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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

STOPPING ILLEGAL HANDGUN
SMUGGLING ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 VISANT À STOPPER
LA CONTREBANDE D'ARMES
DE POING ILLÉGALES

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 52, An Act to enact the Stopping Illegal Handgun
Smuggling Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 52, Loi édictant la Loi
de 2021 visant à stopper la contrebande d'armes de poing
illégaux.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member will have up to 12 minutes to make his presentation. I return to the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'll be sharing my time with the member for Toronto Centre in these 12 minutes.

On the night of July 22, 2018, a gunman killed two people and wounded 13 using a Smith and Wesson 40-calibre handgun in Greektown on Danforth Avenue in my riding. The Danforth shooting joined a long list of other shootings that have taken place in this province. Thousands of families across Ontario have mourned loved ones tragically and needlessly lost to gun violence. There are many innocent victims whose lives will never be the same, people who have suffered lifelong injuries or deep emotional trauma because of illegal guns on our streets.

This bill is a concrete way to start stemming the flow of illegal American-made handguns that are used for gun and gang violence. This bill proposes that Ontario follow an approach taken by the Mexican government, which is currently engaged in litigation against American gun manufacturers that it alleges are involved in practices that result in guns being smuggled into Mexico. Mexico is suing to secure billions of dollars in damages and to change the practices of these arms manufacturers that it alleges are making it easy for smugglers to get their hands on guns.

In 2018, approximately 70% of all guns seized by the Toronto Police Service were sourced from the United States of America. A number of years ago, CBC's Fifth Estate reported that ten of thousands of guns a year are

smuggled into Canada from the United States. In 2017, over 25,000 guns were seized by Canadian police forces. Smuggling is not the only source of illegal guns on our streets—no doubt about that—but it is a major source of those illegal guns.

The bill would help save families and victims the anguish and the life-altering impact of gun violence by giving Ontario more tools and power to stop the flow of illegal guns from the source. The bill requires Ontario's Attorney General to investigate and initiate legal action against those American gun manufacturers who are alleged to be facilitating the flow of handguns out of the United States and into Canada. The Attorney General would be required to consult with experts and affected communities to develop a legal strategy to stop the entry and sale of illegal handguns in Ontario.

Now, along with my co-sponsors who will be speaking today, I recognize that the root causes of gun violence are complex. The NDP has long pushed the Ford government to invest in addressing those root causes, which include poverty, a lack of affordable housing, systemic racism, a lack of mental health supports and a lack of youth opportunities. There is more work to be done to address these critical social issues that lead to violence. But we also need to work to stop the bloodshed by stopping the flow of guns. It's critical to have the legal means to stop American gun manufacturers in cases where it has been proven that their actions contribute to violence in our streets.

I want to thank Ken Price, whose family was affected that night on the Danforth, who is one of the founders of Danforth Families for Safe Communities. Recently, he had this to say: "Our family knows first-hand the terrible experience of gun violence. We know it will take a variety of approaches to curb this violence—and particularly to tackle poverty and racism. In concert with those steps, we believe that this bill will be a useful step towards removing guns from our streets and protecting peoples' lives."

This bill follows the path of litigation that was undertaken against Big Tobacco in the United States in the 1990s, and more recently the action against Purdue Pharma for its role in igniting the opioid crisis across this continent. We should see this as a tool to get other provinces, American states, other countries to join in and take on those players in the arms industry whose actions cause the flow of illegal guns into our communities.

Note that Ontario is no stranger to taking legal action. We were part of the litigation against Big Tobacco, part of the litigation against Purdue Pharma. We have acted, as others have, to recover funds for health care and to press for changes to protect the public.

I urge the government to support this bill. The Premier himself has said that we need to go after smugglers who bring illegal handguns into this province. I assume he's serious. I'm assuming that he will support measures that go upstream to those who supply the guns to the smugglers in the first place. He was there on the Danforth in the days immediately after the shooting, when we were commemorating those we'd lost. He knows the social cost, the human cost of this problem.

There's every reason for all parties to support this bill. It may also help address the divide on gun policies that have often made it so difficult for us to move things forward.

I've talked to gun owners who have said to me, "We have a problem with gun violence. You need to go after the smugglers." And do you know what? They're right.

I know those who have been victims of gun violence who want to see a broad range of action—including this one—taken to protect us and our families in our communities. And do you know what? They're right.

