspects, the social factors that inform and would result from it and its economics. I know the region is so eager to get to move and support the growth.

These comprehensive EAs are meant to serve the needs of Ontarians and protect our natural environment and the species that call it home within that environment. Environmental protection and the environmental assessment are continually evolving as our understanding of the environment evolves and as we get a better grasp on the best way to protect water, air and land. In fact, I said it in second reading—some of the work being done in Israel, for example, and a number of other communities in waste water solutions. This must be examined.

I think back to when this first started—Ontario's youngest environment minister—in the 1990s. I was in school when this started. A lot has changed, including this, Speaker—I can't use props, sorry; I was going to grab my cellphone—and we owe it to the people of that region and we owe it to that community. As I said, we understand the time, but in the narrow time frame, engaging a panel of experts, and moving to support their growing needs and using the latest technology.

**1600**

Speaker, it's with this commitment to informed, science-based decisions that I introduced in this Legislature the York Region Wastewater Act, and we're moving quickly to move it through this House because we understand the need to get things going. Bill 5 proposes to suspend the York region's Upper York Sewage Solutions environmental assessment so that we can establish an external advisory panel to provide expert and up-to-date information and advice to the government on the environmental, societal and financial implications of any waste water servicing solution for York region. We couldn't be clearer that protecting our water resources now and into the future is a top priority for our government, but any changes to that system need to be based on current and accurate information, and it would be irresponsible to rush something through that's based on stale information from a decade ago.

By establishing an advisory panel, the government will bring together experts in a variety of areas. I spoke about land use planning and waste water infrastructure. The panel will engage with municipalities, key stakeholders and potentially impacted Indigenous communities, like Georgina Island. I spoke to their chief and indicated as such that we will follow through.

The advisory panel will look at:

- the need and timing for additional sewage servicing capacity to accommodate forecasted population and development growth in the upper York waste water servicing area;

- alternatives to the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking, including alternatives that would provide additional sewage capacity necessary to accommodate future population and development growth in both the regional municipality of York and the regional municipality of Durham;

- the costs of developing and implementing the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking and any potential alternatives;

- the sustainability and efficiency of the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking and any alternatives, including consideration of the use and optimization of existing waste water services and the protection of human health and the environment; and

- the feasibility and financial viability of the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking and any alternatives.

Speaker, I spoke about alternatives. I spoke about a comprehensive review of infrastructure needs and that growth.

We expect that the membership of the advisory panel will be finalized in the coming weeks.

This is not the only waste water management initiative we're working on. Our budget contained investments to further protect the health of communities and ensure that water resources are safeguarded now and into future generations. For example, it's why we've invested \$10 million to improving the transparency of monitoring and public reporting of sewage overflows and bypasses from the municipal systems in the Great Lakes.

I'm going to give a special shout-out to my colleague from Hamilton. She has been a champion on this. It's unacceptable that, in 2021, we are discharging effluent into Lake Ontario that hasn't been properly treated. But we're not just stopping there. Thanks to that member's advocacy, we're equipping municipalities with money to improve reporting, to improve the transparency, and we're going to continue doing that.

It's why, for example, I just recently joined communities along the Great Lakes—yesterday, in fact, I was at Walkerton and met the phenomenal team at the Walkerton centre. It's why I joined Minister Thompson to provide an additional \$2.5 million to support conservation authorities, different organizations in the watershed there along Lake Huron, to improve agricultural best practices on overflows and pesticides, things that are used to put food on our table. I know that farmers are close to your heart, Speaker. We've got to stand with them and work hand in hand on best solutions that preserve our agricultural land.

A special shout-out to the folks at Kelso and Conservation Halton. One of the neatest things I've seen as minister was an opportunity to join them at Kelso conservation, at the quarry, and see the work that they're doing with farmers. We had a farmer and a member of their conservation authority, and what Hassaan, their CEO, is doing there is incredible. They were looking at a different nutrient management system. They were looking at how water penetrates soil on agricultural land. They're doing incredible work, and we're supporting them in doing that. That's why I joined that member, on Lake Huron, to

support them. That's why there were community members who gathered on a windy day to listen to us—farmers and others—because we're empowering local organizations.

It's why, on a separate note, we're working on flood resiliency. That's why I joined the team down in Niagara—incredible students from Niagara College—empowering using citizen science. We have the technology. It's a roundabout way of tying it back into this bill on the latest science. We're empowering citizens in Niagara to build resiliency along the coastal areas using their technology. Imagine that. Why would the opposition, why would other members not want to empower government, public policy-makers, with the latest evidence and science-based decisions? Why would they not want to empower community members, agricultural organizations and conservation authorities to support in that endeavour?

Speaker, under this government we have launched the largest freshwater cleanup of its kind with Pollution Probe. I spoke to Chris Hilken at Pollution Probe. They're doing an incredible job with Seabins. I am slightly biased; one of them is in Cobourg harbour. But I'm not going to talk about Cobourg harbour, because I could go on for days talking about my incredible riding. I'm going to talk about all of the other bins in a harbour near you in this province of Ontario. So many municipalities—I couldn't repeat them all today—are studying microplastics, working with incredible organizations, including the University of Toronto, to study those microplastics. This presents a real and present danger to our freshwater and to the species that call our waterways home.

We're working with Ontarians. We're working with them to leave a better environment behind for future generations, so that my kids—hopefully one day, and grandkids—can swim in cleaner waters in Lake Ontario than I did. That's why we serve here. That's what we're doing, and it's why we're leaning on the best science and the best evidence to inform York region's needs.

Mr. Speaker, we're also considering additional updates to the template for municipal ECAs, and we're looking at whether they should require all municipal sewage treatment plant owners to obtain ECAs that contain the latest environmental protection conditions. We're looking at a number of possible electronic reporting solutions to make reporting of incidents easier for municipalities.

I again hearken back to Walkerton yesterday, talking to Suleiman and the team there. He said the reporting and the technology that we can empower today can detect, with live detection—I'm not the doctor; this is a doctor from l'Université de Montréal who has got far more years of experience than I, but the gist of what he was telling me is that we've got the technology to detect, accurately and in real time, when there are concerns with clean water.

Gone are the days of calling up—we've got incredible folks on the front lines, but their time is valuable, as well, and they've got to respond to spills, all sorts of things, at MECP. But if you don't need to call someone—they drive for hours, you take the water and you then study it. If you have the technology to report in real time on concerns, surely we want to make those investments. Surely we want

to work with the proponents of that technology, with doctors, with scientists, to work with our municipalities, to lean on that real-time technology, to better support our growth and our needs as people of this province.

In December of last year, we launched a pilot tool for real-time online municipal sewage bypass and overflow reporting, as well as the Ontario Clean Water Agency. This tool creates an opportunity to reduce municipalities' burden from reporting these events, and we're going to expand it province-wide. This is real-time data to empower us.

In addition to the work we're ensuring for water and waste water in this province, we've been in a unique position during the pandemic to contribute to tracking the spread of the virus through the surveillance of waste water. We've made important investments. Nobody has invested more in health care than this government, from long-term care to hospitals, but it's some of the behind-the-scenes stuff on waste water surveillance during the COVID-19 pandemic—again, relying on the latest technology to inform prudent public policy-making. That's what we're doing here in York region.

This method of detecting the spread of the virus has great potential, because not everybody gets tested, but the traces of the virus end up in waste water. Monitoring waste water for COVID-19 gives us a close-to-real-time way to track the possible spread of the virus before people begin showing symptoms. Surely, Speaker, we want to lean on that technology and we want to ensure that we—in a decade-old, stale EA—aren't relying on technology that my dad relied on when I was that kid in the 1990s. A lot has changed. We're decades past. Look behind me here at our phenomenal Minister of Labour. Even he was young at that time.

**Hon. Monte McNaughton:** That's right.

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**Hon. David Piccini:** We were all—

*Interjections.*

**Hon. David Piccini:** And you, Speaker. It was a yesteryear. We've got to rely on the latest technology.

**Mr. Jim McDonell:** I would take that as an insult.

**Hon. David Piccini:** I apologize.

In fact, Ontario has committed over \$22.8 million over two years to a COVID-19 waste water surveillance initiative to test waste water samples taken from communities across the province. These financial commitments, as a government, at a very high level—I've often said this, out on the hustings as the Minister of the Environment, that as I look across the way, they've only got about as many knights at the round table at Camelot in the Liberal Party today. But that's what we're taking Ontario out of—the Stone Age, and bringing it into the 21st century, using digital ID, using the latest technology that's driven by science, that's driven in close partnership with our institutions.

