

Legislative
Assembly
of Ontario



Assemblée
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70 ELIZABETH II, 2021

Bill 248

**An Act to require the establishment of a public inquiry
respecting the response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Ms A. Horwath

Private Member's Bill

1st Reading February 17, 2021

2nd Reading

3rd Reading

Royal Assent



EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Bill enacts the *COVID-19 Public Inquiry Act, 2021*. The Act requires the Lieutenant Governor in Council to establish a commission under section 3 of the *Public Inquiries Act, 2009* to inquire into and report on the Government of Ontario's response to the COVID-19 crisis and to make recommendations respecting the minimization of future harm, including loss of life, in similar circumstances.

The Act provides that the commission shall hold hearings in public. It also sets out timelines for the commission to begin its work, to issue an interim report, to issue a final report and to make the reports public.

**An Act to require the establishment of a public inquiry
respecting the response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Preamble

The COVID-19 crisis has gravely affected Ontarians and has cost thousands of lives. COVID-19 has also taken a major toll on Ontario's economy, health systems and social services. Small business owners have lost their livelihoods and essential workers have struggled to make rent. Low-income and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and Persons of Colour) communities have been hit hardest by the virus.

Ontarians deserve the chance to learn from the Government's response to the COVID-19 crisis in order to ensure that we are best prepared when another pandemic or similar emergency arises in the future.

Therefore, Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, enacts as follows:

Appointment of commission

1 (1) Within 60 days after this Act comes into force, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall establish a commission under section 3 of the *Public Inquiries Act, 2009* to,

- (a) inquire into and report on the Government of Ontario's response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- (b) make recommendations respecting the minimization of future harm, including loss of life, in similar circumstances.

Commission's duration

(2) The commission shall remain in place until it delivers its final report.

Removal of commissioner

(3) The Assembly may, by order passed by a vote of at least two thirds of the members of the Assembly, remove a commissioner appointed to the commission for cause.

Timing

2 The order establishing the commission shall provide that the commission shall begin its inquiry within 60 days after the commission is established.

Hearings open to public

3 The order establishing the commission shall require the commission to hold hearings and shall require the hearings to be held in public.

Reports

4 (1) The order establishing the commission shall require the commission to submit an interim report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and to the Minister responsible for the inquiry within six months after the commission is established.

Final report

(2) The order establishing the commission shall require the commission to submit its final report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and to the Minister responsible for the inquiry within 12 months after the commission is established.

Reports to be made public

(3) The order establishing the commission shall require the commission to make each report it submits public within 10 days after the report is submitted.

Extension for final report

5 If the commission requests an extension to the time period set out in subsection 4 (2) for submitting its final report, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall amend the order establishing the commission to,

- (a) extend the time period for the final report in accordance with the commission's request;

- (b) require the commission to submit a further interim report to the Lieutenant Governor in Council and to the Minister responsible for the inquiry no later than 12 months after the commission is established; and
- (c) require the commission to make its further interim report public within 10 days after the report is submitted.

Commencement

6 This Act comes into force on the day it receives Royal Assent.

Short title

7 The short title of this Act is the *COVID-19 Public Inquiry Act, 2021*.