In this bill, we can see the basis for joint action across the divide of understanding and across the partisan divide. The evidence is substantial that there are companies that facilitate smuggling. We need to press them to change their practices and make restitution for the health care, law enforcement and personal costs that their practices have caused.

I call on all legislators in this chamber to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): In case you missed it, this a co-sponsored bill. The other co-sponsors of this bill are the member for Beaches–East York, the member for Scarborough Southwest, and the member for Toronto Centre, who is going to continue the debate.

Ms. Suze Morrison: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 52, the Stopping Illegal Handgun Smuggling Act, which I'm so proud to have co-sponsored along with my colleagues from Toronto–Danforth, Beaches–East York and Scarborough Southwest.

Handgun crime continues to grow as a problem in Ontario. Many families have been affected, and many more will be affected. It seems that shootings have become an almost weekly occurrence, especially in communities that have experienced historically high rates of gun violence, including Regent Park.

Speaker, the community of Regent Park is still reeling from the death of Thane Murray, a beloved youth worker in our community who was senselessly gunned down on the north side of the big park—which is an area with a playground where children and their families walk through every single day. My heart aches for Thane's friends, for his family, for his loved ones, and for the children and youth in our community who he cared for, who he inspired, who he uplifted. These are kids who looked up to him as a mentor in our community.

Speaker, I recently met with members of the Regent Park tenants' association, and they told me that they're now afraid to let their children play outside once it begins

to get dark because of the gun violence in our community and how common it has become. I know how scared they are. The trauma of that violence stays with you forever.

In 2017, in June, before I had even considered putting my name forward for public office, my partner and I had been out on a date night, and we turned right onto Regent Street from Dundas, just seconds after a drive-by shooting had happened. We found a man lying on the sidewalk. We later learned that his name was Lemard Champagnie. He was bleeding from several gunshot wounds to the chest, and he wasn't breathing. We called 911. We began CPR, until emergency responders arrived. I remember holding his head while my partner did compressions, with our hands covered in his blood, and begging him to hang on to life.

After that shooting, I remember how terrified I became of that corner. It took months before I could walk home from work. I would come down the street, and I would try so hard to keep myself on that sidewalk. I would look at that corner and I would see the dried spot, where I could still see the bloodstain on the sidewalk. It was like an invisible force field, like gravity just pushing me to the other side of the street. I couldn't make myself stand on that corner. It took months.

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The physical trauma that gun violence takes up in your body after these incidents is something that is too commonly known in my community, and I don't want a single other person in my neighbourhood to know that kind of trauma, to be afraid to walk down their own street, to know the unimaginable pain of losing a loved one or a child.

Speaker, we know that the root causes of gun violence lie upstream in poverty, but we also know that we need new and innovative ways to reduce the number of illegal handguns that are in our communities. But we have seen neither a strong anti-poverty reduction strategy from this government, nor any meaningful plan to actually address the illegal guns that are in our communities.

We're committed to addressing the social conditions that drive the demand for handguns, but we also know that we have to tackle the illegal handguns coming into our communities over the border. This bill represents a step forward to doing just that. This bill would set the stage for future litigation against major American handgun manufacturers. It's a way to create accountability directly to those manufacturers for the damaging impact of handguns in our communities and hold them responsible for the harm that they cause.

This bill follows a similar strategy that has been pursued against the tobacco industry, against Purdue Pharma for their role in the opioid crisis. We also know that this is a strategy that is currently being tested in Mexico. We have other jurisdictions we can look to that have guided this legislation.

The government in Mexico has alleged that the handgun manufacturers in the United States have engaged in practices that facilitate the diversion of legally produced guns directly into the black market, directly to smugglers who transport those guns into Mexico. But we also know that thousands of guns are coming into Canada in the exact

same way every single year. These manufacturers have to be held responsible for the harm that they are causing in our community.

Speaker, handgun crime in Ontario regularly claims the lives of people in our communities, and it's a growing problem. It's certainly a complex problem, with more than one solution required. We need to be tackling the illegal guns, but we also need to make sure that we're investing in anti-poverty initiatives. We need to address the root causes of violence that are causing devastating levels of poverty in our communities. One of the things I love about this bill is that it can create future revenue opportunities to fund things like education opportunities for youth, employment opportunities and community resources.

For all of those reasons, I'm so glad to stand with my colleagues and support this bill. I strongly encourage the government members to do as well. Thank you. Meegwetch.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Monsieur le Président, bon nombre de nos communautés sont en proie à la violence armée. Ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Vanier est l'une des régions les plus durement touchées en termes de crimes violents.