We've got to do this, because our population is growing. Attainable homeownership has become far too difficult. Under the previous Liberal government, they

exacerbated these strains. Affordable, attainable home-ownership was but a pipe dream. But this government is ensuring we're leaning on the latest technology, ensuring we're taking the stale EA processes of 50 years ago and modernizing them so that we can get shovels in the ground—so that we can respect our species at risk, for example. We've set up an agency. The way the Liberals would have this is that we task developers, over an 18-to-20-year span, to protect species at risk.

We have phenomenal men and women across this province who are in the business of building homes for men and women, for families, and they should focus on just that. They shouldn't be tasked with doing what a scientist and what an expert can do better. That's why we've set up that agency. That's why we're empowering them with the ability to protect our species at risk in this province of Ontario.

They don't want change. They want to bring us back to the knights of the round table, back to Camelot, back to King Arthur's Round Table, but we refuse. As a government, we're going to embrace some modern technology. As a government, we're moving forward. We're embracing a panel of expertise. We're working with Indigenous communities. Again, talk is cheap, and all I can try to do is show that as the minister, in four months, I'm engaging in meaningful dialogue, listening to concerns, and reacting. The concerns are far too grave in Lake Simcoe to not listen, to not engage, to not explore the latest technology, and do it, as I said, in short order, in a 12-month span.

Speaker, in the near term, when I think to climate change mitigation and adaptation, there are tremendous initiatives. I think, longer term, our government is laser-focused on the generational problems at our feet, and that's climate change and adapting for its impacts. In fact, we were the government that launched the first-ever climate impact assessment. In the previous Environmental Bill of Rights of the previous government, they couldn't even muster up the words "climate change." I say that—and I'm going to contradict myself, because this is the same party that will sit there and check how many times you mention a word. It's not actual action; it's all platitudes and rhetoric. I prefer to be a part of a government of action. I'd rather not say 10 letters or five letters, and do more in the spirit of the words "climate change," because action matters a lot more. It's why we're the only province in this federation on track to meet our GHG reductions.

And while I'm up here, to show, in the spirit—I will criticize the previous government where they deserve criticism. They, too, did things to get us to where we're at today, and deserve credit for that. But it was a government far more focused on headlines than meaningful action. As I said, that's why we're cleaning the water of this great province. It's why we're investing in the largest freshwater initiative of its kind. It's why we're working with our farmers to improve sustainability. They're the best stewards of our land. It's why we're leaning on the latest, modern technology to support waste water needs of

growing communities—a community that is going to virtually double its population in the coming decades.

If I think of the stress that climate change will put on waste water management infrastructure today and into the future—heavy rains, severe storms—it's why we're investing into our municipalities to support them with the design and engineering. I'll have more to say in the coming months on that. It's why we've committed in the budget to make those investments. It's why we've launched that first-ever climate change impact assessment. Again, we could go it alone in silos, and the silos perpetuated under the previous government, or we could break down those barriers. We're the first government to have a minister of digital, working together with municipalities with that impact assessment. I spoke at AMO at length with a number of our important colleagues who want to work with the government, and they look forward to the results of that impact assessment so we can leverage programs like the ICIP, Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program, to make the necessary investments.

I think locally to the incredible investments we've made to improve water treatment plants in Hiawatha and Alderville, to improve the transportation fleet in Cobourg. One out of every four GO trains taking men and women in my community to their places of employment is thanks to Premier Ford and the historic transit investments we're making—subways, getting shovels in the ground, building communities around GO stations and subway stations. That's smart growth. That's what this Premier is doing. When we tackle transportation, the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the province, by doing things like that, we're tackling greenhouse gas emissions, and we're doing that as a government. In fact, that's why we're the only province on target to meet our Paris goals. It's a commitment that we take very seriously.

I'm excited to embrace this technology. I understand that we've got a lot more work to do and that we've got to work in partnership and we've got to lean on expertise and work together to do this, and that's what our government is doing. Our government is making those investments. It's why we're working closely with York region and we're going to lean on those experts on the panel—a panel that I said will rely on experts in planning, on experts in waste water, to inform the decisions we make so that we can ensure that every dollar we invest, every penny spent on the growth needs of that growing region are done in a responsible manner, are done relying on the latest technology, and that we meet the waste water needs not just for today but for future generations who want the dignity of a home and who want a roof over their head.

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

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and actually, today, listen to the Minister of the Environment on the second reading—third reading of this bill; this bill is going so fast.

I'd like to congratulate the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks on his appointment. He is

an incredible communicator. I give credit where credit is due.

But let's get back to the bill. There are lots of great things that he's talking about, but the best thing, when I look at a bill—because I am not a great communicator; I know that. I'm just a country boy. So I always go to the explanatory notes of the bill to see what the bill is really talking about. I'd like to read those on the record for the third reading: "The minister's decision-making on the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking is suspended and all actions by the regional municipality of York related to that undertaking are prohibited."

Basically, from what I understand—and no one is trying to minimize the issue of what to do with infrastructure in a growing region like York. There is a large controversy about where sewage infrastructure should be placed, where the effluent should be directed, and with this bill, the government has basically put a stop-work order on one process, which directs work towards another process. The minister spent a fair bit of time talking about this expert panel; that's not actually mentioned in this bill, the expert panel, but I take the minister at his word. But when you stop work on one process, obviously, the expert panel is being directed in another direction.

But when you read past the explanatory note—the minister spent a lot of time talking about, "We need the latest technology," and I fully agree. But when you read into the bill, basically this bill bypasses the Environmental Assessment Act because it's taking too much time—the knights of the Round Table, I believe he equated it to.

#### 1620

The Environmental Assessment Act in Ontario is a pretty strong tool. They're suspending that. But where it gets really interesting is that when you go past the Coles Notes part, the other thing this bill does—and it's not the first time the government has done that. I'm going to read the bill, actually. It prohibits legal action against damages caused by the government's actions. The government was elected to make laws, but I'm not sure that the people of Ontario or the people of York are happy that the government is saying, "Well, we're going to make decisions, but then we're not going to allow anyone to be able to access the courts to keep themselves whole from damages caused by the government. I don't think anyone signed up for that.

The minister didn't spend any time talking about that either. The minister—I give credit where it's due—is a great communicator, and he knows where to stay away from, and he didn't mention that at all. So I'd also like to read that into the record:

"No cause of action arises against the crown, any current or former member of the executive council or any current or former employee or agent of or adviser to the crown as a direct or indirect result of,

"(a) the enactment, operation, amendment or repeal of any provision of this act;

"(b) anything done or not done under the authority of or in reliance on this act, whether before or after this section comes into force; or

"(c) any representation or other conduct that is related, directly or indirectly, to the application for the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking that was submitted for approval by the regional municipality of York, whether made or occurring before or after this section comes into force, subject to subsection (2)."

Basically, for anything that was done before and anything that's done after, you can't sue the government for damages. And the government knows very well how the court system works, because they've tried a few times and have lost. They lost the pay equity one. They've lost a few of the carbon tax ones. They lost, so they decided, "Okay, we're not going to let this happen to us. We're just going to stop them from going to court."

I'm not trying to minimize the York waste water issue; this is a serious issue, and it's an issue that should be dealt with. But it should be dealt with so that everyone has the ability to keep themselves whole, because people will be damaged. And no government has the right to do what they're doing. That is the crux of this matter.

What makes this bill even more suspect—and very few people care about the intricacies of how Queen's Park works, and I understand that. Before I was elected, I didn't understand it; I still don't, to tell you the truth, Speaker. But there's a process. You introduce a bill and then it gets debated a second time, and then it usually goes to a thing called a committee. And especially for really complicated stuff, because none of us—very few—I'm sure the Minister of the Environment knows more about waste water than I do. I'm not sure he knows more about manure than I do, because I used to be a farmer. But I think very few of us claim to be experts in waste water, so it would have been ideal if there actually had been a committee process, which is the normal process, where people who are experts or who have an interest in the subject could have come and made presentations to the committee, and then, in third reading, you could have a much more informed debate. Then, probably, some legal experts would have come and said, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. You can't do this, what the government is doing." But they solved that problem by eliminating the committee process.

It's one thing in a time allocation motion to shorten the ability of members to speak—members should always have the right to speak, but we are not experts on waste water management. But in this case, on a bill that is all about waste water management, they have eliminated the right of experts to speak to the Legislature or put words on the record in the Legislature.

They're going to appoint an expert committee. Again, I'm not saying that the expert committee isn't qualified to do that—not at all—but the more information that's put on the record, the more information that expert committee has to deal with, because you can make better decisions with more information.

This government, with this bill, by eliminating the committee process, not shortening it—I remember the old days. I've been here for 10 years; I know it looks like 20, but I've been here for 10. When I first got elected, when the Liberals were in power—they're over in the corner there—they had their faults. I am not a supporter.

**Hon. Jane McKenna:** But you supported them.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I'm not a supporter. But I remember standing and talking about the committee process, and on bills that had to do with northern Ontario, they didn't bother having their committee travel to northern Ontario. At that time, that was a pretty big deal—not having bills travel so you could go and actually talk to the people who were involved in their own area. We fought for those. Committees used to travel. Not only does this committee not travel to York, but there's no committee. They want to have an expert panel, but they don't really want to actually listen to people or experts they don't appoint. That's the travesty of this bill.

This is a tough situation. No one is discounting that the York waste water situation—any large environmental issue—they're tough issues. No one is discounting that. But the reason that we are opposed to the bill is that you're taking away the rights of people to keep themselves whole, and you're taking away the rights of companies. You're saying, "We have all the answers, and if they're wrong, tough luck. You can't sue us anyway." That is a recipe for disaster.

The minister talked about how he wanted to improve transparency in the process. He just said that, and I take him at his word. I will rebut that by saying that taking the committee process out of a bill that actually limits people's legal rights is the absolute opposite of improving transparency. It's a hallmark of this government.

I remember a former Minister of Natural Resources on another bill, about broadband, where they talked about limiting people's rights. If you will recall, he ripped a page out of the bill and said, "Well, if you don't like it, just forget about that one"—a former minister. But here they've got a whole bill that is taking away people's rights and saying, "We don't need the environmental assessment process; it takes too long. We've got a better idea. And by the way, if it doesn't work out, and you're on the wrong side, it sucks to be you." That is what they're saying: "It sucks to be you"—and the people who invested all that money, "It sucks to be you."

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In the official opposition, we believe in this Legislature, we believe in the people of Ontario, and we believe in the process. The fact that the government decided not to have any committee hearings and is basically suspending the Environmental Assessment Act is saying that they don't believe in the process, and in the long term, the people of Ontario will no longer believe in them.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** I'm rising today to speak about Bill 5, the York Region Wastewater Act.

I think that it would only make sense that population growth and the protection of the environment be planned and managed together; it doesn't have to be one or the other. In fact, growth should be planned according to the environment capacity of a region, instead of playing catch-up with environmental impact. The municipalities should responsibly establish their development plan and

population targets, taking into consideration the capacity to handle the footprint and the management of the additional burden on our precious natural resources, especially water.

The rapid population growth in the greater Toronto area has made it necessary to find new sewage solutions. If the sewage of York region cannot be properly handled, then housing construction will need to take a step back and housing prices will increase, making them unaffordable for families in the region. An environmentally sustainable solution must be found to the issue of the York region sewage problem.

The main function of this bill is to suspend the environmental assessment of the Upper York Sewage Solutions plant and establish a panel of experts to explore various options—at least this is what the minister is saying that it's going to be doing, because none of these details are in the bill. But I am questioning the positive impact of suspending the environmental assessment. If the panel is going to explore all the options, wouldn't it be helpful to have the results of the environmental assessment? The parliamentary secretary expressed many times the importance of relying on science to make a decision. So why not let the assessment continue its course to benefit from its findings in evaluating the options—not accelerate it, not suspend it, but let it continue its course, taking into consideration the most recent information?

Water pollution is hazardous to ecosystems and to the well-being of those who drink the water, eat fish from it and live near it. The amount of phosphorus discharge and the impact on the water quality being the main concern—it would be important that the terms of reference from this for this expert panel should include the search for the best technology. I think there has been allusion to this over the course of the discussion this afternoon.

In addition, it would also be helpful to understand the definitions that the government has provided in Bill 5. The reference to phosphorus offsetting programs is unclear, as a project in the Holland Marsh has been added to the Upper York Sewage Solutions even though the two are only marginally related. The Holland Marsh project is environmentally sound and seeks to remove phosphorus from the watershed. Can the government clarify what it means in the definition? Is Bill 5 halting the Holland Marsh project or halting the general use of phosphorus in water and sewage treatment plants?

Moreover, we must take into account that Lake Simcoe is the traditional territory of the Chippewas of Georgina Island. This means that certain measures are required under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Free, prior and informed consent is required from the nation before construction of this sewage plant can occur. The Chippewas' island territory is within Lake Simcoe, and they rely on the lake for many of their needs. If the water of the lake were to become undrinkable and harmful to fish populations, the Chippewas' quality of life would be drastically impacted. A focus on reconciliation is essential in deciding whether to approve this sewage treatment plant or not.

The issue of potentially adding pollution to a watershed is not unique to the York region. Across Canada, water pollution has been harmful to ecosystems. Cadmium, a metal used in batteries, can find its way into our watersheds and can lead to problems in fish reproduction. Pesticides used in agriculture can accumulate in the flesh of aquatic animals and impact their immune systems. Human pharmaceuticals, which aren't properly filtered out of waste water, can have devastating impacts on fish hormones and behaviours. Industrial polluters are causing environmental damage across our province and our country. Chemical plants, pulp mills and oil refineries are also causing damage to Canada's iconic marine ecosystems. Bolder action from the Ontario government is needed to tackle the pollution of our ecosystems.

Creating a panel of experts to explore all available solutions is a good thing, but suspending the environmental assessment, I submit, is not. This course of action by the government has raised concerns about political interests, and I can't help but wonder about the validity of such propositions. It is highly desirable that the government use expertise, and it is equally important that solutions are proposed in a timely manner so as to avoid the negative effects of preventable delays.

Winning conditions for the finding of sustainable solutions include, in my view, the meaningful consultations of stakeholders, such as Indigenous nations, community organizations and environmental groups, as well as inviting the collaboration of all involved municipalities.

The problem is real. The solution is not easy, especially if we want to respect all the conditions. I only hope that the process will be transparent and will allow for a timely and sustainable way to protect our water resources.

It's too bad that the government didn't include details in the bill about the work this expert panel will do and any timeline that could have informed Ontarians about the clear objectives of the government because, without clear commitment, we have all the reasons to be suspicious about the government's intentions, given their record on the environment. How can we trust that they want to protect our water when they use MZOs to build over wetlands; when millions and millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted to cancel green projects and in useless legal battles?

I'll stop at that, Mr. Speaker. I think I've said what I had to say.

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

**Mr. Gurratan Singh:** I'm happy to join in today's discussion with respect to what's being put forth by the government.

When the minister spoke today, I couldn't help but reflect on some of his comments. He spoke at length about the Ford government's track record on the environment. The minister described in his comments how, in his words, in his perspective—it's quite a positive track record that the minister was describing about the Conservative government, their history on the environment. But when you look at the actual track record and you actually

examine how this government has fared with respect to the environment, you see across the board that the Conservative government has been criticized for their lack of action with respect to protecting the environment. So I found the minister's comments to be inaccurate.

When you look at it across the board—let's look at the issue around MZOs. This government has used MZOs in such a callous and drastic way. Environmental groups across the province have decried the use of these MZOs and stated, very fairly, that they put at risk our wetlands, our endangered species, our communities and farmland, across the board. That is not an action that indicates protection for the environment. That instead indicates the government taking whatever steps they want against the environment.

When the minister was talking about emissions—the Auditor General came out and described how poorly the Conservative government is doing with respect to emissions, how we're actually in danger of not meeting our targets under the current track record, the current direction that's being laid out by the Conservative government. That doesn't show a government that is prioritizing the environment.

**1640**

When we look at the multitude of bills that have come forward by this Conservative government—and I took a little bit of a tally of some of them. We're talking about laws that gutted the province's protections for endangered species. We're talking about bills that threaten the water, soil and earth here in Ontario.