Cet été, un jeune homme de 20 ans a quitté la maison pour aller jouer au basket; il n'est jamais revenu à la maison. Tyson Ndongezi a été pleuré par de nombreuses personnes à Vanier, en particulier dans l'éminente communauté burundaise d'Ottawa. Tyson s'est trouvé au mauvais endroit au mauvais moment. À cause d'une arme à feu, sa vie a pris fin alors qu'il jouait dans une cour d'école. Il était sur le point d'aller à l'université grâce à une bourse de football. Il était un bénévole actif dans sa communauté.

Nous ne devrions pas avoir à craindre que des gens se promènent avec des armes à feu dans nos communautés. Cet été à Ottawa, il y a eu quatre fusillades en l'espace de cinq jours seulement, et 16 fusillades pendant l'année.

Toute mesure visant à lutter contre la violence armée doit être considérée dans un esprit de justice raciale. Les gens pensent souvent que des politiques plus sévères contre la criminalité sont nécessaires pour réprimer la violence armée, mais ces politiques brisent les communautés par une incarcération excessive. Cela divise les familles et crée un cycle de pauvreté et de traumatisme intergénérationnel.

La police doit être intégrée dans les communautés, et renforcer le lien de confiance entre les forces de l'ordre et la population est un impératif. En travaillant ensemble, la communauté et la police peuvent lutter contre les crimes violents et leurs causes. La pauvreté est une cause essentielle de la plupart des crimes violents, et avec des programmes gouvernementaux robustes, nous avons le pouvoir d'éliminer la plupart des crimes en veillant à ce que les gens soient soutenus économiquement. Des programmes communautaires et parascolaires plus riches et diversifiés font partie des solutions qui peuvent empêcher les adolescents de se tourner vers la criminalité et les gangs de rue.

Lorsqu'une arme se retrouve entre les mains d'un jeune, c'est que nous avons manqué à mieux contrôler la circulation de ces armes. Ce projet de loi me donne l'opportunité de dénoncer une fois de plus la violence armée, qui brise tant de vies, et à offrir aux proches de Tyson toutes mes condoléances au nom des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I am honoured to be co-sponsoring this important bill along with my colleagues, and I am grateful for all the hard work and thought that the MPP from Toronto–Danforth has put into it and for the support of the Danforth Families for Safe Communities, as we in Beaches–East York still mourn the young and brilliant Reese Fallon, who died that terrible July night, just as she was on the verge of her dreams. Gun violence is a hideous scourge on our communities and no one in any neighbourhood is safe until we end it.

We have known for a very long time what needs to be done to seriously address gun violence. The Roots of Youth Violence report came out almost 15 years ago—that's 15 years of lost opportunities that have resulted in wasted lives, trauma, destroyed families and death. It didn't need to be this way, and it doesn't need to be this way.

We know that tackling gun violence at the source means tackling the conditions in which it thrives: It means eliminating poverty; it means being serious about tackling systemic racism, in particular in education; it means creating opportunities for marginalized youth. No five-year-old wakes up in the morning and says they want to grow up to be a gang member, and gangs do not prey on communities where young people have safe, secure futures. So tackling the roots of violence is absolutely key, and there is so very much the government should and could be doing in this area.

But if we are to solve gun violence, which affects communities and people everywhere, we need to use absolutely every tool in our tool kit, and we need to tackle the supply problem as well. Most handguns involved in gun violence are illegal and are smuggled across the border illegally. The companies that manufacture them do not always do everything in their power to ensure that they are used legally and responsibly. Those companies that facilitate smuggling put their profit over the lives and safety of Ontario families, youth and children. They shrug their shoulders at the maimings, funerals, trauma and devastation. For them, it is merely a by-product of the cost of doing business. Shame.

This bill says enough is enough. It says that where companies play a role in the illegal trafficking of death via the smuggling of illegal handguns into Canada, the government of Ontario can take legal action against them. It's high time that we demand that the manufacturers of death take responsibility for their role in life-altering and utterly avoidable tragedy. I hope that members on all sides of the aisle will support this important bill.

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

Mr. Faisal Hassan: It is a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the decent and hard-working people of York South–Weston. I would like to begin with thanking my colleagues who have co-sponsored Bill 52. We know that thousands of families right across this province have had to mourn their loved ones who needlessly lost their lives to gun violence. This bill looks to hold American manufacturers of guns legally responsible when they knowingly allow illegal guns to make their way into Canada.