The Conservative government has, by and large, failed in protecting the environment, and for the minister to come forward and say today that the track record is astounding goes against the truth. It goes against what we're seeing here when we look at the track record being put forward. It goes against the actual many times the Conservative government has scrapped supports for the environment—these actions that have been challenged in court and that the Conservative government has ultimately lost. This issue, MZOs, is being seen across the board in the news. We see it all the time, and how environmental groups are ringing the alarm bell, saying this use of the MZOs is something that will put our environment at risk and has put our environment at risk.

This is not the track record of a government that is trying to protect the environment. Instead, it's a track record of a government that time and again will prioritize the needs of big developers over protecting community and environment. That's what we're seeing time and again.

When it comes to this bill being put forward, my colleague described a lot of issues that we have here from the NDP, but I do want to bring attention to one of the issues that I find really alarming.

In this legislation, it's prohibiting the minister to make any decisions under the Environmental Assessment Act in respect to the Upper York Sewage Solutions undertaking. It's so interesting to me, and I think it's bizarre, frankly, that you would have within this legislation a portion of it

that prohibits the minister—your own minister—from acting with respect to this project. If that doesn't raise a red flag I don't know what will, because it's clear that this is something that is ultimately going to be used for the minister to distance himself if there's something that people are not going to respond to in a positive fashion. There are so many ways in which this can be used.

Ultimately, I've never seen something so bizarre—that, in this bill itself, it's preventing the Conservative government's own minister from making a decision with respect to this matter before us. That is something that, to me, is odd; it's bizarre, but beyond anything, it's problematic, it's troubling, because it goes down this pattern we see amongst the Conservative government where, time and again, they're putting forward policies that try to insulate them from either direct action or being held accountable. If we look at those two issues, both are present in this motion being brought forward by the Conservative government. It potentially insulates the minister, because all of a sudden his hands are tied with respect to this matter, and then it also prevents lawsuits being carried out against the government with respect to this matter.

That's a track record that we've seen previously from this government—be it the Crown Liability and Proceedings Act, which insulated the government from being held accountable in a court of law, or this matter right now. All of these are issues that we can see can result in the courts challenging or groups challenging these kinds of legislation through the courts and ultimately result in them either being overturned or a lack of freedoms and access to justice for people in Ontario.

If we look at the track record once again with this government and how often their pieces of legislation are being struck down by the courts, it's something like over a dozen pieces of legislation that have been challenged successfully, and the Conservative government has lost those challenges in court. We see here really clearly that bad legislation—when we see legislation being created in such a fashion in which you are preventing access to challenges in the courts or you're insulating them, these are all issues that raise constitutional red flags, because people have a right to hold the government accountable. And it shouldn't be a right that the government is concerned about. I always see the Conservative government putting forward these pieces of legislation, and I say to them that you're doing yourselves a disservice, because the ability for people to hold you accountable is better for democracy, is better for this institution that we uphold, is better for the people of Ontario. When you don't do that, when you actually work against this very important institution in our province and in democracies across the world—the fact that the government is ultimately also accountable to the courts, the government is not above anyone, the government can be challenged just like anyone else should and can be—that ultimately leads to situations that we've seen time and again under this Conservative regime in which they're putting forth bad legislation, bad legislation becomes challenged, and ultimately the court throws it out. That is a huge waste of

taxpayer dollars. It's clogging up a court system that's already really backlogged, and the intention of it is something in which, when I look at why would a government put those policies in place but for the ability to prevent them being held accountable in the court of law, as clearly articulated in the legislation—that's a problem. That's a bad thing. That's not how we build robust democracies.

Further, when we look at this legislation and the problems around it and why people are rightly so holding them accountable and people are criticizing—the opposition are doing it, as well—we see that when we look at the period we are in right now, coming out of many, many months of a lot of despair, a lot of dark times, and the economic fallout that people are still dealing with right now, the fact that, because of COVID-19, people are put in really precarious situations, people are in tough situations, one would expect that the government would be prioritizing matters that are going to help those who are in the toughest positions right now.

This is a matter that needs to be addressed, undoubtedly. But the fact that in our second week of sitting after a long summer break and the government being prorogued for a period, this is the matter that is being put forward—I would say that there are a lot of issues that should take precedence. There are a lot of issues that people are struggling with across the province that we need to act on immediately.

The issue of COVID-19 has not gone away, and we know that people no longer have the protection of paid sick days, despite the fact that we are still—there is a light at the end of the tunnel and vaccination rates are going up, but we know that this is demonstrated to us. What we've seen over the past few months is that clearly people need supports when they're in tough positions. When they're sick, there's a whole new perspective. Prior to COVID-19, if you were unwell, often you were told just to push through it and come to work. Now we know that's not the responsible thing to do; that if you're not well, you should stay home so that you can get better and you can prevent others from getting sick. Paid sick days are not a support that people have at all in this province anymore because of the expiration date that was put on—too little, too late, as we in the opposition described the Conservative government's attempt on paid sick days. People don't have that support at all any more. These are matters that need pressing attention right now.

Talk about affordability—people are struggling right now across the province, be it with lack of affordable housing, rents. In my riding of Brampton East and across Brampton, the issue of auto insurance is something that is especially pressing on people's minds, because in some households in Brampton, people are paying more for auto insurance than for the mortgage on their own home. These are matters that people need immediate action on.

But instead of action, we're seeing the Conservative government continually not prioritizing the people who need the help the most. We're seeing the Conservative government instead putting forth policy that either—we

see before us something that, in many ways, is bizarre, it's confusing, the way that this legislation is worded and formed, in the sense that it prevents the Conservative government's own minister from weighing in on it. Or we're seeing legislation that's not prioritizing people.

The opposition has been clear: There are a few red flags in this piece of legislation, but beyond that, we need immediate action now to address the issues that are impacting people across our province in the toughest of times.

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

**Mr. Stephen Blais:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment spoke very well about how important taking strong actions to protect the environment is, but I'd like to remind the minister that he is the Minister of the Environment for a government that took actions like spending hundreds of millions of dollars to cancel green energy production. He's the Minister of the Environment for a government that cancelled programs to make electric cars more affordable for families. He is the Minister of the Environment for a government that is pursuing the destruction of thousands of acres of forest, wetland and farmland. In fact, they are a government and a party that believes that their road to re-election is through paving over thousands of acres of farmland, forest and wetland. Those are the actions of this Minister of the Environment's government.

Mr. Speaker, this is the Minister of the Environment for a government that cancelled the cap-and-trade system to bring carbon emissions under control. This is a free-market system that would allow enterprise to develop programs to support businesses. They are the government against the free market, against the control of carbon emissions. Those are the actions of this government.

It's interesting, because there are two members of this government from Ottawa in the chamber with us today, Mr. Speaker. This is the government and the party that voted against cleaning the Ottawa River. Their entire bill today is about the protection of fresh water and clean water in the GTA. Their entire bill is about protecting clean water in Toronto. They voted against clean water in Ottawa. They voted against the Ottawa River Action Plan, and they are now living with the consequences of that. A party that has a reputation of being against the environment, in a seven-month period, Mr. Speaker, 1.6 billion litres of sewage flowed into the Ottawa River—1.6 billion litres of sewage in the Ottawa River in seven months, and this is a government that voted against it. They voted against cleaning the Ottawa River.

Let's be clear about what this bill does. This bill takes power away from the Ministry of the Environment to make decisions. If their decisions are about making the Ottawa River more polluted, about cancelling energy production, about making electric vehicles more expensive, I want that power to be taken away from this Minister of the Environment. He doesn't deserve that power.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The time for debate on this matter is over. Pursuant to the order of the House passed earlier today, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Piccini has moved third reading of Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I believe I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

There's going to be a vote. The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes. Prepare the lobbies, please.

*The division bells rang from 1655 to 1725.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The vote was held on the motion for third reading of Bill 5, An Act respecting York Region Wastewater.