In our community of York South–Weston, we are all too familiar with gun violence. I have risen in the Legislature many times since being elected and called on this government to address the issue and the underlying factors of gun violence in our community. I've also attended far too many funerals of young people whose lives have been tragically cut short.

These are people like 20-year-old Hashim Omar Hashi, who was senselessly gunned down in February while sitting in his vehicle. Hashim was described as “a caring friend, a thoughtful neighbour, and even more a loving son and brother” by those that knew him.

In 2019, our community was shook by the needless death of 16-year-old Hanad Abdullahi Ali, who was shot on the sidewalks of his neighbourhood. His mother, Hodan Abdullahi Ali, said, “I don't know why they killed my son. They killed an innocent child.”

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These deaths have been occurring far too frequently, and we do not find the shooters, and we are not preventing these deaths. These young people had futures, they had families and friends, and they deserve to have a voice that they no longer have.

In our community, we are grateful to have a group of mothers who have organized to act as a “mother outreach” that provides support to other mothers and families who have lost lives to gun violence. Mending a Crack in the Sky is their name. They look to create safe places to heal, mobilize, advocate and navigate relevant systems when it comes to youth violence.

I support this bill to stop illegal guns and applaud the initiative. At the same time, this government needs to address the root causes of violence that primarily affect young Black men and racialized and low-income families. Young people are losing their lives needlessly, this government seems disinterested, and the police cannot find the culprits or prevent this from occurring again.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I rise today on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest to speak to Bill 52, the Stopping Illegal Handgun Smuggling Act, which I'm proud to co-sponsor with my colleagues. I especially want to thank the member from Toronto–Danforth for his dedication and leadership.

Often times, I find myself speechless when meeting with family members or neighbours or the victims of gun violence.

Just over the last two months, in our neighbourhoods, we've experienced multiple incidents of gun violence, one

taking the life of a senior taxi driver. And a few weeks ago, near one of our local community centres, a place where I used to volunteer and meet with children and parents and go for peace walks—right there, in that area, we faced gun violence. Many heard the multiple gunshots that were fired and that injured two young men, who ended up in the hospital in critical condition.

This is a crisis that is leaving families and victims without closure, without justice, and leaving communities feeling fearful about their well-being.

One mother said to us that the history of these types of incidents in the area made her feel unsafe about her two sons going to the local subway station. Another reached out and said that they live in the area where the shooting happened, which is very close to where their young children go to school, and they are deeply concerned about the safety of the community.

People want to see real action. They want to see leadership in solving the problem. But they want us to make sure that we're listening to the community and providing support and that we're taking action at the root of the problem.

Speaker, gun violence is a complex issue. While the government currently spends millions of dollars in an attempt to find illegal handguns already in the country, there needs to be decisive action taken to look at the root cause of this issue, which includes entry of illegal guns to our province, neglect to our communities, and systemic neglect toward areas like Scarborough. Communities like ours start to lose hope when this happens, and areas fall into patterns of violence. These are the products of systemic negligence and socio-economic disparity, and we simply cannot arrest our way out of this. We know we need community-led action and investment into delivering a higher and sustainable standard of living to get out of this vicious cycle.

But the social inequities at the root of this issue are also exacerbated by the flow of illegal guns onto our streets. A Global News investigation reported that a majority of the guns found on our streets are not locally or legally obtained but are smuggled from the United States. In fact, while it takes months to legally obtain a gun, you can obtain an illegal gun in less than two hours. The investigation also found that in 2020, 85% of all handguns seized by the TPS were traced back to the United States. That is a serious problem, Speaker. We have seen and suffered the consequences of guns smuggled into our province and onto our streets.

The current system isn't working. Our policies have failed to protect Ontarians. We need be bold. We need to take actions that are at the root. We need to take actions that are outside the box. We cannot continue to tackle this issue at the surface, because the longer we take to address this issue of illegal handguns coming into Ontario, the more handguns will enter Ontario and directly contribute to the ongoing violence. The longer we ignore the voices of our communities impacted by this violence, the further we will get from a solution. This is why our bill will take a multi-layered approach that requires the government to listen to experts, professionals and community members

with lived experience, and create a litigation plan that would identify actions against the American gun manufacturing industry to ensure safer practices and greater protection for all Ontarians.

I ask all of you in this House to support this bill and take decisive action against gun violence in Ontario.

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

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good evening. It's pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to debate the opposition's Bill 52.

Speaker, nothing is more important than the safety of Ontarians, which is why our government, under the leadership of Premier Ford, has worked to enact changes that reflect our commitment to building healthier and safer communities while supporting measures to hold offenders accountable and to stand up for victims of crime. Public safety is our priority, and we have taken steps at every opportunity to support the work of police and prosecutors to protect the people of our province. We are particularly committed to confronting gun crime and dismantling the criminal gangs that threaten our communities. This is why we have taken from day one, and will continue to take, concrete action to combat these and other serious offences to keep our communities safe.

In August 2018, just two months after forming government, we invested \$7.6 million to assign one intensive firearm bail team per court at each of Toronto's provincial courthouses. Each team is led by a crown attorney with the mandate to focus exclusively on ensuring violent gun criminals are denied bail and remain behind bars. These teams were further supported by new teams of bail compliance officers who focus their attention exclusively on ensuring that those violent criminals who are out on bail are not violating any terms of their release.

Since then, ensuring the safety of all Ontarians has continued to be our priority, and we continue to make the necessary investments to protect Ontarians. For example, just last week, the Attorney General joined the Premier, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Finance at the Toronto Police Service's 23 Division to announce a new \$75-million investment to dismantle gangs and to stop gun crime in our communities. Speaker, this investment will target the flow of illegal guns at the border and support the work of police in every region of the province, including through a new gun and gang mobile prosecution unit. This new support raises our government's total investment in combatting gun and gang crimes to \$187 million since 2018.

Furthermore, last month the Attorney General announced a \$72-million strategy to prioritize public safety and address the unprecedented backlog of criminal cases that has accumulated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented investment will hire more than 340 additional prosecutors, court staff and victim services professionals to increase core capacity and ensure people charged with serious crimes such as murder and sexual assault do not go free without a trial.

These investments are in addition to the digital tools we are providing to police, prosecutors and the courts to help

hold offenders accountable. These measures build on the reforms this Legislature has passed to fill judicial vacancies faster in order to strengthen the capacity of the justice system to address current and future challenges.

Speaker, the bill being discussed today, however, raises a number of legal and operational concerns that we simply cannot support. The bill vaguely refers to consultations regarding the development of a plan with communities affected by illegal handguns. What constitutes a community affected by illegal handguns? What about victims of gun violence who don't live in one of those specific communities? Would they be silenced?

Additionally, there are already federal laws on the books that lay out punishments for companies and individuals who import guns into Canada illegally. If evidence surfaced that a manufacturer or retailer was intentionally skirting Canadian laws to have their products distributed in Canada, there is already an offence for that: importation under section 103 and trafficking under section 99 of the Criminal Code.

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Finally, and in the event the opposition is not aware, criminal law and the importation of goods—in particular, firearms—is a federal concern controlled and regulated by the federal government. The Canadian Border Services Agency, which controls the border, is a federal agency following federal guidelines.

Instead of proposing vague and largely unenforceable bills, the opposition should be joining us and supporting the work that we are doing in this area, such as:

- establishing the Office of Illicit Drug Intelligence to disrupt the drug supply chain coming into Ontario and provide enhanced investigative support to identify and prevent cross-border drugs, guns and human trafficking;

- enhancing support for gun and gang specialized investigations to assist with firearms analysis and tracing enforcement, allowing for the timely identification of gun traffickers, their networks and their smuggling routes;

- creating a province-wide joint analytics working group to enhance the ability among police services to collect and share information on gun and gang activity and trends;

- increasing the presence of border enforcement security teams in Ontario to curtail the flow of illegal firearms entering the province;

- supporting provincial joint forces operations to formalize collaboration among jurisdictions in response to information and intelligence;

- creating a provincial database of gun and gang activity to ensure consistency in the classification of relevant data and enhance information flow to combat gangs.

Mr. Speaker, that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of our accomplishments. I would encourage the opposition to work with us on all the significant investments that we have made to combat illegal guns, instead of proposing bills which, frankly, will do nothing to actually keep communities safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Humber River—Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: It takes years to nurture and raise a child, but it only takes a terrible moment to end a life. The scourge of gun violence has taken too many lives and we must do everything we can to stop it.

On July 27, 2007, Ephraim Brown was killed after he was hit by a stray bullet while attending his cousin's birthday party. He was 11 years old.

On July 9, 2015, Lecent Ross was killed after she was shot inside a townhouse. Police later found an illegal handgun on the scene and it was determined that it was the weapon used in her death. She was 15 years old.