**The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Trevor Day):** The ayes are 40; the nays are 7.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I declare the motion carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Orders of the day? Mr. Parsa, the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

**Mr. Michael Parsa:** Speaker, if you seek it, you will find we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member is suggesting we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### GENDER AFFIRMING HEALTH CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT, 2021

### LOI DE 2021 SUR LE COMITÉ CONSULTATIF DES SOINS DE SANTÉ AXÉS SUR L’AFFIRMATION DE GENRE

Ms. Morrison moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to establish the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee / Projet de loi 17, Loi créant le Comité consultatif des soins de santé axés sur l'affirmation de genre.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member will have 12 minutes for her presentation.

**Ms. Suze Morrison:** It's an honour to rise today and speak to my private member's bill, the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act. This bill is an important first step towards improving access to gender-affirming health care for trans, two-spirit, non-binary, gender-diverse and intersex people in Ontario.



Speaker, what do we mean when we're talking about gender-affirming care? Well, someone might think that we're just here to talk about surgeries and procedures that many commonly refer to as top and bottom surgeries, but gender-affirming care is so much more than that. It's about access to medications, access to secondary procedures, wait times and so much more. It's about ensuring that our health system is providing care that recognizes and acknowledges a person's gender identity and expression in all of their health care encounters. It's about ensuring someone has a positive experience when meeting with their health care team and during every step of their transition. Transitioning should be a joyful experience, not one of perpetual and unnecessary harm caused by the failings of our health system.

Here in Ontario, trans, two-spirit, non-binary, gender-diverse and intersex people continue to face significant challenges to accessing health care that is friendly, that's competent and that's affirming. Issues like stigma and discrimination, lengthy wait times, outright denial of care, exclusions in coverage, onerous referral requirements, cisnormative policies, a shortage of clinicians who are able to provide gender-affirming primary care and an underfunding of surgical programs by this government all make it difficult for people to access the care that they need.

These are issues that I've been hearing about from constituents not only in my riding of Toronto Centre but from people all across the province. Many have reached out to me, frustrated and exhausted that their transition is being delayed by bureaucratic prerequisites, paperwork and wait-lists for life-saving surgeries that are sometimes as long as five years. Some experience constant misgendering and deadnaming by their health care practitioners. Many who are Indigenous and two-spirit, particularly youth, have negative and harmful experiences because of systemic racism that is still in our health care system.

People are falling into debt to pay for secondary transition procedures that are vital to their health. They're life-saving procedures when they prevent gender dysphoria, but OHIP won't cover them.

No one in this province deserves to receive less care because of who they are. But for decades, Liberal and Conservative governments have been slow to respond to calls from advocates to expand OHIP coverage and reduce barriers to access to transition-related surgeries and procedures in Ontario. The previous PC government delisted transition-related surgeries from OHIP coverage back in 1998. Additionally, people have had to go through excessive programs at CAMH and other onerous requirements that can take years to complete in order to gain access to transition surgeries.

**1730**

I heard from one community member who shared the irony of the hoops that people are forced to jump through just to get access to surgeries. When we met over coffee, this constituent said, "I have to prove I'm mentally well for surgery, but I'm mentally unwell because I can't get surgery." This Catch-22 in terms of accessing transition-related health care has cost lives.

Activists like the Trans Lobby Group pressed the former Liberal government to reverse setbacks made in the Harris era, but it wasn't until 2008 that certain transition-related procedures were even made eligible for OHIP coverage. And it wasn't until 2016, 13 years after sitting in government, that they finally got around to training health care providers to give referrals for gender-confirmation surgery.

OHIP today currently only covers two types of gender-confirming surgery: genital and chest, meaning the requirements for these surgeries can be onerous. Trans people are put in a position where they have to prove their gender to health care providers over and over again to get the referrals that they need to qualify for surgery, all while being misgendered and often deadnamed in the process. But we know there are many additional procedures that are critical to affirming how people think and feel about their own gender, including, but not limited to, facial feminization surgery, chest contouring, electrolysis. All of these procedures and treatments are not covered by OHIP, forcing people to pay out of pocket for what is essential health care.

Consider the significant costs that come from paying for surgery or treatment at a private clinic, travelling away from your home or your community, out of province, out of country, and the time that you have to take off from work to heal from your procedures. Consider how much more difficult that is made for someone who already faces discrimination when it comes to essentials like housing and employment, like we know many trans, non-binary, intersex and two-spirit folks do.

On top of that, it's not uncommon to have to wait months to see a primary care physician with enough specialized training to provide a referral for access to transition-related surgeries. Once they do get that referral to the wait-list for the transition-related surgery, the TRS program at Women's College Hospital—which I would note is the only publicly funded hospital in Canada to even have this kind of program—they have to wait at least a year to be scheduled for their surgery.

Just this morning, I spoke to clinicians in the program at Women's College Hospital, and they're begging for support to expand that program. They have surgeons willing and able to clear the wait-list that can be as long as five years, and the only thing they're lacking is the financial resources to do that. In fact, Women's College Hospital runs that program at a deficit as it stands right now, all while they've asked this government for appropriate funding for the resources they need to operate that program, and they haven't heard back from this minister or this government.

Speaker, gender-affirming care is life-saving, and no one in this province should languish anywhere from two to five years on a wait-list for surgery for any kind of life-saving procedure. In no other situation would this be acceptable. These wait-lists have only gotten worse as a result of COVID-19.

A 20-year-old non-binary student shared with me: "Current wait-lists for gender clinics in Ontario range

from one to two years for just an initial appointment to access gender-affirming care. After 18 months of COVID-19, the community feels this wait in sadness, grief and losses. Many whose health care has been wait-listed due to the pandemic and structural transphobia feel forgotten by a system that pledges universal care.”

Speaking with members of the trans community, I heard about many folks who have had to travel out of province or even to the United States to access transition surgeries and procedures because the obstacles to accessing care and the wait-list in Ontario would mean they would have to wait years for the care that they urgently needed. For some, this can make the option of coming out or moving forward with their transition simply impossible, and we know that this ultimately puts lives at risk. Every year, the trans community loses people to suicide deaths that could have been prevented with timely access to gender-affirming health care.

A 2020 Trans Pulse Canada survey found that one in three trans, two-spirit or non-binary people had considered suicide in the past year. Access to gender-affirming care can have a positive effect on someone’s mental health while also decreasing suicide attempts.

Gender-affirming care is life-saving care. Taking action to improve access to gender-affirming care would save lives today and ensure that generations of trans, two-spirit, non-binary, gender-diverse and intersex folks receive the health care they need to live their best lives.

Other jurisdictions are taking steps towards aligning with international best practices for gender-affirming care, and it’s time for Ontario to do the same. Last year, the Yukon territorial government expanded health care insurance coverage to include a comprehensive list of surgeries and other procedures identified by the transgender and gender-diverse community, and this policy is considered the most comprehensive of its kind in all of Canada. I’m urging this government to take action to ensure that everyone has access to the health care they need and the health care they deserve in the province of Ontario.

This bill, if passed, would require the government to establish a committee made up of members of the community with diverse lived experiences, including people with disabilities, neurodivergencies, poverty, homelessness, sex work and more, as well as health care providers who are competent in providing gender-affirming care. The committee would then make recommendations to the Minister of Health on how to remove barriers to accessing gender-affirming care by expanding OHIP coverage, reducing wait times, removing onerous referral requirements and ensuring equitable access to gender-affirming health care and more. Passing the bill before us today is crucial to building a more inclusive and affirming health care system here in Ontario.

Speaker, as I wrap up my comments, I want to share one more story, and that’s of one community member I met with who, when we sat down for coffee, told me in their conversations about the importance of trans joy. Yes, we must fight to end the pain and harm that our health care system is currently causing, but we can’t exclusively view

the experience of trans folks as a negative one, that the experience of euphoria that happens when people are finally able to live their lives as their truest selves is something we should all celebrate and centre in this work.

After that conversation, I was reminded of a quote I have heard so many times. I see it shared on Facebook groups all the time. It’s from a book called *Something That May Shock and Discredit You* by Daniel M. Lavery that reads, “As my friend Julian puts it, only half winkingly: ‘God blessed me by making me transsexual for the same reason God made wheat but not bread and fruit but not wine, so that humanity might share in the act of creation.’”

I am urging all members of the Legislature to support the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act. Together, we can ensure that Ontario is a province where everyone has access to the health care they need, to the life-saving procedures they need and to health care that is safe, is affirming and respects people’s gender identities.

Again, thank you all so much for being here today, and I strongly encourage all of the members of the House to support this bill.