On November 17 of last year, Dante Andreatta was walking home from the grocery store with his mother when he was hit in the neck by a stray bullet. Four days later, he died in hospital. He was 12 years old.

These are just a few of so many names who have been lost to gun violence. Each name is too many. Their lives had barely started and they were senselessly stolen from them, their families and communities left devastated.

The trauma of such a loss never truly goes away. Local grief counsellor Rev. Sky Starr and Out of Bounds grief support have provided trauma support to many families after these tragedies. She said that for mothers who have experienced this loss, the pain never really goes away. They suffer from flashbacks, anxiety attacks, depression, nightmares, insomnia and high blood pressure as a result of their trauma and loss.

Speaker, there are many major factors that lead to gun violence, but today we're debating a bill to address an important one that often takes a back seat. It speaks to the fact that the vast majority of these tragic crimes were committed with illegal guns obtained from the United States. We must do everything we can to stop these illegal weapons from coming across the border.

This bill follows action taken in other jurisdictions and would require the Attorney General to consult with experts and affected communities to develop a legal strategy to stop the entry and sale of illegal handguns in Ontario, and stop them from getting into the hands of those who wish to use them to commit violence. It will also allow the AG to investigate and initiate legal action against American gun manufacturers who are alleged to be involved in practices that facilitate the smuggling of weapons into Canada.

Speaker, I strongly support this bill to fight the smuggling of weapons into Canada, and I hope everyone here will do the right thing and pass it. It is an important part of the integral strategy to stop this terrible and senseless violence, and we must do everything we can to stop it.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise in this House on behalf of the people in my constituency, who sent me here to be their voice. When it comes to ending the scourge of gun violence on our communities, I would really urge the government to do all that it can and not leave out any ideas, because this scourge on our society is affecting our communities, and it's getting worse. We need new

solutions and we need to address the issue at its source and at its root.

Speaker, I was elected in 2013, just one year after the Danzig shooting, which really affected the whole city. It was the largest mass shooting in the history of our city and our province; 24 people were affected. What happens when a gunman opens an Uzi submachine gun at a child's birthday party? What happens is that that bullet on that vector that leaves that gun is intent to harm and to cause mayhem, and it did indeed. Shyanne Charles and Joshua Yasay lost their lives. I remember Shyanne's mother. I embraced her as she cried on my shoulder one year after her daughter was taken from her. The fact is that those wounds don't really heal.

What we're trying to do in this Legislature is to improve the lives of people in our communities. While there are aspects to this bill that I think require further study or improvement, this bill focuses on a major concern, which is the rising issue of gun violence. In my riding there were eight shootings in November. Toronto's 77th and 78th homicides occurred in Scarborough. We have to do better, we have to do more, and I believe that this government should not turn its back on communities that are affected by gun violence, because they need to heal.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I want to thank and acknowledge members of the opposition for highlighting the important issue of gun violence in our province and concluding that smuggling is the main source of guns for Ontario's gun violence.

The statistics are clear: 80% of guns being used in crimes are obtained by illegal means, including from across the border, and half of the gun-related deaths in Ontario were gang-related. We know that these illegal guns continue to cross the border, fueling gun and gang violence in our province, and it needs to stop. That is why public safety is a key priority for our government, and we're committed to working with our policing and community partners to provide them with the resources and tools they need to keep Ontario's communities safe and resilient.

Mr. Speaker, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has a proud history and a long-standing tradition of hunting, sport and target-shooting clubs, and legal, law-abiding citizens who have those, so I want to make it crystal clear that anything like this cannot be anything that causes them any concern. The legal, law-abiding—these are not the guns that are being used for these illicit crimes. I believe the member from Flamborough-Glanbrook said there are federal responsibilities to make sure that we watch over these.

I want to put on record a good-news story. Some would think that in a place like Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, it's mostly just in the large urban centres that we have gang and gun violence, but just in the last week a joint-force investigation conducted by the Owen Sound Police Service community-oriented response and enforcement unit, the Owen Sound Police Service drug enforcement unit, the OPP community street crime unit, the OPP emergency

response team and the OPP regional support team resulted in the arrest of seven individuals and the seizure of five firearms, a large amount of cocaine and other illicit drugs, and a very large amount of Canadian currency. A number of prohibited weapons were found and seized, and 69 charges were laid. So it does happen in small, rural and northern Ontario.