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

**Mrs. Robin Martin:** I’d like to thank the member opposite for introducing Bill 17, the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act, 2021. This act would require the Minister of Health to establish an advisory committee on gender-affirming health care.

Our government is committed to ensuring everyone in Ontario receives the high-quality health care they need. We, as a government, are proud that Ontario is a province of inclusion, of fairness, of equity and respect. No person or community in Ontario should experience discrimination of any kind because of their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation.

In Ontario, conversion therapy on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children has been banned. This action has prevented medical practitioners from billing OHIP for it, an action that ensures the rights of LGBTQ2S children are respected.

Mr. Speaker, this progress has been significant and should never be taken for granted. This government and all of Ontario stands with transgender, two-spirit, non-binary, intersex, gender-diverse folks and the entire LGBTQ2S community, and we always will. Indeed, everyone in Ontario should feel welcome and included in our society, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

**1740**

Our government passed the Connecting Care Act, 2019, which affirmed our commitment that everyone in Ontario should receive the highest-quality care. That act states, “We believe that the public health care system should be guided by a commitment to equity and to the promotion of equitable health outcomes.” This act allowed our government to establish Ontario Health, the agency that oversees health care delivery in Ontario and provides support for health care organizations and providers to ensure better-

quality care for all patients. Ontario Health will streamline health care delivery here in Ontario, as it is one voice with one set of priorities, so more resources can be directed toward patients and not toward government agencies.

Ontario Health is working with partners across Ontario to help connect and coordinate the current health care system in new and innovative ways, to ensure that all Ontarians receive the best possible care. The Connecting Care Act requires that Ontario Health, Ontario health teams and health service providers establish mechanisms for engaging with patients, families and caregivers, among others, as part of their operational planning process.

In 2020, our government created the patient and family advisory council, a permanent body that provides advice to the Minister of Health on key health care priorities that have an impact on the patient experience and patient care. This input helps improve the quality, safety and health care experience of patients and their caregivers, and also helps to ensure that programs and policies really reflect patient need. The council is made up of 14 members and one chair, and through its diverse membership is reflective of a broad cross-section of Ontarians. The council seeks to give voice to the values, experiences and ideas of patients and their families from across the province.

The minister's council is a first of its kind in Canada. The council was formed to advise government on key health care priorities, drive meaningful change for provincial programs and policies, and help to inform health care plans in Ontario. The council has received broad support from Ontarians, receiving over 1,200 applications to join the council and 100 applications to become the chair of the council.

On June 23, 2020, the Minister of Health announced the appointment of the patient and family advisory council's new chair, Betty-Lou Kristy. Betty-Lou is an advocate for people with trauma and mental health and addictions challenges and is committed to helping build a more diverse and inclusive health care system.

As our government looks to the road ahead, the Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council will continue to make patient, family and caregiver engagement a central pillar of our health care system, and they will do this by providing patient perspectives and advice on strategic health priorities that have an impact on the care—and the health, frankly—of all Ontarians.

As part of the ongoing transformation towards a connected health care system, one that is centred on the needs of patients, our government has created a new integrated model that I've told you about now, Ontario health teams, where partnerships between patients, family and caregivers are foundational. As part of our government's health transformation, these Ontario health teams will transform equity across population groups, including those within the transgender, two-spirit, non-binary and entire LGBTQ2S community, where access to inclusive and gender-affirming social health and services can make a difference.

The Ministry of Health asked each Ontario health team to create a patient, family and caregiver partnership and

engagement strategy as an early priority; to review and adopt the Patient, Family and Caregiver Declaration of Values for Ontario. Steps taken to ensure that Ontario health teams have a strong commitment to diversity, inclusion and health equity are on the horizon now. By engaging with patients, families and caregivers through the lens of health equity, health care professionals, planners and organizations will be able to engage with and respond to the unique needs and voices of a diverse range of populations that they serve. This includes, of course, LGBTQ2S and transgender, intersex, and non-binary Ontarians who may experience different access to health care and health care outcomes.

Though still early in their formation, the implementation of Ontario health teams is already demonstrating a positive impact on patient, family, and caregiver partnerships—doing this by including patient partners in decision-making and planning for the implementation of services that respond to specific needs of specific communities. Improving equitable access to care and improving health outcomes and experiences across populations is certainly an essential part of our vision for Ontario health teams.

Currently, the Minister of Health reviews guidelines for gender-affirming care and consults with stakeholders to inform and enhance access to OHIP-insured gender-affirming services, including the consideration of new services. Access to gender-affirming health services has improved greatly over the last number of years. Sex reassignment surgery was listed as an insured service in 2008. Sex reassignment surgery was expanded in 2016 when the requirement for patients to attend the gender identity clinic program at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and receive a recommendation for surgery was removed—a requirement that will never be returning to Ontario.

OHIP coverage expanded in 2019 to add three more types of sex reassignment procedures. OHIP now provides coverage for chest surgery, reproductive surgery, and external genital surgery for the purposes of sex reassignment. Currently, an average of 1,700 patients are approved for OHIP-insured sex reassignment surgery procedures annually.

Hormone replacement therapy for transgender and non-binary people in Ontario is no longer considered a specialty area, so all primary care providers can provide this treatment to their patients. Additionally, assessment and referral for OHIP-funded sex reassignment surgeries can be done by any qualified health care professional in Ontario.

OHIP funding criteria for transition-related surgery is aligned with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, their internationally accepted standards of care for the health of transgender and gender-diverse people.

Once again, I just want to thank the member opposite, the member from Toronto Centre, for introducing this bill. Our government is committed to ensuring everyone in Ontario receives the high quality health care that they

require, and this is not influenced by their gender identity, sexual orientation or any other factor, as Ontario, through the Connecting Care Act, is committed to equity and equitable health outcomes.

The patient and family advisory council, a first-of-its-kind organization in Canada, as well as Ontario health teams are working hard to engage patients and families to reach these goals. The transgender, two-spirit, non-binary, intersex, gender-diverse, and all those in the LGBTQ2S community are a valued and important part of Ontario. The Ministry of Health and government of Ontario, as I said, will always stand with members of these communities and work together to ensure health equity and fairness for all people in Ontario. The Minister of Health and our ministry will carefully consider this bill and the possible creation of a gender-affirming health care advisory committee.

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

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I would like to first start off by thanking the member from Toronto Centre for putting forth this bill to create a gender-affirming health care advisory committee. I just got choked up as soon as I stood up because this bill is very personal to friends and family, I know, of the member for Toronto Centre, of myself and many of us who are part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and who have trans friends who are dear to us.

I want to read the words of a constituent of mine, who said, “Jill, please support MPP Morrison’s bill. As a trans Ontarian, the difficulty of finding knowledgeable affirming primary care has me trapped”—“has” me trapped—“in my current location. As much as I would like to move back to my hometown to purchase a home, help provide for my elderly parents and build community, I can’t go where I can’t access medical care. My ability to contribute to the province I grew up in and I love is significantly reduced because I’m stuck with only a very few possible places to live and work, places where the few trans-knowledgeable and -affirming doctors available are overloaded with patients already.

1750

“No one should receive less care because of who they are. Imagine if you”—to the Conservative government—“needed emergency life-saving care but were unable to access it because you couldn’t find a doctor, because you had to wait almost three years, like I did, for even a consultation, because the medical staff had no idea about your situation or were so hostile you felt subhuman.”

We need more inclusive, affirming care for transgender, intersex and gender-diverse Ontarians. That’s why I support Toronto Centre MPP Suze Morrison’s private member’s bill, the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee Act. This bill will create an advisory council to make recommendations on improving access to gender-affirming care in Ontario.

I can’t say how important this bill is. When you walk in the world as someone who you are not, it affects every sector, every piece, every morsel of who you are in your life, whether it’s at school, whether it’s the workplace,

whether it’s your ability to experience trans joy. I really hope that the Conservative government will listen to the member from Toronto Centre, will listen to all of us who are in support of this legislation, and pass this bill—pass this bill because gender-affirming health care is a life-saving aspect of our health care system.