Speaker, I want to make sure that—unlike the previous Liberal government, which oversaw a \$12-million cut from the fight against gun and gang violence in this province, our government has invested heavily, working hand in hand with law enforcement to tackle guns and gangs in Ontario. That's why Ontario launched a multi-year Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy, which takes a comprehensive approach to public safety by focusing on prevention, intervention and enforcement. The strategy funds several initiatives that deliver strong enforcement and prosecution, proactive gang disruption, and tailored youth and adult violence prevention. Our investments include:

- \$25 million over four years, 2018-22, invested in support to the Toronto Police Service to address the increase in gun and gang violence in the city;

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- approximately \$16.4 million over two years, 2018-20, to ensure a comprehensive approach to building a comprehensive, province-wide strategy to fight against guns and gangs; and

- \$58 million allocated over three years, 2020-23, to build on the previous investments to continue to address gun and gang violence in Ontario.

We've also allocated funding towards the following initiatives:

- \$3 million over three years to the Toronto Police Service to increase Toronto's closed-circuit television system from 34 cameras to 74;

- \$410,000 to Peel Regional Police in 2019-20 to help provide them with CCTV;

- \$1.5 million to Peel Regional Police to address an increase in gun and gang violence in Peel region;

- \$900,000 over three years to Peel Regional Police and Halton region to implement a joint initiative to address gun and gang violence within their local communities; and

- \$6 million over three years through the Ontario CCTV grant dedicated to help police services across Ontario expand CCTV systems to deter criminal activity and improve public safety.

Speaker, this year alone our government is investing \$75 million over three years to support police services by:

- establishing the Office of Illicit Drug Intelligence to disrupt the drug supply chain coming into Ontario, as well as to provide enhanced investigative support;

- making sure that we've put a registry in place to ensure that we know where that is;

- creating a new gun and gang mobile prosecution unit and a province-wide joint analytics working group to enhance the ability among police services to collect and share information on gun- and gang-related activity and trends;

- increasing the presence of border-enforcement security teams in Ontario to curtail the flow of illegal firearms coming into our province;

- supporting provincial joint force operations, like I just referenced in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, to formalize collaboration among jurisdictions in response to information and intelligence; and

- as I referenced just a few seconds ago, creating a provincial database of gun and gang activity, to ensure consistency in the classification of relevant data and enhanced information flow to combat gangs.

Mr. Speaker, these investments by our government are showing results. From March 2020 to April 2021, the guns and gangs specialized investigation funding has removed over 200 guns and over \$16 million worth of illicit drugs from our Ontario streets. Our government will continue to combat gun and gang violence and show real, proactive results through real police work to protect the safety of all Ontarians. We need to clamp down on crime. Illicit, illegal drugs and guns are not welcome in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto-Danforth will have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I want to thank all those who took the opportunity today to speak. I want to thank my co-sponsors for this bill and I want to address the commentary of the government. I guess I should not be surprised, although I still am somewhat surprised, at the position that they've taken.

I want to suggest an analogy, Speaker. If you have a flood in your basement and there's a broken pipe in a corner, and you ignore the broken pipe and just bring in buckets and try to get out the water, you can never empty that basement because the water keeps flowing in. That's the problem that we face. We face two sources: One is the social conditions that cause the violence in the first place, and my colleagues have spoken to that quite eloquently, but you also have an extraordinarily lucrative business that is caught up in manufacturing, selling and smuggling guns into this country. Like drugs, it's an opportunity to make an awful lot of cash.

If you think that you can win this one without going upstream, you're wrong. When the Premier said, "We need to go after the smugglers," I assumed that he was serious, but clearly he's not, because those who supply the smugglers are as much a problem as those who actually carry the guns across the border.

To say that this is simply a federal problem is to ignore what we've done in this province. We have sued tobacco companies because they have cost us millions; we didn't wait for the feds. We sued Purdue Pharmaceuticals because they have sparked an opioid crisis; we didn't wait for the feds.

If you're serious about dealing with gun and gang violence, deal with the broken pipe. Don't just count on using a bucket at a time to empty your flooded basement. If you want to actually protect human lives, go to the source. Cap the pipe. Deal with the fundamental problems.

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

Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 52, An Act to enact the Stopping Illegal Handgun Smuggling Act, 2021. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded division being required, the vote on this item of private members' public business will be deferred until the next proceeding of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

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

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

COVID-19 RESPONSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for York Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given earlier by the government House leader. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the government House leader or another member of the government will have up to five minutes to respond. We turn to the member for York Centre.

Mr. Roman Baber: Ontario's hospitals are in crisis due to shortage of staff, but instead of increasing staff, primarily the number of nurses, the government's policy is decreasing the total number of nurses. It's almost two years since the start of the pandemic. One would think that a government that campaigned on ending hallway health care would increase the number of nurses, but last Thursday it refused to answer a simple question: Do we have more nurses in the province of Ontario's hospitals today than at the start of the pandemic or less nurses than at the start of the pandemic?

It's a very simple question that the government refuses to answer or is too embarrassed to answer. In fact, the Minister of Health is not here today, and neither is the parliamentary assistant, to debate this issue. And the issue is now more important than ever—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me; I'm going to interrupt the member for York Centre. The member has been here long enough to know that he has no business saying who is in the House and who is not in the House. I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Roman Baber: Withdraw, with apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the member to continue.

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, the question of whether there are more nurses employed in Ontario's hospitals

today or less nurses is a very simple question, and it warrants an answer, because the issue is now more important than ever before. For you see, even though 90% of eligible Ontarians are vaccinated, the experts, the celebrity doctors, are calling for more restrictions.

Specifically, a week ago the science table said that we need more public health restrictions to prevent hospital capacity from collapsing because of staffing shortages. We also learned from the CBC three days ago that the doctors are calling for help as hospital staffing shortages persist. But instead of beefing up nursing capacity during a pandemic, Ontario is losing health care workers, and this government is utterly incapable of growing the number of nurses to meet demand.

Two weeks ago, I heard from the family of a Willowdale constituent. He was brought to the North York General Hospital and spent 24 hours on an ambulance stretcher in the emergency room. This is one of the hospitals that serves my riding. There was no one to attend to him.

If the government doesn't have the ability, the managerial acumen, to attract more nurses, then you would think that they'd get out of the way and not make things worse. The Premier said that a vaccine mandate will result in the suspension or termination of tens of thousands of health care workers, so he pretended to oppose the mandates, knowing that, with very few exceptions, almost every hospital in Ontario will mandate their own policy. This resulted in the termination and suspension that the Premier pretended to be against, all across Ontario.

Nurses, our health care heroes, who worked through the pandemic, through the acute phases, who were safe enough to attend to patients for the last two years, many of whom had COVID, are now sitting at home without pay while the health care system is collapsing, and the science table wants more restrictions. This doesn't make any sense. They're being vilified and threatened while the chief of surgery at the University Health Network is telling the CBC that the shortage of nurses is their biggest challenge.

Moreover, the government is refusing to admit that it was wrong on Bill 124. Every Conservative is raving about 5% inflation, but in 2019 this government imposed a 1% cap on wage increases payable to nurses. A nurse that made \$75,000 last year, in a pandemic year, got an increase of just about \$750, no more than \$50 a month before tax. I voted for that legislation, as the House leader will undoubtedly suggest; it seemed like a good idea at the time. But why not admit that the government was wrong and correct course? Ask any managerial consultant: If you want to retain and attract talent, start looking at compensation.

This government campaigned on ending hallway health care. Instead, it's ending health care, because it would rather follow a misguided vaccine ideology that takes away consent and refuses to admit that capping pay increases to 1% was a major mistake. Why? Because of politics; because they would rather see people die than admit mistakes.

As the government House leader gets up to reply to my submissions, I ask him that instead of giving me talking points, making it personal, making it about me or questioning anyone's conduct, he should start by answering a simple question: Does Ontario have more nurses or less working in Ontario's hospitals today versus March 2020? And if it's less nurses now than in March 2020, will he own this government's failure and accept responsibility?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader will have up to five minutes to reply.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to reply. If I remember correctly, the honourable member

asked two questions with respect to nursing. I think the second part of his question on that day was with respect to the use of Plexiglas in restaurants. On the second point, with respect to Plexiglas, of course we are being guided by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. With respect to the first question, Mr. Speaker, we are hiring over 2,000 new additional nurses, on top of the 27,000 PSWs. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): There being no further matters to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow, December 8.

The House adjourned at 1851.

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)	Parkdale—High Park	
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Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
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McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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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	

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Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	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	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
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Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	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
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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
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Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
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Jim McDonell, Sam Oosterhoff
Laurie Scott, Vijay Thanigasalam
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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

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

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

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutila Karpoche
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle
Joel Harden, Mike Harris
Bhutila Karpoche, Natalia Kusendova
Robin Martin, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

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

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