Before I wrap, I just want to give a shout-out to some of the organizations that are doing the heavy lifting of supporting and embracing the lives of trans folks and 2SLGBTQIA+ folks. I want to give a shout-out to Maggie’s and Sprott House and the 519, Planned Parenthood, Rainbow Health Ontario, Trans Pulse Project, Friends of Ruby, the Toronto Trans Coalition Project, the Wellesley Institute, Senior Pride Network—can’t say enough about seniors. So many of our seniors, trans seniors, are pushed back into the closet. They’re pushed back into the closet in long-term care, when they should be living their best lives in their final years, because of homophobia and transphobia.

We have to create this gender-affirming health care advisory committee, and something that MPP Morrison has so deliberately included in her bill is that this must be made up of members of the two-spirit, transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse and intersex communities, with diverse backgrounds and lived experience, and health care providers.

We have heard the Conservative government say a whole lot about what they are doing, but I hope that what they’re doing actually has trans people leading the way and not simply as an add-on. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Rima Berns-McGown:** I want to begin by thanking my colleague the member for Toronto Centre for this really important bill. I hope the members opposite will really consider passing this bill, because it is so important to get advice from health care providers and community members with lived experience. This gender-affirming care is absolutely going to be life-giving and life-sustaining, and I want to talk a little bit from some personal experience.

It’s often said that as a mother, you are only able to be as happy as your least happy child. I have four incredible children, and they are all joyful, and they are all beautiful and wonderful, but my youngest child was not always joyful. She wasn’t joyful because when she needed to transition, the kinds of things that are envisaged in my colleague’s bill were not in place in Ontario. And when the government sends out messages that are transphobic, then other institutions are also transphobic, and that goes right down the line. So when she was starting to transition, she had to deal with a lot of deadnaming and she had to deal with a lot of misgendering, even as she was forced to go through steps like changing her birth certificate and so on and so forth, and proving that she was experiencing gender dysphoria and that she needed to transition.

Fortunately for her, she ended up at a very well-endowed grad school in the United States—she’s brilliant—on a scholarship, and they paid for everything.

Their benefits program paid for the therapy she needed, for the medication she needed, for the surgeries she needed and even for the facial feminization surgery that she needed, allowing her to be both safe in the world as well as ultimately joyful and successful in the other parts of her life, in the things that she actually wants to do.

I cannot tell you, as a mother, what that meant to me. To watch her go through that existential agony that she went through when she had to encounter barrier after barrier after barrier, because of the health care that was in place in Ontario, was horrifying. It was absolutely horrifying and terrifying because when you have a trans child walking in the world who is not yet transitioned, you're terrified that they are going to be hurt. And we know trans people are regularly hurt and murdered at disproportionate rates because of stigma and hate that still exist, so anything that alleviates that is so crucial and critical.

When she had her facial feminization surgery and had healed, she said to me, "Mama, now I can go to the gym without having to put makeup on. I'm safe." And everybody's child should experience that—and not after a five-year wait. Everyone's child should experience that, so I beg government members to pass this beautiful piece of legislation and save lives.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** I would like to thank the member for Toronto Centre for tabling this important and thoughtful piece of legislation. As we progress towards a more inclusive society, we should remember that policy matters just as much as our intentions in daily life. The member shared stories, and I've heard many of the same nature, I guess, because of the time I spent with students and children, as a mother of four and as a school trustee for 10 years. I need to say that I'm wholeheartedly supportive of this bill.

Our expressions of support to the LGBTQ+ community are essentially meaningless if we are not also working to ensure that their health care needs are met. There is an important link between access to gender-affirmative health care and the well-being of transgender and non-binary people. When transgender and non-binary people are denied access to gender-affirmative health care, they're being denied their right to self-actualize and express their identity. This can lead to serious mental health problems and distress, which is one reason why transgender people have vastly higher rate of mental illness and suicide attempts than the rest of the population.

Gender-affirmative health care includes top surgery, bottom surgery, puberty blockers, hormone treatment, facial surgery and various other medical treatments. Unfortunately, many doctors in Ontario are not properly trained in gender-affirmative practices, which forces trans and non-binary people to become experts on their own health care. Many doctors are not even aware that they can prescribe hormones. Only 52% of trans Canadians say that they have a primary care provider with whom they are comfortable discussing trans health care issues.

Quebec has had a better track record of providing gender-affirmative care than Ontario. This is largely because Quebec covers the cost of drugs, including hormone treatment.

**1800**

An important way to improve access to gender-affirming health care is to remove financial barriers. One jurisdiction whose trans health care coverage surpasses that of both Quebec and Ontario is the Yukon. The Yukon has comprehensive coverage for trans health care, and their plan is considered one of the best trans health care models in the world. I hope that the task force proposed by this legislation would consider the Yukon model and how we could imitate it in Ontario.

As for a current provision of care in Ontario, gender-affirmative health care is much more accessible in urban areas than in rural areas. It is important that this task force consider how the lack of availability of inclusive health care in rural areas can be addressed.

While the primary reason for improving access and coverage of gender-affirming health care is that it allows people to express their identity and improve their mental health, it can also improve the safety of trans people. Many transgender people say that they urgently need access to comprehensive health care, including surgeries and hormones, because it would allow them to "pass" more effectively as cisgender. Transgender and non-binary people are one of the most marginalized groups in our province and often face violence because of their gender identity. It is abhorrent that there are people who perpetuate this kind of hateful violence, and allowing transgender people to complete their transitions could aid some people in avoiding violence. Of course, we should be striving to ensure that nobody faces discrimination because of their gender identity or the way they look, but improving gender-affirmative health care would be a good short-term measure to keep transgender people safe.

Establishing a task force to suggest improvements to gender-affirmative care would be an excellent step toward improving the level of care available in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, trans rights are human rights, and I am happy to support this bill.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas:** Speaker, I cannot tell you how proud I am of the member from Toronto Centre for bringing this bill forward—a bill that is quite simple: Put together a gender-affirming health care advisory committee. Why? Because our health care system needs it; because we know that two-spirited, trans and non-binary folks have a really hard time accessing quality health care.

When I listen to the people from the other side who talk about Ontario health teams—I have nothing against Ontario health teams. But right now, they have a hard time just making sure that their diversity, inclusion and equity includes francophone people. They have a hard time making sure that their equity and inclusion includes First Nations. In my neck of the woods, 35% of us speak

French, 12% are First Nation, Métis and Inuit, and they have a hard time meeting that.

To think that after having to look after hundreds of thousands of people—because an Ontario health team is not a little team; they have to have hundreds of thousands of people on those teams—the needs of two-spirited, trans and non-binary people will be a priority—they won't be. There could be a physician in there who is very good at providing care, there could be a few people who need the care in those health teams, but to think that it will be a priority—it won't be.

We need to have this committee that will focus on it so that at every level, whether it be in the faculty of medicine—I am really proud of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. They have a trans lady, Rita OLink, a good friend of mine, who speaks at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine so that there's a little bit of a link for them as they take their study.

But that's not enough, Speaker. It doesn't matter that we have good people with good intentions. Unless we have a committee that looks at how we define best practices for trans, two-spirited and non-binary folks, how do we make sure that those best practices are taught in school, that they're present in primary care, secondary care, in surgery? How do we make sure that all of this happens? Well, in health care, it always happens the same way: You put a committee in place. You make sure that the right people sit at that committee; you develop the best practices; you test them. Once the best practices are identified, you spread them. But none of this will happen unless you put this committee in place.

We all know that this committee will save lives. Why not do it? We have an opportunity to vote yes. What we have in place is not enough; it won't cut it. I hope everybody supports the Toronto Centre member's bill.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The debate has concluded. However, the member for Toronto Centre has two minutes to respond to what she heard this afternoon.

**Ms. Suze Morrison:** I'd like to thank all of my colleagues for their remarks.

The Trans Inclusion Project shared a quote with me that I believe speaks to how important this issue is. They said, "Being alive and transgender in Ontario should not be synonymous with being a survivor of our health care system," which is currently the case as it stands. I'm reminded of the story of a respected trans activist, Julie, who was tragically murdered in December 2019. One of Julie's friends shared with me as we were working on this bill that Julie had been forced to actually leave a treatment centre just a few months prior to her death after complaining about transphobic treatment she received there. And this is the reality. So many trans folks in our communities are dying either by suicide or through violence because they can't access this critical, critical care.

Everyone in this province, no matter who they are, deserves equal access to medically necessary and life-saving health care.

I'd like to take a minute and just thank all of the stakeholders and community members who contributed to the development of this bill—and if I've missed anyone, I'm so sorry. There were so many of you and so many stories that were entrusted to my team and I as we worked on this bill. I'd specifically like to thank Stefanie Pest; Susan Gapka, from the Trans Lobby Group; Keith McCrady, who is the executive director of 2-Spirited People of the 1st Nations; Lyra Evans, the first openly trans school board trustee in Canada; Fae Johnstone; Charlotte Keskinen-Keith and Oliver Thorne from the Trans Inclusion Project; Heath V. Salazar, aka @theirholiness, Gay Jesus, who is a local performing artist and writer from my riding of Toronto Centre; and so many more who took the time to meet with me to share your time, to share your stories, to share your wisdom and your expertise. All of that fed into this bill, and this bill wouldn't be what it is without any of you. I'm so, so grateful for all of that.

I can't wait for the day that we have a trans member in this Legislature, finally, to lead this work and to centre the voices of trans and non-binary folks in this Legislature, because that's certainly long overdue.

Thank you again to my colleagues. I strongly hope you'll join me in supporting this bill. Meegwetch.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired. Ms. Morrison has moved second reading of Bill 17, An Act to establish the Gender Affirming Health Care Advisory Committee. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

*Second reading agreed to.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** I'm going to turn to the member from Toronto Centre and ask her if she has a committee she'd like this bill referred to.

**Ms. Suze Morrison:** Yes, please. The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member has referred the bill to the committee on social policy. Are we agreed? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

## ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

### COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Now, pursuant to standing order 36, the question that the House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

However, the member for Ottawa South has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given earlier by the Minister of Long-Term Care. The member for Ottawa South will have up to five minutes to state his case, and a parliamentary assistant or the minister will have up to five minutes to respond.

We turn now to the member from Ottawa South.

1810

**Mr. John Fraser:** I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, the parliamentary assistant, for being here for the late show. I am dissatisfied with the answer that I got. The question was actually to the Premier, and the Minister of Long-Term Care took it.

It's perfectly reasonable for a family to expect that the person caring for their loved one in hospital, or at home in home care, or at a clinic somewhere, has been vaccinated. It's also equally perfectly reasonable for families to expect that the person who's teaching their child or helping their child at school or in a child care centre has been vaccinated, too. That's the essence of the question. It's really hard to understand how the government can make vaccinations mandatory in long-term care, after months of pushing, and is not doing it in other health care settings and is not doing it in schools. It's a real head-scratcher.

The Premier said last week, "I can't do it because we're going to lose too many staff," but the evidence doesn't bear that out. The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario has a mandatory vaccination policy; they reached 98%—98% at the Queensway Carleton Hospital; 97% at the University Health Network. So the evidence just doesn't bear it out.

In actual fact, the Minister of Long-Term Care said we're having a mandatory vaccination policy because we're worried that if people aren't vaccinated, they're going to go in and make other staff members sick, and that puts a risk to our human health care resources. There's a risk to having unvaccinated staff with other staff. They may get sick. They would have to be off work. It's just a mess.

Ontario's doctors, Ontario's nurses, Ontario's hospitals, Ontario's families, Ontario's school boards have been calling for a mandatory vaccination policy. And what did the government do? Here's what the government did—I'll give them credit for long-term care. It's too late. They did the right thing. But they haven't done anything anywhere else. What they said is—and this was so clever. It won't prevent the transmission of disease, but it was clever. "We're going to tell organizations that it's mandatory that they have a policy, force them all to do it individually, and that way, we can use the word 'mandatory' so it sounds like we're doing the thing that we're not doing." And that's exactly why they did it, and that was wrong. You made every school board, every hospital big and small, every organization go through something that you knew we had to do—wasted time, wasted resources.

Not-for-profit long-term-care homes had to band together—because the government didn't have the courage to do it—to collect money so they could get a legal fund. Way to back them up, folks.

This government has delayed and dithered on so many things—the vaccine passport, mandatory vaccinations. We're in a pandemic, and making clear decisions quickly is critical. I don't understand why, when four out of five people are vaccinated—and as I said, families have a reasonable expectation that the person who's caring for their loved one or the person who's teaching their child or

caring for their child has been vaccinated. It's not unreasonable. I think everybody in this Legislature, save maybe one or two, would have exactly the same expectation, because you love your families, because you care for them, because you don't want them to get sick. You don't want your mom and dad to get sick because they're in a hospital and they get COVID-19 from an unvaccinated staff member, and you don't want your child to get sick because the child care worker didn't get vaccinated. Or you don't want your mom or dad to not get the care they need in hospital because 15 people are off because there's an outbreak, just like the Minister of Long-Term Care said.

I know I sound angry about this right now, and I am. I'm frustrated that it takes so long, I'm frustrated that the government says, "Have a mandatory policy," just so they can use the word "mandatory" and then put every organization through what they did.

Actually, what the Premier said last week—he left them hanging. It's just incredible to me.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville North–Burlington, will respond.

**Ms. Effie J. Triantafilopoulos:** Speaker, I'm pleased to respond to the remarks of my colleague the member from Ottawa South. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Long-Term Care, I've had the opportunity to provide him answers before, so I will do my best to do so again and to gently correct some of his assertions.

I would first point out that Ontario has some of the lowest per capita COVID-19 infection rates across North America.

In long-term care, as of this morning, we had eight outbreaks out of 626 homes, 22 confirmed resident cases, and 23 confirmed staff cases. Yet we are still seeing a growing number of outbreaks, in part because of unvaccinated staff coming into long-term-care homes.

Our policies need to match what is happening in long-term-care homes on the ground, and that's why the government decided to change the vaccine requirements for staff. In the face of the Delta variant, the government announced on October 1 that all long-term-care staff, except those with valid medical exemptions, will have to be vaccinated by November 15. This was not an easy decision, and we know it will create difficulties for some, but our priority must be to keep long-term-care residents safe. It's a decision that was carefully considered by the government, weighing what is best for vulnerable seniors. As the facts change, we must be prepared to revise the policy to address this evolving situation.

Almost all health workers in long-term care are vaccinated, and I know that they care about residents and want to keep them safe. They are a key reason case numbers are so low. I want to thank them for the work that they do and for the compassionate care they provide.

Our health care workers and public health units also deserve our thanks, as do all the people of Ontario who've gone to get their vaccinations.

Getting vaccinated is indeed the best way to protect yourself, your family and everyone in our community.

All through the pandemic, our government has acted to give long-term-care homes the help they need. We've done this through \$2 billion in COVID-19 emergency funding for long-term care, help with infection prevention and control, access to PPE, helping with staff, and intervening more directly when necessary. All of these measures were taken to help homes through the crisis, so that they could keep residents safe. That is what families expected and what we did.

As an aside, I would like to end my comments by congratulating the honourable member for his party's

convention this past weekend. I note that his party leader made a speech at the convention in which he failed to mention long-term care even once, but he did commit to resigning if he hadn't achieved ranked balloting by the end of this term. Perhaps my honourable friend could suggest repairing his party's sorry record of only building 611 net new long-term beds from 2011 to 2018. Maybe that's something his leader should offer to resign over.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** There being no further matter to debate, I deem the earlier motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1819.*









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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
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Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
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<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (Transit-Oriented Communities) / Ministre associé des Transports (Aménagement axé sur les transports en commun)
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Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
<b>Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)</b>	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
<b>Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)</b>	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<b>Hatfield, Percy (NDP)</b>	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hillier, Randy (IND)	Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
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Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Khanjin, Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement
Kramp, Daryl (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Kusendova, Natalia (PC)	Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)</b>	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
<b>McKenna, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)</b>	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
Miller, Norman (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (IND)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)</b>	Ajax	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
<b>Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)</b>	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
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Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
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<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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
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	
<b>Walker, Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
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Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

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Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly  
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson  
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Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison  
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh  
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
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Logan Kanapathi, Michael Mantha  
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas  
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed  
Donna Skelly, Vijay Thanigasalam  
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Logan Kanapathi, Vincent Ke  
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Dave Smith, Daisy Wai  
Jamie West  
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Jeff Burch, Amy Fee  
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden  
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth  
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Natalia Kusendova  
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John Fraser, Christine Hogarth  
Daryl Kramp, Robin Martin  
Sam Oosterhoff, Lindsey Park  
Tom Rakocevic, Sara Singh  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell