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Mardi  
26 mai 2020

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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 May 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mai 2020

*The House met at 0900.*

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DEFIBRILLATOR REGISTRATION  
AND PUBLIC ACCESS ACT, 2020  
LOI DE 2020 SUR L'ACCÈS PUBLIC  
AUX DÉFIBRILLATEURS  
ET LEUR ENREGISTREMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 11, 2020, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators / Projet de loi 141, Loi sur l'accès aux défibrillateurs et leur enregistrement.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? The member for London–Fanshawe.

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Thank you, Speaker. I was going to allow the government to speak on the bill first. But it's always a pleasure to rise, especially during these very unprecedented times, and to be in this Legislature and speak about, first of all, the AED bill, because it's one of the things that we need to understand when it comes to health care. That's an important piece to save people's lives. In the context of the pandemic, we are talking about saving people's lives.

I have to say, AED stands for automatic external defibrillator. This is a good bill. I don't think there is going to be a horrible opposition to anything like this because we know that heart attacks and strokes are on the rise. They are probably the silent killer of—we know that women suffer heart attacks and heart disease, and they're probably one of the least-noticed populations in the country, so having this bill is a good idea.

Yes, I know that our health critic, France Gélinas from Nickel Belt, talked about it very much and was very much a proponent of it, because she also raised this bill and these concerns many times before in the Legislature, so having something like this is very important.

I have a little bit of history; it's kind of my own tidbit of knowledge. Back when my husband was a city councillor in London, he actually brought it before the council, and wanted defibrillators in community centres. He wanted defibrillators on fire trucks, and London passed that. What happened was a woman's father suffered a heart attack, and she felt that the ambulance service took a very long time to get to the home. She felt he passed away

because of that delay, and that was unnecessary. So she contacted him and said, "We need to do something better. We need to get either increased ambulance times to make sure that, when people need defibrillators and they're having a heart attack, that is something that is available. We need to do something. It has to change. I've lost my father." It was a horrible story.

So he talked to officials and decided that a way to do that is to have fire trucks carry defibrillators. And that was amazing, I think—an amazing step forward. Now, if an ambulance is busy and fire trucks are there, they also have that equipment as well.

Again, it has gone beyond that. We talk about having them in community centres and in public places so that if someone does have a heart attack, again, they can be saved. There's a well-known radio announcer that had a heart attack in—I believe it was an arena or an exercise place. I can't remember, but it was a public place. He was saved because there were defibrillators on-site. So it does work. Of course, having this bill brought forward is going to help people in phenomenal ways. It's going to change lives.

Also, the member from Nickel Belt talked about how we need to make sure that places like the rural and northern parts of Ontario have proper accessible devices, defibrillator devices. When it comes to health care and public services, we know that there are gaps in the north, and we know that the rural communities—very much so—have to be heard and they have to have a voice at the table when we're talking about health care and ways to save lives and making sure that services are equitable, that there is equity around the province when we need to access health care.

I know that there is talk about having committees. France Gélinas, the member from Nickel Belt, is probably going to be one of the ones that's going to sit on that committee, with her history with regard to the AED bill, and work together, I guess, with this government, making sure that we push for real, important issues that need to be heard when it comes to the north and rural communities.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation often comes and visits Queen's Park as well as our own offices, and they are very passionate about this. We know that it makes such a difference if we can provide things like a defibrillator to people. It affects the outcomes of health care and their quality of life. Right now, when we're looking at health care and the quality of life, we're all considering the looming questions about how to make things better. I think that having the AED as a bill to discuss in this Legislature—hopefully they're going to be taking it out to the community. I think it's a good idea. As we know, this was

something that was brought up this morning to the House, and we want to have many speakers available to contribute to the bill.

With that said, Speaker, I hope you will allow me to share my time with my colleagues. My colleague from Waterloo will be speaking to the bill as well.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** And we're sharing our time? The member for Waterloo next.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** I guess we are sharing our time, Mr. Speaker.

It's a very interesting bill to be brought forward during this particular time in the history of this province. It certainly warrants our attention.

Context, of course, is very important. Let's remember that the Liberals, of course, never created an AED registry for years, despite knowing that a registry would, in fact, save lives. And unfortunately, in Bill 141, the Defibrillator Registration and Public Access Act, the Conservatives have to date not even mentioned 911 emergency dispatchers in this bill, despite the critical role they play in directing callers to nearby AEDs. So you have a former government that never created a registry. You have the Conservative Party that has brought forward this bill, and yet it is still flawed.

I always go back to process, Mr. Speaker, and to consultation as legislation is crafted. Leaving out 911 emergency dispatchers from an important piece of legislation like this—because, of course, if an emergency happens, be it in a hockey rink or in a business setting, and somebody calls 911, you will be calling a 911 dispatcher. This government has a fairly poor record to date on how you treat 911 dispatchers. In my local riding, they've moved 911 dispatchers from Cambridge to Hamilton for over a year now. I know the Speaker knows this, because it affects our whole region of Waterloo-Wellington.

**0910**

You've added stress to 911 dispatchers by making this move. You've added cost; I think it's well over \$1 million in additional costs in housing and expenses that those dispatchers have to incur, and that comes back to the taxpayer. To date, they're still not home.

Quite frankly, we are going to support this bill. We're going to try to make it stronger, as we usually do, and we're going to put out a call once again to bring the Cambridge 911 dispatchers home from Hamilton.

This points to the state of emergency that we are in. I must say that this week is paramedic awareness and appreciation week. Paramedics across this province are performing—well, essentially, they are heroes, Mr. Speaker. In this particular time when we've seen front-line health care workers have to step up in ways that we have never seen in the province of Ontario, some of them, unfortunately, are still fighting for PPE—which is quite astounding, actually, in this province. So I want to give a special shout-out on behalf of our party. I know if our health critic was here, she would be mentioning this for sure: that paramedics in the province of Ontario deserve our respect. They deserve our support. I want to publicly thank them for the work that they're doing.

Bill 141, the defibrillator registration act, imposes certain requirements respecting the installation, maintenance, testing and availability of defibrillators. It also sets timelines for notifying the registrar of a new AED installation.

We have seen during this state of emergency, which we are currently still in—and for good reason, I might add, Mr. Speaker—that this pandemic has exposed gaps in our health care systems. Certain people, unfortunately, have fallen through those gaps. I know all of us in our own ridings have heard from various people who have had difficulty accessing health care; who have had access issues with getting tested and testing the veracity of those tests.

Our public health units, of course, and our medical officers have performed outstandingly, quite honestly, in a time of great stress. But when you look at the lens of health care in our system and you apply the stressors of this particular pandemic, COVID-19, those stress tests, in some instances and in some communities, failed. So when you consider a bill like Bill 141 and you have conditions where you have to make sure that the installation, the maintenance, the testing and the availability of defibrillators happens at all sites across this province, a rational person, having borne witness to the state of crisis in the province of Ontario as we have dealt with the coronavirus, would call into question how this would actually happen. How would it be operationalized? Our public health units are so siloed. That's one of the key learnings that we've seen with COVID-19. We've seen great inequity across the whole province.

A rational person would look at this bill on the surface of it and of course say, "Yes, having defibrillator registration and a public access standard is really in our best interests as a province." That said, having witnessed what has happened with this pandemic, we have to now be mindful that those gaps in our provincial health care system are very much in place.

The background: Obviously, our health critic, Ms. Gélinas from Nickel Belt, spoke very eloquently on this. She has been a true champion for northern Ontario. Consider this: Northern Ontario doesn't have access to 911 in all places. There are people who go up to northern Ontario and there is no 911 access. How would this particular piece of legislation be operationalized? These are good questions. Our northern members for many years now have raised the inequity in health care services.

An automatic electronic defibrillator can charge someone back to life after a heart attack stops the heart, or can slightly charge the heart to deal with an irregular beat. As the name states, the machines are quite automatic, and walks the user through use with voice prompts, but you have to know where it is; you have to know where the AED is. You have to have somebody on the line who can actually give you some instruction, and, clearly, in northern Ontario, that would not happen, because there are no 911 operators in certain jurisdictions in northern Ontario. So I hope that the respective ministers who have this file are cognizant of that.

We just saw this piece of debate come up like five minutes ago, literally. I think that it warrants our attention, and it also warrants our attention to address what is missing. As I mentioned, there's no mention of 911 emergency dispatchers, despite their key part in rolling out a piece of legislation like Bill 141 with some integrity and with some effectiveness. The greatest use of this registry is a 911 caller being directed to the nearest machine, which could save a life, and one wonders why 911 operators are not mentioned in the piece of legislation.

I'm sure that our health care partners and our allies who are paying close attention to how this province has dealt with the pandemic and those system gaps that have been revealed through the COVID-19 experience will be asking these very questions as it moves through the process.

This is an important piece of legislation. As the member from London–Fanshawe has mentioned, we're going to be supporting it. As always, though, we're going to try to make it stronger and make it more effective, and, during this emergency, this state of emergency, I find it interesting that they've brought this piece of legislation forward as it stands.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

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

**M. Guy Bourgouin:** Ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui. Ça fait une secousse qu'on n'est pas venu dans la Chambre. Je peux vous dire que c'est un changement avec comment qu'on opère.

Ceci dit, je pense que c'est un bon projet de loi, puis on va le supporter. Je dois admettre qu'il y a des lacunes et définitivement des choses à améliorer. Comme ma collègue vient de mentionner, elle dit qu'ils ne mentionnent le 911. Puis vous le savez, dans le nord de l'Ontario, des fois le 911 reste à désirer, ou soit qu'il y a bien des places où on n'aime pas le 911. J'ai aussi mentionné souvent ici en Chambre que ma circonscription représente 60 % de francophones. Puis je peux vous dire, le service en français 911—il y a encore eu des plaintes au commissaire récemment parce qu'on ne pouvait pas être capable de s'exprimer en français pour avoir le service du 911. Ça, c'est sans mentionner qu'il y a des places où on a du 911, mais il y a des places qui n'ont pas le 911. Puis sans mentionner aussi que, vous le savez, dans le nord de l'Ontario, il y a bien des services hospitaliers où les services de santé ne sont pas aussi avancés que dans le sud de l'Ontario.

Mais je veux vous parler un petit peu de ce que—c'est pour ça que je me suis levé. Je pensais que c'était important que je me lève pour vous parler un petit peu d'une histoire personnelle que j'ai vécue. J'ai un de mes amis, un collègue, M. Jean, qui a eu une attaque de coeur. Il jouait au hockey. C'est un gars qui était très physique. Il s'entraînait, il joggait, il marchait. Mais lui, il jouait au hockey puis tout d'un coup il a eu une attaque subitement. Il est tombé sur la glace. Je peux vous dire qu'on pouvait entendre une aiguille tomber dans l'aréna quand c'est arrivé.

Il a eu la chance qu'il y avait des paramédicaux ou qu'il y avait du monde de santé qui étaient à l'aréna. Puis il a eu

la chance d'avoir un défibrillateur à l'aréna à Kapuskasing. C'est pour ça que c'est tellement important qu'on ait ces défibrillateurs un peu partout dans la région, un peu partout dans les systèmes de santé, dans les places où le monde se réunit, parce que ça sauve des vies. Aujourd'hui c'est un père de deux enfants. Il était dans la cinquantaine, je crois, quand c'est arrivé. Mais il est vivant aujourd'hui. C'est grâce au défibrillateur.

C'est pour ça que ce projet de loi est très important. Oui, on est dans une situation de crise, on est dans une situation de pandémie, mais je pense que les défibrillateurs sauvent des vies. Je pensais que c'était important aujourd'hui que je me lève debout pour être capable de conter cette histoire-là, parce que—aujourd'hui il fait un travail. Il m'a remplacé, quand j'ai été élu, dans ma section locale. Mais il ne serait pas ici aujourd'hui si ce n'était pas du défibrillateur, puis je pensais que c'était important que je mentionne ça.

**0920**

C'est certain qu'il y a des lacunes dans le projet de loi. On va essayer de l'améliorer, mais on va supporter le projet de loi, parce que c'est un bon projet de loi; ça sauve des vies.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you to the member for Mushkegowuk–James Bay.

The member for London West.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much, Speaker. I am pleased to be able to rise today to address Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators.

Speaker, it's important, in the context of the pandemic, that we all have a new-found, even deeper, appreciation for the very important role of paramedics. I am sure that all of us in our ridings have heard from paramedics who are on the front lines of fighting COVID-19 and who had to advocate to ensure that they have the proper PPE.

When you think about the workplace of a paramedic, they are confined in, literally, a box when they are dealing with patients. I had some conversations with paramedics in my own riding who talked about, initially when the standard was that they weren't going to have N95 masks, whether that was appropriate, because you can't apply the same rules to every workplace. You have to acknowledge the differences in workplaces. Certainly, a confined ambulance is a very, very unique kind of workplace. It requires very specific PPE that is going to protect those health care professionals.

This bill that is before us today is really the kind of legislation that people in Ontario appreciate. It was developed through collaboration between all three parties. I know that private members' bills were brought forward by my own colleague the member for Nickel Belt. A private member's bill was brought forward by the member for Ottawa South. A private member's bill—the one that we're dealing with today—was brought forward by the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. There was a lot of similarity between those three private members' bills, so the decision was that we were going to come together and make sure that this concept—the concept of having an

AED registry—would become a reality here in the province of Ontario.

I want to give a shout-out to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, who really provided the impetus for this Legislature to address this issue. They came to Queen's Park; they came to talk to MPPs. They told us about the lack of access to AEDs across the province, because they were sporadically available. Sometimes they're in schools; sometimes in community centres. But there was no centralized depository for paramedics or citizens to know where the closest AED might be located. This bill creates a registry so that there is centralized information about where the closest AED is located.

The bill also imposes requirements regarding the installation, maintenance, testing and availability of defibrillators on designated premises or public premises. It requires that these defibrillators be registered within a specific time period. It also allows regulations to be made under the act.

Speaker, every year in this province there are about 7,000 Ontarians who will experience cardiac arrest. I do know that in the context of this pandemic, when there has been the order to cancel elective surgeries, we are seeing more and more people who are having cardiac arrests. That's going to be one of the learnings from this pandemic. It's not only the patients who are dying of COVID-19, but it is also the patients who are not going to emergency when they need to, when they are experiencing cardiac events, because they are nervous about going to emergency rooms. We are hearing more and more about patients who are dying of cardiac arrest because they left it too long, or maybe they did see the warning signs but they felt it wasn't serious enough to go to the hospital. They have made a medical condition that much worse because they did not seek treatment.

This bill is important. We're in the middle of the COVID-19 state of emergency. I think that there is recognition on all sides of this place that the legislation that we speak to in this chamber deals with the state of emergency. It deals directly with the issues that Ontarians are facing as a result of COVID-19. This registry of defibrillators can be connected to the pandemic.

As I said, we have all expressed our support for this registry to go ahead, but it's important that we continue to have the debate to highlight some of the gaps that remain. My colleague the member for Nickel Belt, who had brought her own private member's bill forward last fall, had talked about the fact that there is inequity in the north. There are great regional variations about people's access to health care services, and in particular 911. That is a big issue, when people can't feel confident that when they dial 911 they will get help in a timely way. This bill can help address that. And we may be hearing more calls to 911 during this pandemic because, as I said, people are worried about going to the hospital. They're not going to emergency when they should be, and so they may have a very serious cardiac event at home.

I want to give a shout-out to the paramedics in my community, in Middlesex-London. I am not sure if every riding holds a survivor day, which is an opportunity for

paramedics—actually, all of the first responders, the whole emergency team. Often there are the paramedics, the police and there may be a citizen who all came together to revive, to save a patient who is experiencing cardiac arrest. It is a very powerful, powerful moment to be in a room and to see someone whose life was literally saved by this team of first responders who came together to save that person's life. You hear, many times, the person whose life was saved speak to what it meant to them. Oftentimes, it's the first opportunity they've had to thank the paramedic, the police officer, the fire person or other first responders who came to their rescue. It's very moving. There are tears. There are tears from the family members, from the patients, from the first responders themselves and from those of us who have the privilege of witnessing this experience.

So, Speaker, we are of course supportive of this bill. We want to see it enacted quickly because it is important in dealing with COVID-19. Moving forward with this defibrillator registry will help save lives. We know that. We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate.

With that, I am going to share the remainder of my time with my colleague the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

**0930**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you for the prompt. I recognize the member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

**M. Michael Mantha:** Good morning, Speaker. Bonjour à tout le monde, et puis bienvenue à votre tour. C'est tout un plaisir de prendre mon siège et d'être ici de la part des bonnes personnes de mon comté d'Algoma–Manitoulin.

J'aimerais toucher sur le projet de loi 141, la Loi de 2020 sur l'accès public aux défibrillateurs et leur enregistrement. Je veux parler des expériences personnelles que, dans tous nos rôles, soit ici à Queen's Park ou dans nos comtés, on aime tout le temps avoir les outils nécessaires pour faire notre job, pour faire ce qu'on a à faire. Et puis dans des circonstances d'urgence, tous les gens réagissent d'une différente façon. Il y en a qui courent vers les urgences; il y en a d'autres qui courent de l'autre bord des urgences. Moi, je suis une personne qui court vers. Ça m'a poigné à trois reprises dans la mienne, ma vie, avec la dernière qui est juste arrivée l'été passé avec mon garçon Roch.

On était à mon camp au lac Cinder à Elliot Lake. On était en train de jouer une bonne partie de « bocce ball » et on était en train de rire ensemble. Et puis du coin de mon oeil j'ai vu quelqu'un courir vers le lac. Puis mon garçon a entendu un appel pour de l'aide et puis un appel pour un secours. Une de mes voisines, qui était en train de nager en ce temps-là, elle a subi une faiblesse dans l'eau. On a couru au bord du lac, on est venu à bout de la sortie sur le bord et on a essayé tout ce dont on était capable.

Les ambulanciers sont arrivés. Ils sont venus à bout d'embarquer Helen. Helen c'était son nom. C'était la femme à Mike Prevost. Tous les gens qui étaient là au parc, on a tous fait ce qu'on était supposés de faire. Il y en a qui ont appelé les gens d'urgence pour qu'ils viennent. Mon garçon a couru au chemin pour faire certain que les ambulanciers savaient où venir pour se rendre à la scène.

On a tous donné l'attention, mais Helen a été emportée. Les ambulanciers sont venus à bout de l'emporter à l'hôpital. Il y a eu des signes, mais c'était trop long. Helen est partie.

La raison que j'apporte ça c'est que c'était la troisième reprise où je n'avais pas l'outil nécessaire qui m'aurait donné la chance d'aider. Je ne sais pas si ça aurait sauvé la vie d'Helen, mais c'est vraiment important qu'on ait les outils nécessaires.

La raison pour laquelle je dis ça c'est que j'étais au parc où est-ce que, en fin de semaine, je viens juste de faire mon jardin. Et puis je visite—je les appelle tous mes matantes, mes mononcles, mes amis, mon frère, ma soeur. Je suis l'un des plus jeunes au parc. Bizarre, hein? Mais j'aime vraiment ça. On a tellement une bonne ambiance. Mais c'est tellement nécessaire dans des clubs tel quel, surtout les clubs d'aînés, de faire certain qu'on les a, les défibrillateurs externes automatisés. Mais le défi pour ces clubs, c'est vraiment les fonds aussi qui sont nécessaires. Parce que ça ne vient pas à deux, trois cennes, les défibrillateurs. Ça coûte de l'argent.

Ce que je veux aussi soulever c'est qu'on est très « supportifs » du projet de loi 141. Très bonne idée. Ça fait longtemps que devrait avoir été fait. Pareil comme les idées, puis j'espère que le gouvernement prendra l'initiative de ma collègue de Nickel Belt, M<sup>me</sup> France Gélinas, pour l'accès au 911. Parce que dans les miennes, mes communautés d'Algoma-Manitoulin, on est plusieurs, des communautés, qui ne l'ont pas, cet accès-là. Ce n'est pas si facile que ça d'avoir les mêmes services que plusieurs de mes collègues ici dans le sud de l'Ontario prennent pour acquis. Nous autres, c'est un « challenge ». C'est un défi pour nous dans le nord de l'Ontario pour les avoir, ces services-là.

J'apporte ça—c'est juste pour simplement dire que les outils nécessaires pour qu'on puisse tous prendre soin de notre santé, soit le 911, soit les défibrillateurs, c'est de faire certain qu'ils sont aux bonnes places. Puis, certainement, l'enregistrement—parce qu'une des choses que, nous autres, on est venu à bout de découvrir pendant l'été, c'est que, oui, on savait qu'ils étaient disponibles, mais on ne savait pas où ils étaient enregistrés. C'est vraiment important qu'on les ait, les outils, et que la formation soit aussi donnée, parce que ce n'est pas juste sortir ça puis appuyer. Il y a de la formation qui vient avec ça pour faire certain qu'on est prêt et qu'on peut prendre les pas nécessaires pour prendre soin de nos voisins, nos voisines, nos matantes, nos mononcles, nos « neighbours ».

Mon bon Jean, mon neighbour au lac Cinder, je m'arrange très bien avec lui, mais je m'arrange avec tous les gens : Raymond, Mike, j'ai Gérard, j'ai Jean, j'ai Noëlle, j'ai Paulina. Ce sont tous des gens qui sont, on va dire, dans leur âge d'or. Moi, je les regarde tous comme des gens qui sont une grosse partie de la mienne, ma vie. Puis j'ai besoin des outils nécessaires pour faire certain qu'ils se sentent sécuritaires quand ils sont au parc, et qu'on puisse tous avoir une bonne conscience, de faire certain qu'on a tous les outils nécessaires pour sauver des

vies quand le temps arrive et l'appel est là et, dès que les urgences arrivent, qu'on coure vers les urgences pour aider les gens.

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

Mrs. Martin has moved third reading of Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

*Third reading agreed to.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Orders of the day.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** No business.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** This House stands in recess until 10:15 a.m.

*The House recessed from 0938 to 1015.*

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### FRONT-LINE WORKERS

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe because I want to bring their voices forward during the pandemic, and what they're saying and contacting our office about.

One thing the Ford government has been saying is that our essential workers, our front-line health care workers, are heroes. They are our heroes. They're dedicated, they're committed and they're strong, and they put their lives on the line every day to look after our society. The grocery stores, our loved ones—the whole gamut of how the world is working is because of essential workers and front-line health care workers.

What I hear specifically from health care workers is—the announcement that was made on April 24: They're very grateful for that, but they wanted to know, why not have that announcement back when the emergency order was called?

There is a PSW who contacted my office. She's home sick from COVID-19 and she doesn't get the pandemic pay. That's another hole in announcing it on the 24th. The other piece of that is, I get calls from PSWs who are agency workers, and they're saying, "We're doing the same work as everybody else, but we're not categorized in the pandemic pay."

I just ask this government, from what I've been hearing in London-Fanshawe from my constituents—and I'm sure they've heard it, too—to reconsider that and include all health care workers and heroes who keep us going through the pandemic.

### MAY 16TH MIRACLE

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** On May 16, 2020, a miracle took place in my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington. People from all corners of the riding took part in what may have

been the most paramount display of community we have ever seen.

It all started with an idea by Chatham-Kent residents Wes Thompson and James Rasmussen. After hearing of the shortages at our local food banks and the amount of new people and families seeking food donations, they came up with an idea they called the May 16th Miracle.

The idea spread rapidly throughout our community. Roughly 5,500 people volunteered for the event. The idea was to have local residents leave non-perishable food items and gift cards on their front porch, driveways or doorsteps. These items were then collected by volunteers going door to door in every Chatham-Kent neighbourhood.

Chatham-Kent residents and businesses did not disappoint, Mr. Speaker. Signs were hand-painted and set up around the community with the words “May 16th Miracle.” Pretty soon, many businesses donated thousands of dollars and manpower to the cause.

No stone was left unturned. There were over 50 drop-off spots in rural areas to ensure everyone was able to donate and participate. In the end, so many food items were collected that Chatham-Kent has unofficially broken the Guinness world record for the most amount of food items collected, at over 678,000 pounds. Our local food banks will be stocked for months.

I’m so proud of Chatham-Kent. We have truly exemplified what #OntarioSpirit is all about.

#### NURSES

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Speaker, good morning. I know you value the work of our front-line medical personnel. Down in Windsor and Essex county, we have a long tradition of honouring our nurses.

1020

For 13 years, the RNAO has selected a nurse who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession as well as to the local community. They receive the Lois Fairley Nurse of the Year Award.

This year, the year of COVID-19, the award has a new wrinkle. Instead of recognizing just one nurse, the 2020 Lois Fairley Nurse of the Year Award goes to each and every one of the people practising nursing in Windsor and Essex county. The registered nurses, the nurse practitioners, the registered practical nurses and the nursing students are all being recognized this year. Our nurses have demonstrated a commitment to our community through excellence in their delivery of patient care.

Speaker, as you know, this has been a time of great stress, anxiety and concern. Day in and day out, our nurses have demonstrated great compassion, professionalism and true leadership within the medical community. They have shown great courage in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. They’ve done it in our hospitals, our clinics and our nursing homes as well as in home care and physicians’ offices and at our local public health units.

This is not to downplay in any way the contributions of every health care professional helping us through this

epidemic, this crisis. Thank you to each and every one of you. But hats off to the Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario, the RNAO, for recognizing the service that our nurses are providing.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE IN NIAGARA WEST

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I rise today to express my gratitude to local nurses, doctors and front-line care workers as well as essential workers in many different sectors across Niagara West, including health care providers at West Lincoln Memorial Hospital in Grimsby and the St. Catharines site of Niagara Health, for their extraordinary dedication and commitment as we continue to work together to protect the health and well-being of Ontarians against COVID-19. I want to echo the sentiments of the hundreds of signs and homemade banners on front lawns and porches across my riding: Thank you, and stay strong.

During this pandemic, we have seen community leaders and local residents also step up to serve others. Whether volunteering through Spark Ontario, providing PPE to local hospitals or donating non-perishable food items to food banks, we have seen the true Ontario Together spirit in Niagara West.

I stand in this chamber to highlight just a few outstanding efforts in my riding during the COVID-19 outbreak. The Grimsby Downtown Improvement Area teamed up with Woodworkers Unite and the town of Grimsby to make available hundreds of face shields for local businesses. Clēan Works in Beamsville developed a federally approved process to sanitize and reuse N95 masks. Dillon’s Small Batch Distillers in Beamsville was among the first producing hand sanitizer and disinfectant for thousands of front-line care workers across the province. Stanpac in Smithville is providing warehouse space and logistical support for West Lincoln Community Care. The Fonthill Legion has been preparing thousands of meals for isolated seniors. Local residents have generously participated in food drives for Open Arms Mission in Wainfleet.

Speaker, as we continue to face the challenges of COVID-19, I am amazed and grateful to see how this outbreak has shown that the people of Ontario are ready and willing to love their neighbour as themselves.

#### WORKPLACE SAFETY

**Mr. Jamie West:** As our economy reopens and Ontarians return to work, worker safety must remain a top priority. Throughout this pandemic, we have heard of numerous instances of workers not having access to the equipment or the PPE they need to stay safe at work. Tragically, many of these front-line workers have become sick and, in some cases, have lost their lives due to inadequate protection from COVID-19.

Recently, I’ve been hearing from workers who are worried about their safety as they return to work—worried because the government’s workplace guidelines are com-

pletely optional. I'm hearing from employers worried because the government's workplace guidelines are too vague for their specific circumstances.

Speaker, the government must take a proactive approach. Ontario needs to strike a workplace safety readiness committee. This committee would be composed of safety professionals working with representatives from both labour and business. The workplace safety readiness committee would help identify hazards to ensure that all workplaces have the tools and PPE they need to follow public health advice and the precautionary principle. The workplace safety readiness committee would provide strong recommendations to ensure a safe transition back to a fully functioning economy.

We all know, Speaker, that when workers are properly protected from COVID-19, everyone in Ontario becomes safer as well. This government must step up and put workplace safety first. They can prevent a second devastating wave of COVID-19 cases by striking a made-in-Ontario workplace safety readiness committee today.

#### COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I love downtown Guelph. I love the character, vibrancy and vitality that independent local businesses provide our communities and neighbourhoods all over this province. I don't want our downtowns to become ghost towns because of COVID-19.

June 1 is less than a week away. Rent is due. Over half of Ontario's small businesses will not be able to pay their rent, and 47% say that their landlord will not apply for emergency rent assistance, which opens today.

The Neighbourhood Group operates five restaurants in Guelph-Waterloo region. They hope to celebrate their 30th anniversary next month. They have been awarded the independent restaurateur of the year award. They employ over 150 people and are a certified living wage employer. They've raised over a million dollars for charities. Two of their landlords are working with them and two of their landlords are threatening to lock them out.

Losing these businesses would be devastating to our community, their workers and the farmers who supply them—80% of their food comes from local Ontario farmers. They, like local businesses all across Ontario, need the Premier to bring in a temporary ban on commercial rent evictions now.

#### COVID-19 RESPONSE IN MISSISSAUGA EAST—COOKSVILLE

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, the people of Ontario have shown their Ontario spirit by going above and beyond to help and uplift those who need it most. I wanted to highlight some of the people, businesses and organizations in my riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville doing this wonderful and inspiring work.

The Vietnamese community at Saigon Park had organized a PPE drive among local businesses and raised

\$10,000 for the Mississauga Food Bank. Flato Developments donated much-needed and appreciated PPE to long-term-care facilities in my riding so the folks working and living there would get that extra protection. Grasshopper Energy donated \$50,000 to the Mississauga Food Bank. GlobalMedic donated 650 pounds of food to the Mississauga Food Bank as well. Throughout Ramadan, several Muslim community groups came together to host Ramadan Iftar drive-through dinners for those in need. They prepared meals for our front-line heroes, delivered groceries and prescriptions to our seniors, and most importantly, raised much-needed funds for our local hospital.

I want to say thank you to everyone who has donated, organized, prepared meals and supplies, who has made calls and arranged for services and donations. The Ontario spirit is strong, and I believe that together, we will come out of this crisis stronger than ever. Thank you and God bless each of you.

#### ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION HALLS

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** Last week, I am honoured to say, my son, Jonathan Lindal, received a promotion. He is now Petty Officer First Class with the Canadian navy.

As I reflected on the contributions of all our military men and women, I opened an email from the local Legion in St. Catharines that sent chills down my spine. The local Legion has a revenue loss of close to \$30,000 because they have had to shut down because of this pandemic. Their hope for support through insurance was denied. It was not just denied for their Legion; it was denied for every Legion across Ontario, across this province.

Legions survive off community-based events. They are all at risk of losing so much right now. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, veterans, seniors and Legions need our help. It's a harsh reality to face, with utility and insurance costs in the thousands of dollars.

Now, just like all of us across the aisle and here, we honour our veterans with ceremonies and gratitude while also valuing their sacrifice. I would like to see this assembly honour them in another way, by taking action. We need a utility payment freeze and to create programs to offset insurance costs for our Legions in Ontario.

**1030**

One day my son will be a veteran, and I refuse to leave him a province that ignored supporting our veterans when they need the support the most. The least we can do is show our veterans how much they mean to us by taking action and providing critical, critical financial support today.

#### GABRIEL PIZZA

**Mr. Jeremy Roberts:** It is wonderful to rise again in this chamber during these extraordinary times. Over the past number of weeks, we have seen countless examples of people going above and beyond to support their

communities. In my hometown of Ottawa, this has certainly been the case. Our front-line health care and emergency response workers have been selflessly working to care for our most vulnerable and respond to those in need. Our charities have been hard at work filling the gaps and providing the necessary services to support individuals and families across the city. Our businesses are stepping forward to demonstrate what the Premier has called the “Ontario spirit.”

I’d like to take a moment today to recognize just one of those businesses that has demonstrated that Ontario spirit. Gabriel Pizza has been a staple in Ottawa since 1977. Helmed by George Hanna, Gabriel’s has always recognized that they have a role to play not just as a business, but also as a community leader.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Gabriel’s family stepped forward to support the community. Over the past two months, they have donated around 5,000 meals to deserving front-line support workers and charities right across the city. I was honoured to have the chance to deliver a large number of these meals. We brought delicious lasagna and pizzas to the teams at CHEO and the Queensway Carleton Hospital, to the folks at some of our long-term-care and retirement residences, and to hard-working volunteers at the Caldwell Family Centre. I know that these donations meant the world to these workers.

On behalf of the people of Ottawa, I would like to extend a warm thank you to the Gabriel Pizza team and all of their workers for their generosity.

#### CARING CARD CAMPAIGN

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I am proud to serve the residents of Barrie–Innisfil. Barrie–Innisfil is a community that has each other’s back. For example, Bonney Barth and Sonia DaSilva are an example of women in Innisfil who stepped up to bring hope, love and care to our seniors. When Bonney saw the images of seniors on the news isolated by the COVID-19 pandemic, she wanted to do something about it. Bonney came up with a Caring Card campaign, asking residents to write greeting cards that she would deliver to residents and staff, brightening up their day. Her plan was to collect the cards, sanitize them at home for several days and then deliver them to Lakeside retirement home in Alcona.

It’s an idea that has inspired the whole community. In fact, it has inspired the students at Nantyr Shores Secondary School, who got involved, as well as Councillor Kenneth Fowler and his son Gabe, who built a Caring Card mailbox at the Innisfil Community Church, which of course received the blessing of Pastor Howard Courtney. The hope is that all residents are going to be able to fill this mailbox with cards to brighten the days of our seniors. In fact, even before that mailbox was set up, Bonney received 22 cards dropped off at her home.

Thank you, Bonney and Sonia, for uplifting the spirits of our community to show that seniors at Lakeside retirement home live in a community that loves and cares for them. This is the Ontario spirit.

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

#### QUESTION PERIOD

##### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My first question is to the Premier. For months, the Premier has refused to commit to a full, independent, public inquiry into long-term care. Instead, the government has offered a vague commitment to a limited, government-controlled commission, with no terms of reference, no leadership and no plans to even get started for months.

Families who have lost loved ones deserve answers and they deserve action. They see a long-term-care system dominated by powerful interests making millions of dollars, and they want to know: Is the Premier prepared to truly change a broken system and take on the big corporate interests and Conservative lobbyists?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** To reply on behalf of the government, the Minister of Long-Term Care.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for that important question.

Our government is committed to long-term care. It has created a stand-alone ministry for long-term care. It has put money behind long-term care. It is the first government in the history of this province to put that amount of money behind what its actions are. It is not only talking; it is walking. It is making sure that we take action each and every day forward in advancing the needs of long-term care—a commission that has public hearings, public input and a public report. It is under the Public Inquiries Act. It is going to include the voices of Ontarians. We will be thoughtful about it. We will be open-minded about it.

Long-term care in Ontario has been sorely neglected, and COVID-19 has laid its shortcomings bare. We must all work towards making sure that our most vulnerable people are cared for with respect and dignity. I hope that you will be part of the collaboration as we transform and reform long-term care.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, this morning I was joined by families with loved ones at the for-profit Extencicare Guildwood home in Toronto. Audrey lost her mother, Theresa, to COVID-19 in the halls of Guildwood and told us this: “She went into Extencicare Guildwood healthier than most 86-year-olds and eight weeks later she was dead from COVID.”

The government has the power to step in and take direct control of homes like these, and for months they’ve refused to do so, while families like Audrey’s pleaded for help.

Will the Premier listen to the families of Guildwood today and take over management at this home ravaged by COVID-19?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you once again for the question.

Our government has consistently taken action to address the concerns of our loved ones in long-term care and their families. My heart breaks for everyone who has gone through this devastating virus and its effects. COVID-19 is at war in our long-term-care homes. We are on the front lines. I understand the concerns. Many of us have had a loved one in long-term care or may have one there now. We've experienced it.

Professionally, as a physician, I know how hard this is on families. That's why the decisions we've made have been extremely thoughtful—understanding that there are consequences to every single decision we make. When the mandatory management order was made to assist those two homes that were really having difficulties containing the spread of COVID-19, we did it thoughtfully.

We will continue to take every measure necessary to help our families, our staff and our loved ones. We will do it thoughtfully every single time.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, the government cannot dismiss or ignore the outbreaks in our long-term-care homes any longer. The government has the power to act. Yes, they finally gave themselves, after weeks and weeks and weeks, the power to act. For months, they have sat on the sidelines while families have begged them—begged them—to intervene in these homes.

Corporate providers like Extendicare are turning a profit, but the staff who provide care and the families of residents say that they're not protecting their loved ones. They're turning a profit, but the loved ones who live in those homes are not being protected.

The Premier says he wants to take urgent action. That's not what has been happening. There hasn't been urgent action.

So my question is: Will the Premier and this government listen to workers and families—not CEOs and lobbyists—and take over this home today?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you again for the question.

I reject the premise of your statements. We have absolutely taken swift action, beginning with the formation of the command table, with the guidance that was put out in February at the first sign of COVID-19 being a presence in Ontario. We acted, and we acted decisively. We have consistently acted, looking at ways we can improve infection and prevention control in homes—active screening and, unfortunately, essential visitors only, which was absolutely necessary, but it has caused hardship, and I acknowledge that. It was absolutely necessary to do that.

We have hospitals coming in with rapid deployment teams. We have taken over three emergency orders. We've had more than two packages of regulatory amendments—or two packages of amendments to regulations. We have done this consistently, and we are taking every measure possible, using every tool possible, including the mandatory management order that we issued recently, and it will not be taken lightly. Those are serious decisions.

1040

## COVID-19

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** My next question is also for the Premier. But I do have to say, decisive action isn't waiting until two weeks ago to give yourself the power to take over homes. In BC, that was done within the first couple of weeks of identifying the crisis in long-term-care homes. That should have happened here in Ontario, Speaker. That is not decisive action.

Less than a week ago, here in the Legislature, the government claimed that Ontario's COVID-19 testing was a success and that Ontario is a global leader in testing. Barely 24 hours later, on Thursday, the Premier claimed he was shocked by Ontario's low levels of COVID-19 testing and was pledging yet another action plan.

We see what's going on here. You say one thing, but the reality is quite different. At what point during that 24-hour period did the Premier actually realize that Ontario's testing was, in fact, and remains today, inadequate?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** We certainly recognize how important testing is in defeating COVID-19. We've said that from day one. We've ramped up our labs so that we can do the testing across the province. Initially, this was only Public Health Ontario, but we quickly built a network of labs in universities and hospitals—some private labs with public health—to now have over 20 partners. That was done very quickly to ramp up our testing.

We have been, and continue to be the leader in testing in large provinces across this country. We are going to continue to test. We have tested all residents of long-term-care homes and all of the staff there, but we need to continue to go in and do that testing on an ongoing basis because this is such a vulnerable population. We're going to continue our testing now in other areas of congregate living, including retirement homes, shelters and other places of congregate living, such as group homes.

I'll have more to say in my supplemental, Speaker.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Well, Speaker, it's quite disturbing that the Minister of Health aped the Premier's suggestion last week that we were the best not only in the country but in the world on testing. That is completely problematic, that the Minister of Health doesn't know better than the words that came out of her mouth last week.

The fact is, for months the government has offered more excuses on testing than actual answers. Last week, the government said they couldn't find a way to courier lab samples around the province. Then they blamed the weekend for results drop-offs. Only later did they admit that the results are so low that the labs that process them are only half full.

What assurances can the Premier offer us that the new testing strategy will actually produce the results that every expert says we need in order to successfully reopen the

economy, when efforts to date have been so consistently falling short?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** The reality still exists that Ontario does lead the large provinces across Canada in terms of testing—has so throughout. We are continuing to increase our testing volumes. We've actually put \$100 million into assisting advancing our lab capacity and our testing capacity. We're expanding that in communities across Ontario. We're expanding it in the north in Indigenous communities and First Nations communities. We've also given assessment centres guidance and instruction, that if someone appears and has symptoms of COVID, if they're feeling unwell and they want to be tested, they will be tested.

This is really important as we start opening up our economy. We need to see what the effect is on public health. We're expanding our capacity in that area. We're also going to be going into large places of business as well. We do have a strategy that we will be outlining in the next day or so to the people of Ontario, but we know that we are going to be able to reach those numbers, over 20,000, and we will be able to do it on a consistent basis.

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** All I can say, Speaker, is promises, promises. That's what we get: a lot of promises but no action.

Yesterday, the Premier encouraged Ontario families living in what he called "hot spots" to get tested for COVID-19, yet when CBC News asked the government to provide a list of these hot spots so that people could actually take the Premier's advice, the government refused to do so. Can the Premier explain how families are supposed to know whether they're actually in any of these hot spots, if the government refuses to share that information with people?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** The Premier has always said that he wants to be open and transparent with the people of Ontario with respect to COVID-19, and nothing has changed in that respect. But what I think is fair is for the Premier to have the opportunity to outline the entire testing strategy and not in little bits and pieces, so that the people of Ontario can understand it in its entirety.

But the most important piece for today is that if people feel that they want to be tested for COVID-19, if they're not feeling well, they can go to an assessment centre and be tested. That is going to happen in all of the assessment centres that we have across this province.

#### COVID-19

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** This question is also for the Premier, but I cannot believe what I just heard: People need to wait and get the information bit by bit, and in the meantime the COVID-19 virus is going to spread, but we'll all just be fair so that everybody knows at once what the Premier has got up his sleeve in terms of a strategy. That doesn't sound like a testing strategy to me, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like a high-risk strategy that this government is allowing to occur.

This is just the latest example of the mixed messages and inconsistent approach that we've seen from the government on testing, so I'm back to the Premier again, and this is something we need to get right if businesses are going to open again and families are going to be able to go outside. For months, while the Premier has talked, doctors, health experts and working people have been demanding action: testing in group homes and shelters, workplace testing for essential workers, mobile assessment centres and comprehensive contact tracing so that we know who has the virus and who they have been in contact with.

When is the Premier going to announce these measures?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** All of the issues that you've just discussed are issues that we're talking about right now and that we are rolling forward. It's happening across the province. We have the assessment centres open. We know that it's going to be important to work with businesses as they start thinking about how they will open, how they are going to do their testing, how they are going to get personal protective equipment. All of those discussions are happening, and we are working hand in hand with businesses, with workplaces that want to move forward.

That said, there are some areas where there are more outbreaks than others. We've heard about it in some meat packing plants, for example. Those are the areas that we need to go to, that we need to do the testing, that we need to make sure that people who work there are safe, as well as that consumers are going to be safe.

So there's nothing that is being left to be discussed. We are discussing this comprehensively. We are going forward and doing the testing. The testing volumes are coming up. We were in transition when we completed it with respect to long-term-care homes, but that is continuing; every resident of every retirement home is also going to be tested. But it's important to make sure that we do the testing in the general public, as well as to protect those vulnerable groups that need protection, like people in long-term-care homes and people in retirement homes. We're going to continue to—

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

**Ms. Andrea Horwath:** Speaker, we're 11 weeks in. You would have thought the government would have had the testing figured out by now. Having discussions isn't good enough. For families across Ontario, the testing couldn't be more important. Their health is at risk. Their ability to get back to work is at risk. There is a real risk that following a trend of increasing cases of this virus, the first steps Ontario has taken to reopen the economy may have to be restricted or rolled back. The Premier's officials are using this data to make decisions about going forward or pulling back the steps that they've already been taking in terms of reopening.

Can the Premier tell us what level of testing he will set and actually achieve so that Ontario is safe to reopen?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you, Speaker. I would like to say to the leader of the official opposition, through you, that, as always, we have taken the advice and counsel and scientific evidence of our Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Williams. Dr. Williams and his team of public health experts, who are among the best in the world, are continuing to advise us on our testing strategy, testing locations, as well as the opening up of our economy.

We have not done this on just a thoughtless basis. We have sat down with Dr. Williams and with his team to understand what is safe and careful for us to open. We want to make sure that people are going to continue to be safe. One of the worst things to happen is to start opening up the economy and then have to close things down again. No one wants that to happen. We want our economy to continue to grow, but it needs to be safe for the health of all Ontarians.

1050

That is the work that we are doing. But you have to remember that that is not happening just with government officials. This is with an independent officer of the legislative—

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

#### COVID-19

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** My question is for the Minister of Health. Around the world, we have seen cases of COVID-19 rise. Unfortunately, Ontario was not immune to that trend, but we have seen over the course of this outbreak that our province has steadily increased our capacity to test more and more Ontarians.

I understand this is largely due to our government increasing our lab capacity. This steady increase has given me reassurance that our province has the upper hand in fighting this virus.

Would the minister be able to tell this House how we have been able to expand our lab capacity?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Thank you to the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for this question. It is very important, because we do realize how important testing is in defeating COVID-19. Simply put, the sooner that we can identify cases, the sooner we can act, contain cases and stop the spread, and of course, that will save lives.

That's why we've integrated our lab system in a way that has never been done before in the province of Ontario. This seamless integration of labs across Ontario has resulted in most testing returned to the patient within 24 to 48 hours. Additionally, the integration of our lab systems here in Ontario has allowed us to become a leader in the country for testing.

In order to ensure the health and well-being of Ontarians, we are continuing to invest in further expanding our lab capacity, which I will speak more about in my supplemental.

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

**Mr. Kaleed Rasheed:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you to all those on the front lines helping us fight this virus.

As this outbreak has progressed, it has given me great pride to see how swiftly our government has reacted to combat COVID-19. We know that testing is a major part of ensuring our province can reopen, and we know that our government has been working tirelessly to ensure testing is being done.

We know this is not easy. With the hard work and dedication we are putting in, I'm confident that we'll get to where we need to be.

Can the minister update us on how the province continues to prioritize testing for this province?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** Ontario has a province-wide network of 23 laboratory sites, working in coordination to further increase capacity and test turnaround times for COVID-19.

Additionally, through Ontario's action plan, we've provided \$100 million in additional funds for public health units to support COVID-19 monitoring and testing.

Speaker, to date Ontario has completed over 600,000 tests and continues to lead large Canadian provinces in daily testing volume. But we do know we need to do more. That's why we're now encouraging anyone who thinks that they need a test to please go to an assessment centre. You will be tested.

We want to ensure the health and well-being of Ontarians. We will continue to expand our COVID-19 testing and continue to maximize Ontario's testing capacity. It's important for every single Ontarian.

#### PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

**Ms. Sara Singh:** My question is for the Premier.

Speaker, despite the government's promises, workers across this province continue to struggle to access personal protective equipment. In Brampton, we're still grieving the loss of Arlene Reid, a personal support worker who died from COVID-19 after raising concerns about the lack of PPE she had available to do her job safely.

We also heard the story of Leonard Rodrigues, a personal support worker from Toronto who was forced to wear a dollar store mask on the job because he could not get access to the PPE the province keeps promising and failing to provide.

To the Premier: If there is enough PPE readily available, why are workers in this province still unable to access it?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** The health and safety of all Ontarians is our primary concern, especially when you consider our front-line workers. They are going in day after day to do this very difficult work. They're putting themselves in health risk, as well as their families. I know some families have not even been able to be together because one of their family members works in front-line care. This is very disruptive and disturbing for everyone.

However, we have been accessing PPE. Despite the worldwide demand for it, we continue to access PPE through our regular sources, through Ontario-made sources, so that we can build up our own reserves. This is vitally important for the future. But we have PPE available. It's available to all long-term-care homes. It's available to all hospitals and other congregate settings. It is available. It is available on a daily basis. It can be accessed. Inventories are being sent. People just can order this from the central pandemic reserve, and it will arrive to them within—

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

**Ms. Sara Singh:** But it's not just health care workers who can't access personal protective equipment; it's all front-line workers. Taxi drivers in my riding, for example, have been asking this government for masks, gloves and protective shields they need to keep themselves and their passengers safe.

In Brampton, we've heard of at least 10 taxi drivers who are working out of the Pearson airport—10 alone that we know of—who have died, and they are still telling us that they can't access the equipment they need to do their jobs safely.

To the Premier: Will the government commit today to ensuring that every single worker in this province who needs PPE, no matter where they work, will have access to that personal protective equipment they need to protect not only themselves, but their families and the people of this province?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** There are many people who could use PPE. People working in stores, anywhere, can use PPE. The fact is that most PPE that people need to wear—and this is according to Dr. Williams and the medical officers—is the surgical masks, which are not the N95 respirator masks that many people ask to wear. That is going to be sufficient coverage for them. In some cases, it may be face shields as well.

The reality is that we are still accessing PPE through our regular sources. We are still getting the gowns, the N95 masks, the gloves, the face shields—everything else that we need. Now, there may be situations where in some health care situations, perhaps the supervision there didn't allow people to have access to it. That is an entirely different issue from whether there was PPE or not. There is PPE. There will continue to be PPE available to all front-line workers who need it.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Extendicare Guildwood is nestled in a loving community. Every year, we have a parade, and the whole community gathers and marches by the long-term-care facility. That facility is currently in a raging outbreak. In fact, half of the residents have contracted COVID-19; 27 have died; 25 staff have contracted this disease. The community is crying for help.

Will you appoint a hospital to take over the management of Extendicare Guildwood so that we can preserve lives?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question. I appreciate your community rallying around your long-term-care home. I think communities can be very, very important to support our long-term-care homes.

We've taken measures—our government—across this pandemic regularly, at time of need. When homes were in crisis, we acted. We are monitoring and keeping track of the worst-hit homes. We have even gone to the point of calling in the Canadian Armed Forces. These are all serious decisions that impact the ability of our homes to function reasonably well.

Some of them are in crisis, and that's why we've had to issue the mandatory management order. Other homes may be in crisis, but we're managing to coordinate and collaborate with local hospitals, with other agencies, in finding a way forward for these homes. There has to be a collaborative process to this. We need to be supporting our homes and the staff who work there.

#### 1100

Issuing a mandatory management order is a last resort. I believe very much that our homes are gradually coming out of this. Our outbreaks are reducing. We are getting a handle on this, even in the homes that are in a dire situation.

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

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** Speaker, I appreciate the hesitation that I hear, but right now there are 30 people walking in front of Extendicare Guildwood in protest. They are asking this government to act and to act quickly.

I spoke with the daughters of Theresa Da Cruz. They put their mom in Extendicare Guildwood just two months ago. She was healthy and COVID-free. Sadly, she passed away from this disease in just eight weeks.

We need the province to use the power that is available so that we can save lives.

Will you act, and will you act today, to connect this long-term-care facility in outbreak with the hospital resources that are available and waiting to be used?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you again.

We take all of these situations extremely seriously, and that's why we work with Public Health Ontario, Ontario Health and our hospitals in the area. We've had tremendous support coming from our acute care hospitals to help our long-term-care homes. These are actively monitored. We have our inspectors in touch every day. There are other inspections going on through labour. We're aware of the circumstances of the homes in terms of testing, in terms of PPE and in terms of infection prevention and control. All of these measures are taken on a regular basis.

We are looking at how we can support the homes and looking at every measure that can be taken, and the hospitals have really risen to the challenge. It's not an easy time for anyone right now. If there is a worry about PPE, there is a route to access that. If there are concerns about incidents, there is an action line that can be called. We want to make sure that the communication is maintained with our homes and make sure—

**Ms. Mitzie Hunter:** But we're calling you now.

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Well, the collaboration is occurring, and we are getting support to all homes.

COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION  
PROTECTION DES LOCATAIRES  
COMMERCIAUX

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** My question is for the Premier and it concerns commercial evictions.

The Premier has been asking and even begging commercial property owners not to evict their tenants because there are no lineups of tenants to take their place, he says. However, evictions are still happening.

Why is the government not willing to use its power to take a measure to protect the tenants and to enact a measure to prevent evictions, just like it did for residential tenants?

Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement n'utilise pas son pouvoir afin d'adopter une mesure et d'empêcher les expulsions, comme il l'a fait pour protéger les locataires résidentiels?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Merci pour la question.

Minister Phillips has addressed this question several times over the last two weeks. I want to remind the House that this Legislature has passed \$10 billion in support for Ontario businesses. It included \$6 billion in support related to the deferral of taxes; \$1.8 billion with regard to property taxes, which we enabled our municipalities to do; and \$1.9 billion in WSIB supports.

We also cut the employer health tax by \$355 million so that 90% of businesses won't pay that tax this year. We reduced electricity costs by \$300 per business as well.

This is a government that supports business. We're going to continue to work with the federal government as they roll out their commercial program.

Again, I want to thank the member for the question.

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

**M<sup>me</sup> Lucille Collard:** The Ottawa Coalition of BIAs is asking this government for a moratorium of six months to prevent evictions and to compel landlords to take up the emergency program. The Toronto BIAs are asking the same thing because, according to their surveys, less than 20% of the commercial property owners are willing to take the emergency program.

Why won't the government listen to businesses and give them the support they need, instead of threatening commercial property owners with consequences down the road?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Again, Speaker, I'm not going to reiterate all the support measures that I addressed in the first question. But I will acknowledge that we all know, on this side of the House, on behalf of Minister Phillips, Minister Fedeli, Minister Sarkaria—they've taken an incredible amount of time to work with businesses during the pandemic.

We all know the extreme pressure that they're facing at this time. A global economic slowdown, which is underpinned by a global health crisis, is putting real pressure on businesses and entrepreneurs in our province. We understand that. We're going to continue to work with them. We're going to continue to work with the federal government as we move forward.

We're confident that working together as Team Ontario, we're going to get through this pandemic.

Thank you for the question.

LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** My question is to the Premier. Jeffrey is a personal support worker in my riding. He quit his job to work in a long-term-care home and help out. The home that Jeffrey works in is so understaffed that one PSW is sometimes responsible for 25 seniors. Jeffrey's body aches at the end of each shift. He gets no break. Jeffrey does everything he can to help frail seniors eat and drink when they don't want to anymore. As Jeffrey puts it, "I help them laugh when they live. I hold their hands when they die."

This government promised they had things under control. Jeffrey's experience is telling us the situation in these homes is not under control.

Will the government call a full public inquiry so we can ensure that something like this never happens again?

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

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you for the question.

This global pandemic has put our long-term-care homes on the front lines. The conditions in some of our homes are worrisome. That's why we've taken all the measures possible, even including a mandatory management order, where hospitals are now going into two of our homes to deal with that. We know how incredibly important this is.

This was many years building in terms of the staffing crisis; it didn't happen overnight—many, many years. And now, with a pandemic, we have a situation that is an absolute crisis.

That's why we're doing absolutely everything possible to bring as many workers in: looking at pandemic pay, looking at making sure that they have the PPE they need, doing the testing, the active surveillance, the asymptomatic spread, and looking at how we protect our staff and our residents. This is an evolving science and we're listening to our experts—our Chief Medical Officer of Health and our public health officers—for that advanced information and knowledge. We rely on that. We're taking every measure possible.

Looking at our PSWs, my heart goes out to them. They are on the front lines; they are heroes. We will continue to do everything possible to support them.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary? The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Families, residents and health care workers at Meighen Manor in my riding are still telling me PPE is

being rationed, with some health care workers being told no when they ask for N95 masks, even though a quarter of our residents have died of COVID-19.

They've told me the government commission announced last week didn't go far enough. Meighen Manor community is demanding a public, non-partisan, independent inquiry into long-term-care homes, and I stand with them, Speaker. Meighen Manor needs help now and needs to come under the direct management of this province. They require full access to PPE to keep staff and residents safe, Speaker. I stand with them.

There have been over 1,400 COVID-19 deaths in Ontario long-term-care homes. How many more does our province need to see?

Will the Premier stand with Meighen Manor long-term-care home today and make the commitment today to provide direct public management, necessary PPE and a public inquiry into long-term care? Will the Premier stand with Meighen Manor, yes or no?

**Hon. Merrilee Fullerton:** Thank you, again, for the question.

Long-term care in Ontario is under siege by COVID-19. A commission, an independent commission, a non-partisan commission—we have announced that that will be starting in September. There will be public hearings. There will be public input. There will be a public report. We encourage transparency. We must all be interested in getting to the bottom of this.

1110

The opposition supported a government that neglected long-term care for 15 long years. Watch what happened over that time. We looked at the neglect and the long-term-care sector ignored.

Our Public Inquiries Act includes independent commissions. This will be done. We will get to the bottom of it. If anyone has concerns right now, the action line is there. We are monitoring our homes. We are very aware of Meighen Manor, and we're getting Meighen Manor support. Meighen Manor already has Sunnybrook hospital in there as a support, and Ontario Health is actively involved, making sure that they get their PPE. We have inspectors who are on the ground and aware of what's happening in our homes. This is ongoing, and we will persist to protect—

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

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** My question is for the Premier. The Premier told the people of Ontario that they have a right to know what he knows. The Premier also gave Dr. Williams the power to postpone medical procedures. The FAO reported in April that over 50,000 people have been denied medical health care, and that that number is rising by 12,000 every week. Over 100,000 people have been denied medical procedures.

Minister, how many people have died waiting for heart surgery, organ transplants and other procedures? How many more are suffering because they cannot get cataract,

knee and hip surgeries? Minister, will you tell the people of Ontario how many innocent people have died waiting for the Premier's emergency powers to end?

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

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I thank the member very much for the question. It is an important issue, I know, to many, many Ontarians who have been waiting to have their scheduled procedures done, whether it's for eyes, whether it's hips or knees, or whether it's cancer surgeries or heart surgeries. This has been very, very difficult for very many people, and we are several hundred thousand procedures behind.

But we needed to do that in order to create the space in case we had a surge in COVID-19 cases. Thanks to the work that was done by 14.5 million Ontarians to practise physical distancing, to take all of the necessary health measures that had to be done, we fortunately did not see our hospitals overwhelmed, but that very well could have happened. We very well could have been in the same situation as Italy, Spain and other places around the world. Fortunately that did not happen in Ontario, and we are now working to get those procedures back in place, which I'll speak to in my supplemental.

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

**Mr. Randy Hillier:** Again, to the Premier: We have flattened the curve. The dire predictions of hundreds of thousands of deaths were wrong. Yet while flattening the curve, the Premier has also flattened our economy, extinguished all social interactions and stifled our democracy and our freedoms.

In April, the Premier told the people of Ontario that they deserve to know what he knows. Minister, over 100,000 people have been denied necessary medical health care. To get the real picture of COVID-19, we need to know the consequence of your actions. Minister, will you provide the number of preventable deaths caused by the decisions taken by you and the de facto Premier, Dr. Williams, or will this be kept secret and hidden?

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** I think there are many things to say here, but I'll start with this: There has always been a triage factor in place for people who have been waiting for cancer surgeries, heart surgeries and other surgeries that could be life-threatening, based on a pandemic plan that was developed by Cancer Care Ontario many years ago after SARS. If people were in a situation where their life was at stake and they needed to have surgery, they would have had surgery by now. They would have.

What has been looked at is the type of surgery people have, how aggressive the cancer might be, and whether the situation is going to place them in a life-threatening situation. If they needed the surgery, they would have had it by now.

There has been some modelling done with respect to deaths, but no one knows the exact number. What I can tell you certainly is that if people needed to have that surgery on an urgent basis, they would have had it.

Now we're in a position, thankfully, where we've asked every hospital to prepare a readiness assessment to start

those surgeries again. That assessment is going to be reviewed on a regional basis, and it's going to be based on the number of patients they have who have COVID-19, the space that they still have left in their hospital once they start taking on these elective procedures, how much personal protective equipment they have independent of the pandemic supply, whether they have access to—

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

#### COMMERCIAL TENANT PROTECTION

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the Premier. This Premier continues to think that empty words are enough to convince some landlords to give their commercial tenants a break. Well, Mr. Speaker, without concrete action some landlords just aren't interested.

Michelle Tao, the small business owner of Woofur in Richmond Hill, has tried with her commercial landlord, Primont Homes. Not only are they refusing to apply for the federal rent relief program; they told her they're actually increasing her rent by 30%.

Ontario businesses deserve leadership during this crisis. They are so frustrated with this government. They need a ban on commercial evictions now. Their rent should be capped now. They needed a rent subsidy to survive last month.

Do this Premier and this government understand that small businesses with bad landlords will no longer be open for business, and this compromises our economic recovery as a province?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Our government has been working hand in hand with Ontario's business community from day one. Our province hasn't seen a more business-friendly government in over 20 years.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 we have been acting decisively to ease financial pressures facing our business community across Ontario. Again, I want to remind the honourable member that Ontario's action plan responding to COVID-19 includes \$7 billion in direct support and \$10 billion in cash flow support as part of a \$17-billion package designed to help families and businesses.

We will continue to work closely with the federal government and coordinate our efforts to provide maximum relief for our business community.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The supplementary? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** My question is to the Premier. The Premier's empty words and tough talk mean nothing to the small businesses in my riding that either don't qualify for the government's inadequate rent program or whose landlords are refusing to opt in. In Parkdale–High Park, businesses like the Northern Contemporary gallery have already been evicted, and business owners like Timothy from Ninetails Coffee Bar and Greg from Ace Restaurant are worried that if this government continues

to drag its feet on small business supports like direct rent relief, small businesses won't survive this crisis.

When will the Premier stop pretending that tough talk and press conferences are enough for small businesses to make ends meet and start taking real action to save our main street businesses?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Again, Speaker, I want to thank the honourable member for the question.

I know that the finance minister would want me to thank all members of this Legislature for voting for the \$17-billion program that our government has brought forward, and it was supported unanimously, to support the people and the businesses of our province. Included in that program was \$241 million in assistance that our government has put forward as part of the emergency commercial rent assistance program.

Again, we will continue to work with all levels of government as we move forward. We will continue to meet and to work closely with our business community. Again, on behalf of the ministers who have had tireless work with our business community, we will continue to be their advocate to the federal government.

#### HEALTH CARE WORKERS

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** My question is for the Premier. I continue to hear from folks throughout my constituency who are still not getting the pandemic pay this government promised weeks ago.

**1120**

Jean Bartkowiak, the president and CEO of Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, wrote to the Premier, calling for pandemic pay for all our front-line health care heroes. As he put it, "Many of my staff have been working for the last more than eight months, seven days a week, sometimes more than 12 hours a day," and the fact that they're still waiting to find out if they even qualify for support is making things harder.

Premier, when will this government ensure that front-line health care heroes finally get the pandemic pay they deserve?

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Deputy Premier.

**Hon. Christine Elliott:** We are grateful for the work that our front-line professionals are doing in health care. They are the ones who really are holding up the entire system for us. They are the ones who show up each and every day. The idea of pandemic pay was to assist them at least financially, in a small way, to thank them for their efforts.

The pandemic pay is being worked on daily. It's important to mention that the Ministry of Health has been working with over a thousand different transfer payment agreements and getting this moving, so it should start flowing next week. All pandemic pay recipients will receive pay from the date that we first announced it, so it will be retroactive back to April 25. The sheer volume and the number of transfer payment agencies that we're dealing with has held this up, but the money will start flowing next week.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Supplementary question, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** Good morning, Minister.

Speaker, when the pandemic pay plan was announced, the government said employers had all been contacted by the 15th of May. People in my riding were expecting money to be in their bank accounts by now. However, we now know the government has no idea when all employers will be contacted and the money released.

We know there are other employee classifications deserving of the bonus pay, including lab techs taking blood samples, X-ray techs, dialysis techs, staff in our physicians' offices and in pharmacies, physiotherapists and, God bless them, the good people who are handing out the groceries at our food banks, making sure that those most in need don't starve.

Speaker, when can we expect the government to show their appreciation to those employee groups I've just mentioned?

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

Careful consideration has been given to the recipients of pandemic pay. I know that they are anxious to receive it. However, as I indicated in the previous question, there are over a thousand transfer payment agreements and agencies that we're dealing with. That is what has held things up slightly. However, the money will start flowing next week. It will be received by the employers for distribution to the employees accordingly. I know they've had to wait a little bit longer than expected, but that's only because of the sheer volume and the number of transfer payment agencies that are involved with it.

## CONSUMER PROTECTION

### PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Ma question s'adresse au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement.

Mr. Speaker, during these challenging times, paying the rent is becoming increasingly difficult for many Ontarians as they struggle to make ends meet. The government put a freeze on tenant evictions, and that helps for now. However, I think we're all well aware that it will take a while to recover from this. It won't be all rainbows and butterflies in the weeks, months or even years after we overcome this challenge. Ontarians will need time to get back on their feet.

The government sets the maximum for allowable residential rent increases annually. A freeze on this increase—a 0% maximum—for the next two years would cost the government nothing and would bring much-needed relief to tenants. This is an important tool at the government's disposal that can be used to help Ontarians at least get some breathing room.

Will the government consider putting a freeze on rent increases for the next two years to help Ontario tenants get back on their feet during these difficult times?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Merci beaucoup pour la question.

Our government acted very quickly during this pandemic. I know that the Attorney General would want me to remind the House that he acted decisively to halt eviction orders and scheduled enforcement of eviction orders. We're also ensuring that no one is evicted for not paying their rent during this terrible virus.

We also invested \$200 million into our communities through the social services relief fund. The fund allows local service managers the flexibility to use it in their communities however they need to. Some have provided rent relief in their communities.

Again, Speaker, all the suggestions and the options are on the table, as the Premier has said at numerous press conferences. We will take the advice from the public as we move forward with further action.

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

**M<sup>lle</sup> Amanda Simard:** Merci au ministre—très apprécié.

Ma question supplémentaire au gouvernement : The government stopped price gouging when it came to stores charging exorbitant prices for essential supplies in the face of a pandemic, and rightly so. Now, food delivery services are charging restaurant owners up to a 30% commission fee at a time when restaurants are dependent on these services due to the current restrictions. Last week, I wrote to the Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction asking him to act now and put a temporary 15% cap on these commission fees for the duration of the ongoing pandemic.

Many of these businesses are seriously at risk, Mr. Speaker. These abnormally high commission fees are just another form of price gouging, and yet for this, the government has indicated that they will not be stopping this practice.

Will the government reconsider issuing an emergency order limiting these commissions to 15%, as several other jurisdictions have done, while Ontario's state of emergency is in effect?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I thank the colleague for the question. As the member knows, the government moved very quickly—the Premier moved very quickly in particular—we put in place a tip line. We brought in some emergency orders to ensure that Ontarians were treated fairly. Of course, we'll continue to work very hard to make sure that Ontarians are treated fairly during the COVID-19 crisis.

I do thank the member for her question.

## PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

**Mr. Jamie West:** My question is to the Premier. Thousands of workers have shown up to work every day during this crisis, and now that this government has started to reopen the economy, tens of thousands of more workers will be expected to return to their workplaces.

It's vital to ensure that workplaces remain safe for the workers and for the public while the pandemic still rages

on. However, instead of putting in place rules and adequate on-site inspections related to COVID-19, this government only offers vague optional guidelines.

How will this government ensure that those who have to go back to their workplaces will have adequate safety measures in place to prevent them from becoming sick?

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

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** As my honourable friend will know, the Minister of Labour has been working very closely with the Minister of Health and through the various command tables that are dealing with COVID-19. We've been reaching out to stakeholders across the province.

It is obviously very important to the people of Ontario that we see the economy restored and that people get back to work, but as the Minister of Health just said, we have to do that in a safe way. The safety of Ontarians is our priority. But as the member knows, the Minister of Labour has been working very, very diligently on this.

I understand that there's somewhat over 90 reports that have been prepared on how to return different sectors safely. We will continue to do that by working together with the opposition and of course with those at the command table.

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

**Mr. Jamie West:** Back to the Premier: It's interesting they mentioned the Ministry of Labour, because I have questions about that as well.

Essential front-line workers have continued to work, scared they'll catch the virus and bring it home to their families. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak in Ontario, 213 workers have exercised their right to refuse unsafe work and asked for a workplace inspection from the Ministry of Labour. The Toronto Star reported that in every single one of these 213 cases, the ministry dismissed the worker's concerns without inspecting the workplaces in person.

Despite the Premier's rhetoric, work refusal complaints to the Ministry of Labour due to COVID-19 have been denied in the vast majority of cases. Workers deserve clarity.

What direction has the government given to the Ministry of Labour inspectors when they receive a work refusal complaint from a worker concerned about their safety?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** The member will know that the Minister of Labour worked very quickly to ensure there were inspectors actively going into workplaces across the province of Ontario to ensure, first and foremost, the safety of those who are going back to work. We understand how important it is to get the economy moving again, and we can't do that if the workers aren't safe and secure. That's why the Minister of Labour has been working with stakeholders, with health care professionals and with the command table to ensure that we have rules in place for when the economy begins to open up, when different sectors of the economy continue to open up.

There are over 90 reports in place already, and as the minister said last week, there are a number of inspections

that are happening daily. There have been a number of complaints made, yes, and a number of workplaces have been cited and the Ministry of Labour has shut them down.

**1130**

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do this, because obviously what is very important to the people of the province of Ontario not only is that they remain healthy and safe, but that they have a job to go back to. And when this economy gets moving again, the only way it will get moving is if the people who are going back to work are safe. The Minister of Labour is on top of that, working with the Minister of Health.

## MUNICIPALITIES

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** We know that COVID-19 is impacting everyone across Ontario and also our municipalities. These municipalities provide the critical front-line services that so many Ontarians rely on every single day.

So my question today is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I'm asking the minister if he could please explain to this House what the government has done to date to support our municipalities and our communities.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I want to thank the honourable member for the question.

I want to take this moment to thank Ontario's municipalities, including AMO, and our councils, boards, committees and every single municipal worker. Each and every one of you are on the front lines providing the supports and services that Ontarians rely on.

I want you to know that our government stands shoulder to shoulder with you, because working together as Team Ontario, we're going to get through this. We, as Ontarians, owe all essential workers an immense debt of gratitude, one we will never be able to say thank you enough for.

Thank you for the question.

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

**Mr. Sam Oosterhoff:** I think we can all agree that our hundreds of municipal partners across this province are doing incredible work. But we also know that we're going to have to come together and make sure that our municipalities are able to get back on their feet. It is a difficult time.

Could the minister please provide this House with a bit more information on how our government is working to help municipalities keep Ontarians safe?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Again, I want to thank the honourable member for the question.

We've given \$148 million to our municipal partners through the Social Services Relief Fund. This fund is allowing those local service managers to invest in their communities in ways that they need it most. This is on top of the quick actions that our government has taken to allow electronic council meetings, staff redeployments and moves to keep our supply chain open.

Our government is continuing to work with our municipal partners through our technical table so that we can track COVID-19-related expenses. But we're also joining the Federation of Canadian Municipalities in asking the federal government for assistance, because we can't do this alone.

Thank you for the question.

#### EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** My question is to the Premier. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister announced that he was working with the provinces to guarantee 10 days of paid sick leave for all workers in Canada, which is good news to Ontario workers who had their sick leave rolled back after this government came to power.

Now that the federal government has recognized the vital importance of paid sick days to allow workers to stay home when they are sick, will this government finally admit that cutting paid sick days was the wrong thing to do and commit to providing 10 days of paid sick leave for all Ontario workers?

*Interjections.*

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

The government House leader to reply.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I thank the honourable member for the question.

This is a proposal the Prime Minister announced yesterday. It was announced during the COVID-19 crisis. We have actually moved very quickly to protect the people of the province of Ontario, workers in the province of Ontario who have lost their job during COVID-19.

We have been very aggressive right from day one and we will continue to be very aggressive to make sure that the people of the province of Ontario are safe. We will continue to work with the federal government on these initiatives.

But never leave it to the NDP to miss an opportunity to try and conflate COVID-19 issues, which are ravaging not only the Ontario economy but the entire global economy, and trying to gain political advantage in another sector.

I will say this: We will protect the people of province of Ontario, we will protect the workers of the province of Ontario and we will make sure that they have a good job to go back to once COVID-19 has been defeated by this government.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** This government should realize that workers who can't afford to take a day off when they are sick are compromising the ability of our province to recover from COVID-19.

Speaker, my question is short and simple: When will workers in Ontario be able to access paid sick leave, so they can afford to stay home when they are sick?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Again, we've moved very quickly, this Legislature—immediately, in fact, with unanimous support of all members of this House—to ensure that those who were sick with COVID-19, who were displaying

symptoms and those who had to stay home to take care of loved ones who may have COVID-19 would be protected, that their jobs would be protected. We were one of the first governments in the country to do that, and one of the first Legislatures. I'm very proud of that.

We will continue to protect the workers of the province of Ontario, because it is the workers, the people who produce for this economy, who will help us make the investments in long-term care, who will help us make the investments in improving our health care system, who will help us build a bigger and better and stronger economy.

It goes without saying that we will continue to do what Progressive Conservatives have always done: We will pay very close attention to the people who have built this province and made it the best province in this country. You can rest assured that we will not let go of that and we will continue to do that.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** That concludes question period this morning. We have no further business this morning, so the House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

*The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.*

#### PETITIONS

##### PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** I rise on behalf of the residents of St. Paul's and, of course, Ontario to read the following:

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, and I sign.

##### PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** On behalf of my constituents from Parkdale–High Park, I'd like to table a petition on pandemic pay.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

"Whereas those eligible to receive the payment will be staff working in long-term-care homes, retirement homes,

emergency shelters, supportive housing, social services congregate care settings, correction institutions and youth justice facilities, as well as those providing home and community care and staff in hospitals;

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

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

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

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

#### PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

**Mr. Mike Schreiner:** I have a petition from a number of health care workers from my riding.

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

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

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

I fully support this request, will sign my name to it and share it with the table.

#### PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will affix my name to it and send it down to the table.

#### PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** On behalf of my constituents of Parkdale–High Park, I’d like to table a petition on pandemic pay. It reads:

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

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

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

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

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

##### REBUILDING CONSUMER CONFIDENCE ACT, 2020

##### LOI DE 2020 VISANT À RÉTABLIR LA CONFIANCE CHEZ LES CONSOMMATEURS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 12, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** It’s interesting that we’re having a debate on Bill 159 at this moment in Ontario’s history. We are on the verge of receiving a very troubling report from the military about conditions that were uncovered in five long-term-care homes in this province.

We here in this place—the citizens of this province expect us to be dealing with the urgent issues that are in front of us as a result of the COVID-19 state of emergency. This bill does not fall into that category. This bill does not address the priorities that people in this province have and that they need to see us talking to, because they are experiencing it every day: the people who have lost their loved ones in long-term-care homes; the people who have lost family members to COVID-19; and the people who are wearing masks and doing their part to physical distance but are really, really worried about what’s going on in this province as we hear the results of the testing—the lack of testing and the problems with reaching the target for COVID-19 testing.

These are the issues that we should be talking to. I'm really disappointed that the government chose this opportunity to bring forward a piece of legislation that doesn't deal with any of the problems that we are seeing in this province as a result of COVID-19 and that doesn't address the report that we're going to be hearing about this afternoon from the Canadian military about the treatment of elderly residents in long-term-care homes.

The Prime Minister said that reading the report was "deeply disturbing." He said that he was sad. He was shocked. He was disappointed. He was angry. He said that the situation that's described in that report is a reality associated with COVID-19 but has existed for some time—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Point of order.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Government House leader is rising on a point of order.

1310

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** While I'm certainly moved by the words of the member across the floor, and there will be ample time to speak to the report once we've all had an opportunity to digest what seems to be something very troubling, at this moment we're talking about Bill 159. I would hope the member would focus her comments.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The standing orders compel the Speaker to ensure that the debate is relevant to the bill that's been called. I would ask the member for London West to continue her remarks, but to make her remarks based on the bill that's before the House, Bill 159.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I do note that there is a schedule in the bill that deals with retirement homes. Retirement homes are a place where seniors go when they are no longer able or want to live at home. Those are also places that have experienced great vulnerability to COVID-19 because of the lack of oversight of retirement homes.

Retirement homes don't even have the inadequate oversight that long-term-care homes have. They have personal support workers from community agencies who are coming and going all the time. We know that even when this government brought in an emergency order to limit personal support workers going into long-term-care homes, those PSWs employed by agencies were allowed to continue going to multiple long-term-care homes and retirement homes, which are included in this bill.

This is a consumer protection bill. Those people, those seniors, those vulnerable seniors who are paying a lot of money in a privatized system to purchase housing in a retirement home, deserve to be protected. They deserve to have oversight from the government that will ensure that when a health care worker comes in to assist them, to support them with their personal needs, they won't be at risk of contracting an infectious disease. This is the kind of consumer protection measure that we need to be talking to right now—right now—in the province of Ontario.

The bill addresses consumer protection. We are in the process of reopening our economy so that consumers can feel that they can safely go into retail establishments and not be risking their health. We are hearing from businesses

in my riding—and I'm sure my other colleagues have heard from businesses in their ridings as well—that they are having trouble accessing the PPE that their staff need. Their workers are very, very concerned about their vulnerability to infection from consumers who come into retail establishments and other places of business.

Those are the kinds of consumer protection measures that we should be talking about: what kind of PPE, what kind of modifications do businesses need in order for consumers to feel safe in this province, in order for consumers to feel that they can go into a place of business and not walk out with COVID-19 infection, not carry COVID-19 infection home to their family members who may be immunocompromised. They may have elderly relatives who live in retirement homes—which are addressed by this bill—or in long-term-care homes, or just in their community.

Speaker, again, I can't convey enough my complete disappointment with the lack of leadership from this government in deciding that today is the appropriate time to be dealing with this legislation. We had an agreement. We talked. Our party, the Green Party, the Liberals, the government: We talked about the urgency of making sure that legislation that's debated addresses COVID-19, addresses the real issues, the most pressing issues that people are facing.

The consumer protection measures that are outlined in this bill are not the consumer protection measures that people are looking for in the middle of a global pandemic. They're not talking about enabling businesses to put up the Plexiglas barriers and getting the masks and gloves that their staff need in order to keep themselves safe, and in order to keep consumers safe.

Speaker, there are so many other consumer protection issues that we should be talking about today. If this government was really concerned about consumer protection, they would be bringing in a bill that protected workers who are dealing with the public now as we reopen the economy. They would be bringing in paid sick leave. They should have embraced the Prime Minister's commitment to 10 days of paid sick leave that was a result of the advocacy of the federal NDP leader, Jagmeet Singh. They should say, "This is a welcome initiative, a welcome development for workers in this province," who used to have access to paid sick leave but have had those paid days removed as one of the very first actions that this government decided to take.

That would be a huge consumer protection measure, Speaker. Because when workers are sick, they hear constantly from public health that they should stay home, and they want to stay home. They don't want to jeopardize the health of their family or the health of the people that they are dealing with. But they can't afford to not go to work. They can't afford to take a day off or potentially 14 days—two weeks—off work. They can't afford to do that and lose their income for that entire two-week period. That would mean not being able to buy groceries, not being able to pay the rent, not being able to pay utility bills.

It's impractical and it's completely unfair that workers should be financially penalized if they are sick and that they should be blamed if they say that it's not economically possible for them to stay home. They have no choice but to go into work. Speaker, that jeopardizes consumers. Taking away paid sick leave, not acting immediately to ensure that paid sick leave is there: That is something that is not helpful to consumers, that is not protecting people in this province and enabling us to get our economy going again.

The bill that we have before us today also includes a number of measures related to the home warranty program. Again, in the midst of a global pandemic, it's very important that people have stable housing, that people are able to go to a home where they can feel safe, where they can feel that the builder did an adequate job, that the builder took the proper protections, that the builder's practices were in alignment with the building code. But we've heard over and over again from people who were not supported, were not protected, by the existing provisions of the new home warranty program. So that is an overdue measure.

But now, as we're dealing with people who are being evicted from their residences, as we're dealing with businesses that are having to close down because their commercial landlord won't participate in the rent relief program, and the commercial landlord is expecting that rent? Many business owners that I've heard from are looking at personal bankruptcy because they are so far out-of-pocket in having tried to keep their business afloat over these last two months that their only option is to declare personal bankruptcy if they do not get the kind of support that they have a right to expect from this government.

This government has not been willing to listen to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, to advocacy organizations, business improvement associations and many other umbrella or sector advocacy groups, which have been telling the government that they need direct commercial rent subsidy. That is what would help them keep their businesses afloat. It's better for consumers when there are businesses around for them to patronize and when they feel safe going into those places of business.

We know that retailers are very worried, the retailers that were able to open up under stage 1. They're very worried about whether they will see a return of those customers who have not been able to go out as those non-essential businesses were closed over the last two months. Their concern is quite justified when we see the number of cases increasing over the last week and when we see that the government consistently failed to meet the targets in terms of the testing that is conducted. It is a big concern to consumers when they go into these businesses as to whether they will be protected and whether they will be able to purchase goods and services without feeling they are jeopardizing their health.

1320

There are a number of things that we should be dealing with right now in the province of Ontario. This bill is not

a high priority. I can't imagine that it's a high priority for anybody on that side. I, personally, have not received a single call—or email, in fact—from a constituent in London West over the last two months who has said that what they want to see from this government is this bill being brought forward, pass second reading and taken to committee. Nobody has contacted me to say that.

In fact, Speaker, there are a number of pieces of legislation that have been sent to committee that maybe it would make sense to deal with. Maybe you could make an argument that, in the context of a global pandemic, there might be a rationale for moving those pieces of legislation forward, but this government has not been in the least bit forthcoming in terms of trying to organize that business.

We have talked endlessly about getting committees moving, about retrofitting committee rooms 1 and 2 so that they can be broadcast and so that the public can participate in the committee input processes, but we have yet to see anything from this government about that going ahead.

There are some pieces of legislation on the order paper that maybe you could make an argument for that this is a good time for these issues to be addressed and to be moved forward in the legislative process. Maybe you could make that argument. But those bills are all at committee and we haven't heard anything from this government about its plan to get committees moving again, to get witnesses to come before the committee.

Instead, what we have seen is this bill coming before us today, a bill that is not a priority for the people in the province of Ontario. It's not a priority for any of us. Look around: Who among us has heard from constituents that now is the time to deal with this bill and now is the time to debate this bill in the Legislature? This is not what people want to see debated.

They want to see the situation in long-term-care homes debated. They want to see contact tracing debated. They want to see a testing strategy for Ontario debated. They want to see a process for reopening the economy, which is in this bill. It is a consumer protection bill, and the economy relies on consumers feeling safe to go to commercial establishments. But people in this province want to see consumer protection that is going to keep them safe as we enter this very, very unstable process of reopening the economy.

I know that all of us have heard anxiety from people we deal with. I'm hearing more and more, just in the last couple of days, from seniors who've said they feel more unsafe now going to a grocery store than they did in the last two months because there have been all kinds of mixed messages from this government about what we should be doing now. There seems to be a little bit of a sense that COVID-9 is behind us and we can all take it easy. We don't have to worry about physical distancing anymore. The people who are vulnerable, who need to go to the pharmacy and who need to go to the grocery store, are worried. They're worried that they could be infected by people around them who are unfortunately not taking public health messages seriously.

The best kind of consumer protection that we could be talking about at this moment in the Ontario Legislature is how to protect citizens as the economy reopens, as phase 1 of reopening the economy is under way. The last thing anybody in this province wants is to see the economy have to shut down again. But without a testing and tracing strategy that is really going to protect people, that is indeed what we might see. That's not going to be helpful to consumers. That's not going to be helpful to businesses. That's not going to be helpful to people who live in retirement homes. That's not going to be helpful to the frail elderly in long-term-care homes and their families. That's not going to be helpful to anyone, Speaker, and actually that's the only consumer protection measures that we should be talking about right now at this point in this Legislature. With that, Speaker, I will conclude my remarks on this bill.

Once again, I want to say that I would have hoped that this would have been an opportunity for this government to move forward with a bill that really spoke to the concerns—the deep concerns, the real concerns—that people we hear from every day are feeling about COVID-19, the concerns that they are feeling about whether we can safely reopen the economy. The concerns that workers are feeling as they are called back to work and being brought back into a workplace that has not been retrofitted with the necessary precautions—and they are not being provided with the PPE that's going to protect them when they are back again dealing with the public and also dealing with their co-workers.

Speaker, this was such a huge missed opportunity for this government—a huge missed opportunity. It's not surprising, perhaps, given the previous legislative changes that they brought in, which were pretty minor in the scheme of things in terms of the kind of legislative change that's needed in Ontario. But I am disappointed that this opportunity was lost to really protect consumers in Ontario to make a difference for people and families who have been struggling with COVID-19, who want a return to normal but don't have confidence that the measures that have been put in place are going to enable that return to normal so that we can move on and get past this pandemic.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I thank the member for London North—

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** West.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** London West—I apologize—for her presentation and now ask members for questions to the member for London West based on her presentation and her responses. Questions and responses?

Okay, further debate?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** It's an interesting time we're in. There are so many unpredictable things happening in our world, in our country, in our province, and also in this Legislature—so many unpredictable things.

Today the government has called Bill 159, the Rebuilding Consumer Confidence Act. It is quite interesting that that title is very much applicable to confidence overall in what's going on during the pandemic. People want to have confidence in government. People want to

have confidence in legislation. And this government calling this bill today, it's kind of off track of what really is going on in our world today. We are under a COVID-19 shutdown. We're in a situation where people's confidence has been shaken—their trust, their faith. It's just the way things are. It's no fault of anyone. The pandemic came along and people are supposed to be dealing with it day by day. But they do expect governments to also do the same.

In this context that we're here this afternoon, I think they expect a government to be calling legislation that is going to protect them as consumers, protect them as citizens, protect them around health care, protect them as workers, and this legislation doesn't really address that.

**1330**

But as in schedule 7, when I was leafing through this bill earlier thinking that perhaps this might be something the government would want to talk about—I don't know why they'd want to talk about it, because really, we should be laser-focused on making sure we get through this COVID-19 coronavirus with as few fatalities as possible. That's what we should be focusing on. That would be making sure the testing is up to par so the numbers keep decreasing, not what we saw last week.

I quickly want to talk about the fact that the Retirement Homes Act is in this bill. Linking that to the current reality of what's happening, there are some big gaps and pitfalls in what's been happening there. We know that PPE, personal protective equipment, is one of them. We know that workers working in multiple facilities is another. We know that the pay people get in certain facilities doesn't allow them to stay in those careers. All those things layered on top of each other have the consequences of what we're seeing today: the high numbers at risk in retirement homes and long-term-care homes because of this coronavirus.

Again, I ask this government to pay attention to what's really going on in today's reality. People want to hear about how we can get through this, how people can be protected in long-term-care homes as workers, in their own homes and when they go out; and when this government is slowly revealing their phases, how they can be protected and what those measures are—not about this bill. As the member from London West said, people aren't calling to hear about legislation like this; they're calling about the worries that they have under the coronavirus, what's next and how they're going to get through it. That's what this government should be bringing into this Legislature for debate.

With that, Speaker, I conclude my remarks.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Thank you to the member for London–Fanshawe. We now do questions and comments related to the presentation just made by the member for London–Fanshawe. Questions and responses? Further debate? Further debate?

Ms. Thompson has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1333 to 1338.*

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Attention: I’ve received a notice pursuant to standing order 30(h). It’s a message from the government whip respectfully requesting that the vote on second reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection, 2000, be deferred until deferred votes on Tuesday, May 26, 2020.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

PROTECTING TENANTS  
AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY  
HOUSING ACT, 2020

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

Mr. Clark moved second reading of the following bill:

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

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Further debate? I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I’m pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act. Back in March, I introduced this important piece of legislation, and since that time our government has focused on the health and well-being of Ontarians as we navigate through the COVID-19 outbreak.

We acted quickly to prevent evictions and announced a range of measures that are helping everyday people. We provided \$200 million in social services relief funding to help protect the health and the safety of our province’s most vulnerable people. Part of that funding—\$148 million—was to help municipalities and social service providers such as shelters, food banks, emergency services, charities and non-profits continue to deliver their critical services, hire additional staff and find ways to promote social distancing and self-isolation to keep clients safe. Service managers were able to determine local needs and distribute the funding, ensuring clients are receiving the support that they need.

Today, I am pleased to be in the Legislature to now take that next step forward on this important bill that we introduced just before the COVID-19 outbreak. It proposes amendments to several existing statutes that, if passed, would strengthen protections for tenants, while making it easier to be a landlord.

It would also allow us to take the next steps in our Community Housing Renewal Strategy and move forward with our plan to improve Ontario’s community housing. We have always known that the system needed to be strengthened, and the recent outbreak has just reinforced that.

The bill also proposes amendments to the Building Code Act and would enable the future creation of an administrative authority that would help deliver faster and better building code services.

Lastly, it proposes to dissolve the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corp. and clarify the ministry’s financial responsibilities for various legacy housing projects.

My colleague the parliamentary assistant for housing, Parm Gill, will speak in more detail about the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, which would improve community housing and help transform and modernize the delivery of building code services, but first—

*Interjection.*

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I did say I’m splitting my time with you, so we’re all good. I am splitting my time.

But first, I’m going to share with members of this House how the legislation will help improve the rental situation for families and individuals across Ontario.

Our proposed legislation is balanced and would ensure the system is fair for both tenants and landlords. It builds on our government’s plan to make life more affordable for the people of Ontario, and I’ve said many times in this House that housing is a big part of that.

During the tenure of the last government, affordable housing became out of reach for too many Ontarians, and our government knows this must change. Every town, city and community in our province is unique, but no matter where you go, one thing is the same: People are looking for housing that meets their needs and their budget.

Last May, I rose in this House and introduced the More Homes, More Choice Act, our government’s housing supply action plan to tackle Ontario’s housing crisis. At the time, more than three quarters of Ontario households couldn’t afford the average price of a resale home, and more than half of renters found the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment out of their reach. We know the situation is even more challenging now, as Ontarians feel the effects of COVID-19.

To create More Homes, More Choice, our government launched extensive consultations and, as members of this House would know, the response was overwhelming. We received more than 2,000 submissions, and over 85% of those submissions came from the general public. More than half of them said affordability was their top criteria when looking for a home to either buy or to rent.

Access to transit was also important. Families wanted to live close to schools, and having services nearby was a huge priority for Ontarians. More Homes, More Choice is helping to address these concerns. It helps increase the supply, making it faster and making it easier to build new homes and apartments. It cuts unnecessary red tape that has slowed down the development process and added

years to construction projects, while maintaining the same high standards for health and safety, protecting the environment, including the greenbelt and our vibrant agricultural economy.

Our plan helps to address the shortage of the missing middle housing. It makes it easier to build a mix of different types of homes, from single-family detached homes and townhomes to mid-rise apartments and family-sized condos. And our plan calls for more secondary suites, basement apartments and laneway homes, as well as large apartment buildings.

More Homes, More Choice not only includes measures to help build homes more quickly and cost effectively, it includes specific tools to help build rental housing: in particular, deferring development charges for rental and non-profit housing. Municipalities collect development charges on new buildings to help pay for the capital cost of infrastructure for things like roads, water and wastewater, transit, police and fire stations. Right now, home and condo builders can cover development charges by pre-selling units.

Rental housing and non-profit builders don't have that luxury. They are literally stretching every penny. With the development charge deferral, instead of paying those development charges up front, rental providers will be able to spread those payments over a five-year period, and non-profits will be able to spread it over 20 years. Deferring those charges encourages builders to build more housing. It ensures municipalities can fund essential infrastructure, and it keeps units more affordable.

But Mr. Speaker, we need to do more than just build new apartment buildings. We need to make renting easier and fairer for both landlords and tenants. And I'm pleased to tell you, Speaker, how the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act would boost protections for tenants while making it easier to be a landlord.

So for context, I'm going to outline some of the challenges that landlords and tenants face and how this legislation that we're debating this afternoon would help. For tenants, this legislation proposes to increase compensation for no-fault evictions. It proposes measures to address the serious problem of renoventions, and it would increase fines for landlords who break the law.

It would also help to increase rental supply by making it easier to be a landlord. That includes proposals to allow landlords to recover costs for certain tenant behaviours and moving certain complaints from the Small Claims Court process to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We're also making a big proposal to streamline the processes at the Landlord and Tenant Board, including expanding mediation where it's appropriate. This is all part of our government's promise to make life more affordable, to make government services smarter and to create a more competitive business climate.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this legislation is obvious. In 2018, when our government took office, the rental vacancy rate in Ontario was 1.8%. In 2019, it was 2%, still too low. The low vacancy rate is creating a tremendous

amount of challenges for many, many people in our communities. It's hard on young people just entering the rental market as they pursue an education or join the workforce away from their parents and embark on a fulfilling career that contributes to Ontario's economy. When housing is limited, work and educational opportunities become limited as well.

Others may be looking to be closer to family and friends to support their physical or mental health. Empty nesters and seniors are often looking to downsize. And people move because of their life-changing circumstances. I believe, and our government believes, that people thrive when they can have access to a stable and affordable home.

Unfortunately, that low vacancy rate I just mentioned can threaten that stability, and not just for people looking to move somewhere new. That low vacancy rate can put pressures on renters who already have a home they're happy with, but at the same time, a place where they want to stay. In a hot rental market, some landlords might be tempted to evict sitting tenants in order to increase the rent, which I will point out is against the law.

#### 1350

I've already spoken about this part of the solution, which is increasing supply in our More Homes, More Choice Act. Building more places for people to live is so important and, at the same time, cutting red tape that will make it happen faster is an important piece to our action plan. But construction takes time, and people need help today. That's one thing I've heard loud and clear as part of the consultations.

Our government understands this, and with that in mind, I look forward to explaining how the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act would help address many of the challenges that tenants face. I will also discuss how this legislation would streamline processes to make life easier for those landlords. By encouraging more people to become landlords, it's going to help increase the supply of rental housing. It's going to increase housing choice. It's going to make housing more affordable for people across this province.

I'm going to start with one of the major issues in Ontario's rental landscape—and I'm speaking of bad faith evictions; in particular, renoventions. To clarify, a renovention is when a landlord evicts a tenant to repair or renovate a unit. We've seen media stories about large property management companies trying to move low-income, vulnerable people out of their homes in order to renovate. This includes seniors and people that are suffering from some serious illnesses. That's also a concern for other long-time residents who rely on that stable monthly income. We know that housing stability is a key part in overall well-being.

The law allows landlords to evict tenants to perform major repairs or renovations, to which there are rules attached to protect tenants. If the landlord wants to evict a tenant for repairs or renovations and the tenant does not want to move, the landlord must first get permission from the Landlord and Tenant Board. The landlord must also

either offer another rental unit acceptable to the tenant or give the tenant right of first refusal to move back in at the same rent they were previously paying when the work is complete.

Right now, the law requires larger landlords—those with five or more units—to compensate tenants. We're proposing to require small landlords—those with one to four units—to also compensate their existing tenants if they are evicted for repairs or renovations. So to be clear, landlords would have to pay compensation and give their tenants the right to come back at the same rent.

Unfortunately, and I think members on both sides of the House will understand this, some landlords don't obey the law. If they are renocted or otherwise evicted in bad faith, tenants can take their cases to the Landlord and Tenant Board. The board can order the landlord to compensate the tenant for out-of-pocket costs like moving expenses and the difference between the rent that the tenant is paying and how much rent the tenant pays in the new home for up to a one-year period. Our government is proposing to increase that compensation by up to a full year's rent, not just the difference between the old and the current rent.

I'm going to give you an example. Let's say that the Landlord and Tenant Board finds that Angela has been evicted in bad faith. She was paying \$1,500 per month in rent, and she finds another apartment at \$2,000 a month. Right now, her landlord could be ordered to pay her the difference—\$500 times 12 months—or up to \$6,000 in compensation. Under the proposed changes that we're proposing, the landlord could now be ordered to pay her up to an additional 12 months' rent, or another \$18,000. In this example, Angela could get a combined total compensation of up to \$24,000.

If Angela wasn't given the right of first refusal and the opportunity to move back into the unit after the renovations, under the current law, she would have one year to file a complaint with the Landlord and Tenant Board. A year might sound okay, but some renovations do take longer than that. So we're proposing to give tenants more time to file a complaint with the Landlord and Tenant Board if they are evicted for renovations or repairs. We're proposing to double that, giving tenants two years to file a complaint.

Mr. Speaker, we're doing more than just increasing compensation. We know that most landlords operate in good faith. Some may break the rules in ignorance and, sadly, some do it both intentionally and repeatedly. We recognize that in order for these kinds of changes to work, we also need to improve the system to identify landlords who are those bad actors. With that in mind, this legislation would make it easier for the Landlord and Tenant Board to identify landlords who may not be following the rules. If a landlord wanted to evict a tenant to use the unit for themselves or to do repairs or renovations, under the proposed legislation they would have to tell the Landlord and Tenant Board if they have done it before.

We're not just suggesting they report successful evictions; we're proposing that landlords must disclose to

the Landlord and Tenant Board any attempt to evict a tenant under the own use or repair and renovation provisions in the last two years. This would help adjudicators at the Landlord and Tenant Board to look for patterns and identify landlords who may be breaking the law.

In addition to the Landlord and Tenant Board, my ministry has a regulatory unit, the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit. Members will know that I've mentioned this unit in the House before. Staff in this unit take complaints from landlords and tenants for alleged offences committed under the Residential Tenancies Act and work with landlords and tenants to resolve disputes. They have the power to launch formal investigations and lay charges. We're enhancing those enforcement activities to be more proactive when they suspect someone who isn't following the law, for example, contacting landlords and tenants where there is credible information to believe an offence may occur.

Our proposed changes would also allow investigators from the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit to get a court order to access financial records more appropriately. This would help them investigate offences relating to filing false or misleading information with the Landlord and Tenant Board. We're also proposing to give them more time to enforce the rules when the landlord fails to reimburse a tenant for a refundable key deposit.

Mr. Speaker, we are not only proposing to increase tenant compensation and strengthen enforcement, but we're also recommending and proposing to increase maximum fine amounts. When the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit prosecutes a court case and a landlord or tenant is convicted of an offence under the Residential Tenancies Act, they could be required to pay a fine. Right now, it's up to \$25,000 for an individual or \$100,000 for a corporation. We're proposing to increase those maximum fines to \$50,000 for an individual and \$250,000 for a corporation.

Speaker, of course tenants face more challenges than just renoctions and unreturned key deposits. Today, the Residential Tenancies Act allows small landlords to evict a tenant if they want to use the unit themselves, and they either have to offer the tenant another unit or give them the equivalent of one month's rent. But if the landlord evicts the tenant because someone else bought the home and wants to use the unit themselves, they don't have to pay compensation. We're proposing to close that gap. Our legislation would require landlords to compensate tenants in both cases, whether they evict to use the unit themselves or on behalf of a homebuyer who wants to use the unit themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I've been speaking a lot about the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act on how it would help tenants, and this is an absolutely integral part of this piece of legislation. But I'm pleased to say that this bill offers balance. With that in mind, I'd like to shift the focus and outline some of the important pieces of this legislation on how it would make it easier to be a landlord. Before I get into the changes this legislation proposes to streamline processes at the Landlord and

Tenant Board, I'd like to highlight some of the legislative and regulatory changes we are proposing to simplify business for landlords.

**1400**

In certain cases, landlords are required to submit documents to the Landlord and Tenant Board on a CD-ROM. It's a dated piece of technology and practice, so we've discontinued this requirement as of January 2020.

My housing critic is smiling to me, about using the word "CD-ROM."

**Ms. Sara Singh:** You had a lot of hair back then.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** I did have a lot of hair back in the CD-ROM days.

Currently, landlords are also required to tell tenants how old the fridge is and how much energy it uses. We believe these practices place an unrealistic burden on landlords and they don't significantly benefit tenants. We're looking to remove this requirement from the landlord's shoulders.

Landlords also have to tell tenants about past electricity use, but this can be very difficult when a tenant is responsible for paying the utility bill. So we're proposing to ease this requirement as well.

Finally, we're proposing to update the law so landlords would not be required to give tenants a printed pamphlet outlining their rights and responsibilities. This information is clearly described in the standard lease that most landlords in the province are required to use. The guide to the standard lease is available in 23 different languages; the pamphlet is not. So we're proposing to make a change that would allow us to give landlords a grace period if they inadvertently used an older version of the lease after it was updated.

Speaker, I believe it's important to mention these changes. While not all require legislative changes, they're part of an entire package that we're proposing to help both landlords and tenants; and that includes the regulatory and the operating changes.

Of course, we've proposed to do more than just remove outdated file formats and paperwork. The Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act would, if passed, go much further towards making it easier to be a landlord. Our changes would streamline processes at the Landlord and Tenant Board and make it easier to resolve certain disputes. It would shift many disputes from the courts to the board, making it simpler to recover costs like unpaid utility bills, and it would allow landlords to recover costs caused by tenant behaviour.

Currently, landlords can only look to recover costs for damages. This legislation, if passed, would also allow landlords to seek compensation for costs they incur due to tenant behaviour. I'm going to give you an example: If a tenant pulls the fire alarm for no reason, the fire department may charge back that landlord. Or if there's a problem in the building with insects or mice and the landlord hires an exterminator to treat every unit but a tenant refuses to let the exterminator in, the landlord may have to pay the exterminator to come back for a second time. Right now, the landlord is simply out of pocket on

these costs. They can seek to evict the tenant, but we want to give landlords more options. Allowing them to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board to recover their costs would create an alternative to eviction.

When renters and landlords have problems, they turn to the Landlord and Tenant Board. But the system is too complicated. We need more and simpler ways to help people resolve disputes. Part of the plan is, over time and where appropriate, streamlining the Landlord and Tenant Board processes. This legislation would make it easier to access alternative dispute resolution services like mediation instead of a formal hearing, when appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken earlier about the bad actors, and I would like to take a moment to remind all of us here that there are many, many good landlords and many, many good tenants. As in any relationship, legitimate problems can arise; this happens. People can fall behind on payments, and they can also struggle to maintain a property. The way to get things back on track is not always clear. Mediation, where appropriate, can help people find that way. It can de-escalate tensions and help people find a way forward by mutual agreement. The intention of this legislation is to simplify, clarify and streamline. Where appropriate, mediation would be a part of that formula, and, where appropriate, we want to encourage those kinds of negotiated settlements.

Right now, some processes are handled by the Landlord and Tenant Board while some go to Small Claims Court. If a tenant physically damages an apartment—for example, kicking down a door or punching a hole in a wall—the landlord can seek compensation with the Landlord and Tenant Board. But if the tenant doesn't pay their utility bill, a landlord has to go to Small Claims Court. It's confusing, and it can be quite expensive. So we're proposing to make the process simpler and more efficient for landlords. If passed, the changes would allow landlords to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board for unpaid rent, utility bills and damage costs for up to one year after the tenant moves out. This would allow landlords the same opportunity to access the board as is available to tenants after they move out.

This legislation would help create other efficiencies at the Landlord and Tenant Board as well. It would require tenants to give advance notice of any new issues they want to raise at an eviction hearing. This would help everyone prepare and would prevent hearings from being delayed and postponed. It would also clarify that the tenant has 12 months to dispute a potentially improper rent increase notice, similar to other disputes.

Mr. Speaker, our government has promised to build healthier communities. We've promised to make life more affordable, to make government services more easily accessible, to make government services smarter, and to create a more competitive business environment. I believe that this legislation does exactly that.

In particular, I'd like to now talk about how our legislation helps to address a very important housing gap, one that hurts Ontario as a competitive place to work and to live. Business needs employees and employees need

places to live. But high housing costs are a barrier to recruiting employees. This is particularly true for employers trying to attract top talent to our province, like universities and high-tech firms.

To help address this challenge, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act would allow employers to offer land leases that are exempt from rental housing rules. For example, to help a university or college attract a new professor, it could offer to sell her or him a home on campus below the market price. If he or she leaves to take another position, they would have to sell the house back to the school. This agreement would ensure that the professor makes a return on their investment while allowing the university or college to keep the house and to sell it to another employee.

It's not just our government that thinks that this change would help create jobs. Let me read you a short quote from the vice-president of operations and real estate partnerships at the University of Toronto. Scott Mabury said, "Universities compete for faculty and staff internationally. Measures contained in this bill will enable us to offer housing options that are affordable and strengthen our competitive footing as we compete for the top global talent that will drive innovation and create jobs here in Ontario."

I'm pleased to hear that our proposed changes not only will help attract top faculty but they will also support student futures.

By making housing more available and more affordable, we can attract and keep jobs and keep Ontario's economy moving. The Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act would achieve this in a balanced way for all parties in the rental market while ensuring that everyone's rights are protected. This legislation would deliver on our government's promise to the people of Ontario to make life more affordable. It would demonstrate innovation in its approach to employee housing. It would create a more competitive business environment by making it easier to be a landlord. By making it easier to be a landlord, we would also encourage more people to create secondary suites and laneway homes, which would help address the need for more rental housing.

The changes would shift many disputes, such as unpaid utility bills, from Small Claims Court to the Landlord and Tenant Board, making the resolution process simpler and more streamlined for landlords. And it would make it easier for landlords to recover the costs that they incur not just for damages but also for bad tenant behaviour. It would streamline and cut red tape at the Landlord and Tenant Board over time and where appropriate, including making it easier to access alternatives to formal hearings, like mediation.

1410

Our proposed changes to Ontario's rental rules would also strengthen protection for tenants. It would help to prevent unlawful evictions by increasing tenant compensation for no-fault and bad-faith evictions, including renovations, and it would help identify bad actors by

giving the Landlord and Tenant Board and the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit more and better tools.

The proposed changes would also double the maximum fines for those convicted of an offence under the Residential Tenancies Act to \$50,000 for an individual and \$250,000 for a corporation.

These proposed changes build upon More Homes, More Choice: Ontario's Housing Supply Action Plan. More Homes, More Choice puts in place specific tools to help build rental housing. Now, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act builds on that and the proposals for stronger rental rules and for streamlined processes to make life better for both tenants and landlords.

Clearly, proposals to help both these sides of the equation, both landlords and tenants, are a big part of this very, very important piece of legislation. But as I said earlier, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act goes much further.

With that, Speaker, I want to give the floor over to my parliamentary assistant to talk about the proposed amendments that would help with the creation of an administrative authority that would deliver faster and more efficient building code services. I'll turn it over to my parliamentary assistant Mr. Gill.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** I recognize the member for Milton.

**Mr. Parm Gill:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the opportunity to speak to the community housing in Ontario. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been a tremendous leader in charge of fixing the broken community housing system in our province—one that was left to us by the previous Liberal government, of course.

As communities continue to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, it is becoming even clearer that we need a strong community housing system that can meet local needs. As you know, Mr. Speaker, in Ontario, the province sets the legislative framework and provides funding for community housing, while operations are managed by non-profit housing corporations and housing co-operatives, municipal governments and district social services administration boards. These providers offer subsidized, low-end-of-market rents for people who simply cannot afford to find homes in the private market.

Everyone here knows that housing plays an important role in our lives. We all want to have a safe, comfortable place to call home. Our government has a vision that every Ontarian should be able to find a home that meets their needs and their budget. But right now, there are too many families living in places that are overcrowded and run down, and I know that some families don't feel safe, either. Our government wants Ontario's community housing system to be sustainable over the long term so that vulnerable families and individuals have the security of knowing that they have a roof over their heads.

That's why last spring we launched Ontario's Community Housing Renewal Strategy. It outlines our government's plan to transform a fragmented and inefficient

system into one that is more streamlined, sustainable and ready to help those who need it the most. Our plan is helping to get community housing back on track so we can meet people's complex and changing needs.

We started with these early steps, Mr. Speaker. We are removing rules that discourage tenants from working more hours or going to school so they can seek opportunities, accept work, go back to school and become economically self-sufficient.

We simplified overly complicated rent calculations, making it easier for tenants to predict their rent and easier for housing providers to calculate it. Tenants who receive child support payments will no longer be penalized financially.

These amendments will come into effect in July, but service managers may choose to implement them at end of the year 2020 or even next year, 2021.

We are also working to free up long wait-lists by requiring tenants to prioritize their top choice of a unit and accept the first unit they are offered. And we've given housing providers the power to turn away former tenants who have been evicted for serious criminal activity, so that all residents can feel safer in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, people need a safe place to raise their family and live their lives. They need to feel like they're part of a community. Having a home helps them be healthier and more productive. But Ontario's community housing has been deteriorating for too many years. The problem is not new. Demand exceeds supply, and with outdated and complex rules, the system is struggling to meet tenants' needs.

The supply of housing for low- and moderate-income individuals was neglected for years under the previous government. Across the province, there's a shortage of community housing for those who need it most. And we're at the risk of losing even more of it.

Ontario's community housing providers signed funding agreements in exchange for providing subsidized housing. Now these funding agreements are expiring and providers are reaching the end of their obligations to offer community housing. If nothing is done, we could lose thousands of community housing units across the province in the next few years.

The previous government had no plan in place to deal with this growing crisis, no plan to protect Ontario's community housing system over the long term, a system that about a quarter of a million people in Ontario rely on.

That's why we're investing approximately \$1 billion in 2020-21 to help sustain, repair and grow community housing, and help end homelessness in Ontario. It's why we're proposing changes to improve community housing's legislative framework.

These changes, if passed, would help maintain our valuable community housing supply by giving housing providers with expiring operating agreements ways to transition to a new system, incenting current operators to remain in the community housing system and encouraging more organizations to offer community housing. But if a housing provider decides to leave the system, we're also

proposing ways to protect vulnerable households and make sure they don't lose their homes.

Ontario's community housing system includes large and small housing providers with different needs and capacities. So we're proposing to tailor our directives for different categories of housing providers. That way, small providers and providers with capacity issues also get the help that they need.

Of course, many of Ontario's community housing units are aging and need urgent repair. That's why we're allocating funding to ensure tenants are living in safe and suitable conditions. We are working with our federal and municipal partners to repair and expand community housing supply in ways that address local conditions and priorities.

We have three new programs. We launched the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative in April 2019. This year, it will provide \$81 million to service managers to repair, regenerate and expand community housing and to support affordability for tenants.

#### 1420

At the same time, we also launched the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative. Together with our federal partners, it will provide \$65 million in funding to all 47 service managers and both Indigenous program administrators. It's flexible, so they can use it to address the local priorities, from housing supply and affordability, including new affordable rental construction, to community housing repair, rental assistance, tenant support and affordable ownership.

Another new initiative to help people afford the housing they need is the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit. This portable benefit program will provide almost \$40 million directly to low-to-moderate income households in 2021 to help them pay their rent, not just in a community-housing building, but in any unit they rent anywhere in the province. Some people are happy with where they live, but they simply can't afford the rent. This benefit could be used to assist with the cost of rent and allow them to keep the housing they have. Others may use it to find housing that better meets their needs. It can be used anywhere in the province, so people can choose to live close to family, friends and their support networks and have shorter commutes by living closer to where they work or attend school. We're giving people more flexibility and more choice. It also means we can act more quickly to help the people who need it the most. We estimate that up to 5,200 households may use the benefit in the first year alone, and this number will only continue to grow.

Service managers are responsible for managing applications and local wait-lists for social housing because they know their communities best. We want to improve access to housing assistance for the people who need it most and to modernize accountability approaches to put people first. We know how important it is that we get this right. That's why we're proposing to require service managers to have certain local eligibility rules for rent-geared-to-income assistance to reflect their community's unique needs. Our proposed changes would also help service managers create

a more effective and flexible local housing access system that would identify and prioritize applicants' housing needs so that, over time, individuals and families would be better matched with the housing and support that they need. We're suggesting broadening the types of housing assistance service managers can offer and including them in their service-level report to encourage creativity and local flexibility while maintaining accountability and provincial reporting.

Our Community Housing Renewal Strategy will fix the crumbling, inefficient system we inherited from the previous government. We are working hard to make things better for vulnerable people who depend on community housing. But there is still much work to be done. That is why the bill in front of you today includes proposed legislative changes to improve community housing. Our approach is based on four core principles: matching people with the right housing based on their needs; ensuring supports and services are flexible and that rules reflect local realities; building effective relationships between all levels of government, housing providers, tenants, Indigenous and community partners; and promoting innovation and long-term sustainability.

Under Bill 184, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, we are proposing amendments to the Housing Services Act to make these principles a reality. Our proposed changes are enabling and would create the foundation for a more flexible, efficient community housing system that would:

- allow for more locally driven, flexible relationships between service managers and housing providers;
- help service managers and housing providers become more sustainable;
- incent housing providers to stay in the system and continue to offer community housing;
- protect tenants and public investments in community housing if a provider decides to leave the system;
- give clarity to housing providers whose legacy agreements and mortgages have ended; and
- encourage innovation and creativity to offer a range of different types of housing assistance that meet people's varied needs.

Service managers would continue to be responsible for local community housing administration, because our government understands that every community is different and we are committed to giving them the flexibility they require to meet their unique needs, now more than ever.

If passed, Mr. Speaker, we will consult with service managers and stakeholders on regulations to protect and grow community housing supply; improve the community housing access system and encourage innovative, business-like approaches.

We want to strengthen the community housing sector's capacity, help them transition to this improved system and foster successful change management. That's why we're proposing a phased incremental approach to change, in partnership with service managers. We will work with our partners to make our community housing system more efficient and sustainable and to ensure that people can

access the affordable housing and support they need today and in the years to come.

But, Mr. Speaker, improving the community housing system is just one important aspect of this bill. I'd also like to discuss another part of this legislation: making changes to the Building Code Act. These proposed changes will give us the ability to deliver new and improved building code services to both the public and building sector, while promoting public safety.

Through our action plan, More Homes, More Choice, our government is committed to helping Ontarians find a home that meets their needs and their budget. The plan will speed up development by reducing red tape and paperwork that adds years to construction projects, so we can get shovels in the ground faster and create a mix of housing that meets Ontarians' needs.

The building sector is a \$38-billion industry and a key driver of Ontario's economy. It will play a key role in boosting local economies and Ontario's recovery efforts following COVID-19. It is essential that people working in this sector have the support they need to create housing and keep Ontario's economy moving.

A critical tool to building Ontario is its building code. Ontario's Building Code Act was first passed in 1974—Mr. Speaker, the same year I was born—under the leadership of our former Premier, Premier Bill Davis, one of Ontario's great Premiers. Prior to this, building code standards varied widely from municipality to municipality. The building code established uniform building standards and detailed technical and administrative requirements and a minimum standard for building construction and renovations.

Since its inception, the building code's scope and policy intent have continued to expand to address the growing needs of the building sector. Today, it creates minimum standards for building that include health and safety, fire protection, structural sufficiency, construction materials, and plumbing and mechanical systems. The code also promotes public health and safety, fire protection, resource conservation, environmental integrity and accessibility. In fact, it's now 2,100 pages long. Ontario's building code is a point of pride. Its high standards are not negotiable.

#### 1430

Enforcement of the building code is primarily the responsibility of municipalities, which issue building permits and conduct inspections during construction. Historically, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has provided a suite of building code services to municipalities, the public and the building sector, including:

- setting policy direction and establishing regulatory building standards;
- overseeing the qualification and registration of building practitioners; and
- providing support to building practitioners such as publishing guides and resources and explaining the policy intent of code requirement.

Timely, modern services and support are necessary to help everyone understand and meet the code requirements.

However, over time, the delivery of these services has not kept pace with the needs of the sector. Municipalities, building inspectors and other organizations have been asking for better, more modern and timely services and resources—resources to help them understand and apply the highly technical and complex building code requirement. The sector also needs more training resources and modernized tools.

We were told that there aren't enough experienced building sector people to keep up with demand. There are jobs, but not enough qualified people to fill them. Smaller municipalities can have a hard time maintaining local expertise to support permitting and inspection of complex types of construction, and members of the public can't find the information they need when looking for their construction projects.

These are just some of the issues we have been hearing. We are committed to tackling them. That's why we wanted to improve building code service delivery for those who use the code every day. Last fall, we had online and in-person consultation to hear from people from across the province about their experience with building code services and on the proposed changes that are being considered. We outlined existing building code services and identified concerns that have been raised regarding their delivery. We asked questions about how delivery could be improved and where there might be a need for new services to be delivered.

And we heard broad support for the transformation and modernization of many building code services and their responsive and timely delivery. We believe the transformation and modernization of the building code services would:

- strengthen public safety;
- streamline customer service and approval processes;
- deliver sector-driven services;
- provide timely and modern tools and products;
- promote consistency across the province; and
- enhance integrity of the system.

To better support the construction industry and the public, we are proposing amendments to the Building Code Act to enable the future creation of an administrative authority. This authority will help deliver faster, better and smarter services. While no final decisions have been made about what services a future administrative authority would deliver, we are committed to continuing discussions with building stakeholders in the coming months to inform how and what services this authority would deliver.

Our government has listened and will not pursue regulatory changes to enable the use of certified professionals. We want to be clear: This transformation and modernization of how building code services are delivered would support the promotion of the safe construction of buildings in Ontario. Our proposed changes respond to the recommendations of the Elliot Lake Commission of Inquiry to protect public safety.

In conclusion, the proposed legislation would make sure our building industry is well-supported and would increase prosperity and create jobs in Ontario while

protecting public health and safety. It would help to enable our government to meet its commitment and to ensure all Ontarians can find a home that meets their needs and their budget. This work was under way well before the COVID outbreak and continues to be very timely today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** We'll now have 10 minutes of questions and answers. I turn first to the official opposition. The member for Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** My question is to the minister. The issue of student housing in the province is a long-standing issue in Windsor, in Kingston, in Ottawa and in Waterloo. There's a recognized power imbalance between students and their landlords, and the Landlord and Tenant Board is non-responsive, it is not flexible, it is not timely.

How will your bill address the very important issues that students face when they have conflict and tension with their landlord?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, through you to the member: I want to thank you for your advocacy for students in Waterloo. As someone who attended the University of Waterloo many, many years ago, I appreciate some of the challenges that that city is facing.

I believe that this bill does provide a great balance between landlords and tenants, and I think the mediation portion of this bill provides an opportunity that isn't in the Landlord and Tenant Board at the present time.

I know I've had many, many discussions with the Attorney General about modifications to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and I truly believe—even now more than ever with COVID-19—that the alternate dispute resolution methods that we're proposing on this bill will be a tremendous welcome for students in some of the challenges that the students have with the present board the way it's constituted.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

**Mrs. Nina Tangri:** I would really like to thank the minister for bringing to the House such important legislation. I believe all members of this House have a deficiency in community housing. Could the minister please explain to the members here how this legislation allows us to fill vacant community housing faster, how providers are able to turn away tenants previously convicted of serious criminal activities and how income tax information can make rent-gear-to-income calculations easier for tenants and providers?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Speaker, through you to the member: That's an excellent question. It was something that we've heard many, many times as part of our Community Housing Renewal Strategy.

On the first piece, the security piece: It came directly from the city of Toronto. The mayor and other city officials have been advocating for this tool not just with our government, but with the previous government as well. I made an announcement at Toronto Community Housing with Mayor Tory and, I have to tell you, they welcomed this tool that we've clarified in their tool box.

As well, parliamentary assistant Gill, the member from Milton, talked about the exciting new programs that we're launching this year to sustain, repair and grow community housing. I really believe the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative, the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative and the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit are real game-changers in community housing. It will allow service managers to really build that stock that we need.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

**Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell:** My question is to the minister. I listened very enthusiastically to the presentations, and I think all of us have community and rent-geared-to-income problems coming to our constituency.

The one part I'm curious about is service managers. Presently it's the district social services administration boards that are administering that. When you refer to service managers, is that the same?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Thank you for the question. When I talk about Ontario's 47 service managers, obviously it includes the district social services administration boards. We work very closely with the DSSABs. We've consulted them extensively as part of our community housing renewal strategy. To build upon your question and the previous member's question: Part of the renewal that we're doing in the community housing system is as a result of an Auditor General's report. For many, many years, the rent-geared-to-income was a very complex system that really didn't serve DSSABs or serve tenants well. So we've taken, to make it simpler, to make both service managers and tenants better understand it—it's a real opportunity to change the system as we know it and to respond to the Auditor General.

1440

The short answer to your question: We are definitely working with DSSABs; they're aware of these new programs as well. And we're really hoping to be able to build our stock and repair the stock that we have.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and the parliamentary secretary for probably one of the most important pieces of legislation that I've seen introduced in this House. This is formative to the realities and lives of everyday people who experience challenges. It hits a very, very challenging balance.

Of course, where do we get this from? Because there's nothing more important than a roof over someone's head. Without that, society's problems are just paramount. They run through from health to social assistance to drugs to whatever.

Minister, this certainly is a great step forward. What I'd like to know is, who did you consult with—the broad variety of input—to give you the guidance for this legislation?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Thanks for the question, and thank you for your advocacy in your riding on housing. As most members know, for the Housing Supply Action Plan we

had extensive consultations. I alluded to it in my remarks. We had over 2,000 submissions; 85% of those 2,000 submissions were from the public. We really did five basic themes: speed, cost, rent, mix and innovation.

The Housing Supply Action Plan bill that was passed last June dealt with the majority of those aspects, but, as I mentioned at the time, we really needed to get that balance in terms of mix for rent. We heard both from landlords and tenants that we really needed to fix the system, provide that balance and provide the opportunity to change the Landlord and Tenant Board as it's presently constituted.

Thank you for your comments. I look forward to more questions.

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

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** When this government tabled the More Homes, More Choice bill, we knew right away that this is one of the ways the government is trying to strip tenant rights. Tenants have been worried for a very long time that delays at the Landlord and Tenant Board are actually due to this government not appointing adjudicators and trying to create a backlog, and to then later use a rationale to “streamline” the services, which is exactly what we heard the minister say right now.

My question to the minister is: Why won't you appoint adjudicators at the Landlord and Tenant Board so that there are no delays in the process, instead of stripping away tenant rights and trying to evict them sooner?

**Hon. Steve Clark:** On behalf of the Ministry of the Attorney General that continues to work with Tribunals Ontario to recruit more adjudicators and appoint more adjudicators, I have to tell the member opposite that, as of March 3, 2020, there are 33 full-time and 13 part-time adjudicators at the Landlord and Tenant Board, and, since June 2019, the government has appointed 18 new adjudicators and reappointed 17 adjudicators to the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Recruitment is ongoing for adjudicators, but I would hope that the honourable member and all members will support the tenant protection measures in this bill. We hear all the time members opposite talk about protecting tenants. We've now put a number of measures forward that do exactly that: protect tenants in the system and make a better and more balanced system at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

I look forward to hearing more debate on the matter.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

**Mr. Rick Nicholls:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again to the minister: In my riding of Chatham–Kent, I do receive phone calls and personal visits from landlords—landlords who are just absolutely beside themselves. I recognize there are good tenants, but there are also bad tenants; there are also good landlords and there are also bad landlords. Well, I like to think I have good landlords coming into my office.

When we take a look at this particular legislation that you're bringing forward, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, my question to you is rather simple. Landlords are allowed, provided they

give reasonable notice, to inspect their tenants' residences once a year. That's my understanding. Again, if there is damage noticed in their inspection, what recourse would the landlord have to recover the cost to repair such damage? Because sometimes when they leave, they find that their cupboards are gone and all kinds of damage, so what recourse would the landlord have?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Minister, he hasn't left you a lot of time. You have 30 seconds.

**Hon. Steve Clark:** Okay. Thanks, and we'll talk in more detail off-line. But we have heard from landlords as well that we needed to put some measures to deal with some of the policies, both at the Landlord and Tenant Board and the relationship before landlord tenants. As the member said, let's face it, there are good and bad landlords and tenants. We've got examples on both sides. But the measures that we've put forward toward landlords are trying to be fair to deal with alternative levels of dispute resolution. We really need to build in that fairness and that balance in the system.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I seek unanimous consent for the official opposition to stand down our lead on Bill 184.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for London West is seeking unanimous consent to stand down the opposition lead on this bill. All those in favour? I heard a no.

Further debate?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'm going to begin by letting the House know that I will be sharing my time with the member for Brampton Centre.

I wanted to begin my remarks with some feedback for the government, Speaker. If there ever was a time in Ontario where citizens want to see their government working together to the benefit of everyone, this is the time.

Today has been a very difficult and unsettling day for us in this Legislature. We're here pretending that it's business as usual, and outside there is an absolute storm swirling around us as we hear the horrifying results of the investigation into the five long-term-care homes in this province. And yet, the government today has brought forward three pieces of legislation that were on the order paper and have nothing directly to do with COVID-19, which is what is confronting people every day in their daily lives in Ontario.

They brought forward these three pieces of legislation without any prior notice to us in the official opposition or the independents—no opportunity to prepare to participate in these debates. I think that the quality of the debate is definitely enhanced when there is time for members to gather notes together, to be able to share feedback that they might have received from constituents about the issues that are being debated, but we have not had that opportunity.

We have not had a chance to even find out what we are going to be debating, until we heard the government House leader call the bill. This is disrespectful to us as

members, but most of all, it's disrespectful to the people of this province, because they expect us to be their voice, to bring forward the concerns and the priorities that they want us to be debating. They didn't have an opportunity to do that, because we didn't know what business was going to be addressed here today.

But I can tell you, Speaker, that it doesn't take a lot of detective work for all of us to know that what our constituents want us to be talking about in the Legislative Assembly is COVID-19 and the ongoing negative impacts, the fallout, that COVID-19 is having in the communities that we represent.

In London, Speaker, London city council just had a budget meeting earlier this week. They have determined that the shortfall because of COVID-19-related measures is going to be \$23 million to \$33 million. That's money that has to be found somewhere else in the budget. I know, Speaker, that we're talking about an act to address social housing needs. Well, in London, London and Middlesex Community Housing just identified an infrastructure gap, a maintenance and repair backlog for our social housing stock of \$556 million over 10 years. How in the world is our community going to be able to dig itself out of this COVID hole, where we're looking at a potential loss of up to \$33 million in our current budget, and also address the repair backlog in our social housing stock? We know that our social housing stock is in a dire condition, in dire straits, of disrepair—not just in London, of course, but across the province.

1450

The other thing that we are hearing more and more is that this crisis is taking a significant toll on people's mental health, especially for those who are most vulnerable, especially for those who are living in social housing, oftentimes in squalid conditions, oftentimes struggling with disability and other challenges. The impact of COVID-19 is being felt in ways that we can't even imagine. We can't imagine the kinds of struggles that some people in this province are going through.

If we're going to be talking about lifting everybody up, ensuring that every Ontarian has access to decent housing—which is a human right; every Ontarian deserves access to decent housing. Stable housing really is where it all starts. Access to stable housing is what enables people to pursue an education, to get a job and to maintain their health. Everything that we want for ourselves and for our fellow citizens begins with stable housing.

Social housing is the place where we can provide wraparound supports that people in crisis need. Never have we experienced a crisis like the one that is before us now. People who are struggling to pay the bills, to know what's going to happen one day to the next, are really facing a huge mental health deficit.

In our communities, the access to mental health services is really under pressure right now because of the lack of in-person appointments. This is something that we should be addressing in connection with a social housing strategy for the province.

I also want to talk about evictions. A big part of this bill deals with evictions. Right now, we know there's a court order that people can't be evicted by their landlord, but who knows how long that court order is going to remain in place? We're already hearing from landlords who aren't respecting that court order. People are being evicted in the midst of a pandemic, and they have no recourse. The Landlord and Tenant Board is not meeting regularly, and there's very little support for people who have been evicted right now.

This bill doesn't talk about the context of this global pandemic. It doesn't talk about what it means to be evicted when we are in the middle of a state of emergency. It doesn't talk about the need for a rent subsidy. All of us heard from renters in our communities who did not know how they were going to be able to pay the rent. They didn't know how they were going to pay the rent on April 1. They didn't know how they were going to pay the rent on May 1. They don't know how they're going to be able to pay the rent on June 1, and yet we continue to hear nothing from this government about a rent subsidy for the most vulnerable tenants, who, despite the court order, are still at significant risk of eviction.

The minister talked about post-secondary students. I heard from many post-secondary students in March, when classes were suddenly cancelled and students returned to their home communities, that they were still on the hook to pay rent to landlords at the universities or colleges that they had been attending. There was absolutely no support for these students. They had signed a rental agreement with their landlord in another community where they were attending post secondary, and unless the landlord agreed to allow them not to fulfill their contract, they were on the hook. Lots of students don't have affluent families who can write rent cheques. Lots of students are really, really struggling. This bill does not appropriately address the financial hardships that post-secondary students are facing.

Speaker, again, I just wanted to reiterate that we would very much appreciate hearing from the government in advance the legislation that's going to be called before us for debate, because we all want to do a good job. We all want to do a good job of representing our constituents the way they deserve to be represented, to be the voice of constituents, and that is a lot easier for us to do when we know what the issues are that we're going to be addressing in this chamber. So please, any members of the government team on that side, if you could take that feedback back to your House leader, that would be very much appreciated. Because that is something that people in Ontario want to see, us working across party lines. They want to see us working together to help people through this unprecedented—unprecedented—crisis that we are facing in this province right now.

With that, I will turn it over to my colleague the member for Brampton Centre.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member did say she'd be sharing her time with the member from Brampton Centre, so we go now to the member from Brampton Centre.

**Ms. Sara Singh:** It's an honour to rise here and contribute to the debate. I will be sharing my time with the member from Toronto—St. Paul's.

As my colleague from London West has already shared, I think it's very concerning that we have pieces of legislation coming forward with very little notice from the government with respect to what that legislation will be. It not only does a disservice to this House, but it actually does a disservice to each of our ridings when we can't have that opportunity to contribute and to amplify the voices that we know our constituents would like us to be doing here in this House.

With that, as the housing critic, I think it's also concerning that we have a bill here in front of us that claims to protect tenants and strengthen community housing when it does everything but that. We are, as we all know, in the midst of a global pandemic at the moment. Rather than taking this opportunity to create a bill that will address those concerns that tenants and people in our communities have, we are just recycling legislation and moving it forward through this House. Why not take the opportunity to address, as my member said, a rent subsidy, which we know is needed here in the province?

We talk about strengthening protections for renters, but we know that people are in crisis. April 1, May 1, June 1: We don't know how many more months this pandemic is going to last, and yet, when we have an opportunity to bring forward critical, proactive legislation that's going to actually address the problems that people are facing right now, this government chooses to just bring forward legislation that's been sitting on the order paper for some time, that actually doesn't speak to the issue of the day, which is right now that we are in the midst of a global pandemic.

Actually, we've been hearing from renters, which this bill does nothing to address, around concerns around the surge they're going to be experiencing to the Landlord and Tenant Board. Not only renters, but I'm hearing from landlords as well who are very concerned about the increasing caseload that's going to be moving forward to the Landlord and Tenant Board. There's no concern being given to how do we address that proactively; how do we stop that surge from happening. We know that people can't pay rent, and obviously landlords are going to be looking for ways to evict them in the future because of those non-payments. But again, rather than look at that problem and say, "How do we solve that? How do we make sure we don't have a surge in cases and applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board in six months?"—silence from this government. We see silence. We actually are seeing this government wait for the federal government to step up to the plate and provide some sort of rental supports rather than doing it themselves.

I think it's really important that we also speak to the fact that the minister spoke at great length about how we're improving social housing, how we're going to be taking care of some of those repair backlogs that have been in place. I don't know if any member here has ever lived in social housing, but I personally have, and I'm hearing

from tenants on a regular basis about infestations. I'm hearing about the lack of repairs.

I don't know if members understand what it feels like to cook your food and put it on the counter, and then go back and understand that you cannot eat that food because there are cockroaches or other insects inside of your food. That is the reality of people who are living in social housing in our province. That is the reality. They cannot sit on their sofas. They are not sure if their children are safe. This is a health and safety concern.

There is nothing in here that is going to actually address that problem in a proactive way. It's the landlords that are allowing that problem to go on for years and years and years, with little recourse for the tenants. And yet, when we have an opportunity to really think critically about how to address some of those problems, this bill doesn't take it into consideration. There is no increase in funding to support some of those repairs that are needed. In fact, what we've seen this government do is cut millions of dollars out of housing to prevent homelessness. I don't have the numbers in front of me because, literally, as my colleague said, this bill was called five minutes before we got here. But what this minister actually did was cut money out of programs that would prevent homelessness, rather than invest in those programs. If our goal is to ensure that people have access to safe and affordable housing, I am really curious how this bill will actually meet that goal.

**1500**

As the member from Brampton Centre—I'm looking over at the parliamentary assistant to the minister right now. He is very well aware, as the member from Milton, of some of those problems that we have in the 905 and suburban areas with secondary suites and a growing demand for affordable housing options. We need real proactive programs that are going to help increase the supply, not just leave it up to developers to ensure that they are going to be providing diversity in housing supply, because if we leave it up to the developers—at the end of the day, I think we all recognize they're here for a profit. They aren't here to help us build healthy communities. That's where the government plays a role in helping to make sure we can work with the market to make sure that there is diversity in the supply. So if we're talking about secondary suites and we're understanding that we need to have a range of housing options, I would be curious to understand what programs and supports are going to be put in place to help people actually retrofit their homes, help create secondary suites, help probably upgrade an existing secondary suite that's in place. I haven't heard anything from this government with respect to measures that will help.

When we talk about actually helping the people of this province gain access to housing, those are some proactive measures we could put in place to actually increase the supply. Yet, when this government has a chance to do that, it doesn't.

My colleague from Waterloo spoke about student housing. Across the province, this is an issue that is growing in scale. In the community of Brampton, in my

riding of Brampton Centre, we have a student housing crisis. We have 30-to-40-plus students living in rooming houses because there are no affordable options for them. We've already seen deaths in our community because of fires that have happened in those houses. Our fire chief is begging for some solutions so that they can prevent these deaths from happening. But when there are no affordable housing options for students, and you have international students coming from around the world into our cities with no housing supports—it's really unfortunate that the only options they have are air mattresses in rooming houses with 40 or 50 other people.

It's a shame that in our province—we know this is happening—the government is aware this is happening and is not stepping up to the plate to help legislate and make sure that those students are protected. We have a responsibility to do that—not just make a profit off those international students because they're paying three times the tuition rates. We have a responsibility to make sure that those students can have a healthy, happy and productive life here when they come to this country.

I think that we all recognize that housing costs and affordability are a major concern here. But increasing affordability and access to housing isn't just about increasing the supply of housing. We have to address the underlying issue of affordability, which is the fact that (1) people are living in poverty and (2) skyrocketing rental rates are causing people to be forced out of their homes. What we're seeing is an increase in hidden homelessness across our province: people couch-surfing; people living in unsafe environments in order to have a roof over their head. This shouldn't be happening in our province. This should not be happening, where people are being forced out of their homes because they can no longer afford to live there, forced out on to the streets with little to no supports out there, because this government doesn't want to legislate rent control and doesn't want to ensure that we can do it. During a pandemic, if there's anything we can do—I heard a member from the opposition this morning actually ask the government a question with respect to ensuring that rents can be frozen at a rate that's sustainable. Yet when this government has an opportunity, with legislation coming forward to the floor, to perhaps bring something like that forward, it chooses not to.

It's really difficult for us to stand here and support legislation that's coming forward that doesn't actually address what's really happening in our province at this moment. At this very point in time, there are people who do not have an income and cannot afford to live where they are living. There are people who are facing eviction. There are businesses—all sorts of folks who cannot afford to have a roof over their head. Rather than put in place measures to protect those tenants and to protect those landlords to secure the largest investment they probably made in their life, this government chooses not to, chooses to hand it over to the developers and allow them to make the decision.

Mr. Speaker, it has been interesting to be part of the debate this afternoon and see different pieces of legislation

coming forward. We just passed a piece of legislation that was supposed to protect consumers. We heard that this government is trying to take into consideration some of that feedback, but with the legislation that's coming to this floor today, it's very clear that this government is out of touch with what's happening in our province and is not actually addressing the needs of the people. So I urge them to use every opportunity we have over the next couple of weeks to actually bring forward legislation that's going to do what the people of Ontario need this government to do.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for Toronto—St. Paul's.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Good afternoon, Speaker. I'm glad to stand today on behalf of my friends and community in Toronto—St. Paul's to speak on Bill 184, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act. I'm also going to be speaking in reference to Bill 108 as well—the More Homes, More Choice Act—and I will be sharing my time with the wonderful member from University—Rosedale as well.

The first thing I want to tell all of the viewers at home in Toronto—St. Paul's and across Ontario is, if you want to get a sense of proposals that have been put forth by your Ontario NDP official opposition, I would ask you to Google—just simple; Google—“Ontario NDP COVID-19 Response.” The reason I say that, folks, is because we are here in the Legislature and we are now debating by surprise. The government did not let us know what bills were up for debate this afternoon, which means, as my colleagues have said, that we haven't had a chance to prepare. But luckily, all of us in the official opposition have been doggedly connected to every single one of our constituents and our stakeholders since COVID-19 erupted the way it did. So we have lived experience of our community members, and that's the best preparation we can have.

I cannot tell you how many letters my office has created on behalf of tenants who have been intimidated, bullied and, in some cases, even publicly shamed by their landlords. So I recognize that the government says that this piece of legislation is to somehow help protect tenants. Going back to our COVID-19 NDP official opposition response, I would say that, rather than playing politics, rather than being so partisan that you cannot listen to the NDP when we are offering suggestions that are, frankly, coming from our communities, why don't we go back and reconsider rent relief, government?

It is clear that the number one issue that is impacting folks in St. Paul's—tenants, whether we're talking small business tenants or whether we're talking residential tenants—is the fact that they don't have the income coming in and, therefore, it's very difficult to dole the rent out.

Our communities are seeing our small businesses die, quite frankly. We lost Dave's on St. Clair just the other day. We lost Wailers. We've lost businesses on Eglinton West, for goodness' sake—businesses that were terrorized already by the delays of this government and the previous government where the Eglinton Crosstown was concerned, but I digress.

This bill is supposed to be about protecting tenants. In my humble opinion, a bill that actually has the audacity to have “protecting tenants” in its title should start with rent control. I've got women in St. Paul's. We've got artists, for goodness' sake, gig economy workers, independent contractors, essential workers—the same people that you all keep cheering and cheering on as being our health care heroes—in St. Paul's who cannot pay their rent, for goodness' sake. We need rent relief.

**1510**

We have an abundance of seniors who are on a fixed income. They are the tenants that you really need to protect. You can also protect them by having universally designed affordable housing, housing that accommodates for all types of abilities and mobilities across the life spectrum.

We have asked for a rent freeze, which I did not hear come up in your legislation around protecting tenants. That is paramount to protecting tenants. There are so many small-business owners that I have spoken to—I'm going to say this very frankly—who have literally said to me that they have tried self-harm, because they don't know if they could live another day with the uncertainty of getting direct support from our province.

It doesn't matter what the feds have to say. It's about what your province is going to do for you, what your Premier is going to do for you. Will your Premier freeze your utilities, so the little bit of food that you can make in that Toronto community housing building can actually be cooked properly, you can actually have electricity?

I spoke to a woman on the phone. She actually wasn't even a constituent of mine, but she reached out to us anyways, because she had reached out to her government member and hadn't heard back.

*Interjection.*

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** A member across is asking me which one of you. I won't say her name, because she's not here. I'm trying to just be for the constituents today and not take any negative jabs, right?

The fact that this woman's housing unit didn't have lights for two days is incredible during a time of a pandemic. As a senior citizen—where the only thing she's got is her TV screen to keep her engaged with the news and with the press conferences on CP24.

I cannot stress enough to the folks who are watching how important it is for us to be able to practise real democracy in here, the same kind of democracy that I see ACORN fighting for, the same kind of democracy that I see tenant organizations and residents' associations fighting for in St. Paul's. We aren't against development. We absolutely believe in more housing. Goodness, we need 65,000 units of more affordable housing in this province.

But I've got to tell you something about Toronto—I read an article a few months ago; I can't tell you the date because, again, I'm not thoroughly prepared, but it was 2020. It stated that the city of Toronto had a 10-year plan for supportive housing, with 18,000 units over the course of a decade—ah, it was February and it was the Star. Of

the 1,800 units of supportive housing that was supposed to come this year, the city has funding for 600. We are in an abysmal housing crisis, and we are also in an abysmal homelessness crisis.

What's the reason for that low number of 600? Cuts. Because we have a Premier who is abdicating responsibility to fight hard for the most vulnerable Ontarians—come on, help our municipalities out for goodness' sake. I just heard, literally, from a nurse—who doesn't want her name involved—with the city of Toronto who told me last night in a Facebook DM that the city is rumoured as potentially not being able to cover face shields anymore because of cuts, so it might just be some kind of goggle glass. She said, "Jill, please don't mention my name. I'm new to the job. I'm new to working with the city, but I'm scared. What's going to happen to me?"

By the way, if you're wondering if I'm veering off the bill, I'm not, because guess what? She's a renter. She's one of these tenants that Bill 184 says it's going to protect.

So here is what I'm going to say as I wrap up, somewhat. We are very resilient in St. Paul's. Heck, I would say the whole province is darn resilient considering the pandemic we're in. But do you know what? Resilience, just like philanthropy, does not take the place of government policy and government dollars. So show us the money. Show us the resources that we need for small-business owners, for our tenants, for our ODSP and OW recipients, for goodness' sake, who are hanging on a thread during a pandemic, afraid because this Premier is going to claw their money away from them when they barely have enough to boil the chicken soup.

This is ridiculous. This is absolutely ridiculous. We have to do more for Ontarians, now more than ever. So please, Ontario; please, St. Paul's—I know you've seen it in my newsletter every day, every other day—please check out our Ontario NDP COVID-19 responses, which actually address the issue of protecting tenants and strengthening community.

I want to give some shout-outs, just a few. To Sterling Karamar, the landlord that continues to intimidate and to not work from a place of compassion: Please know that we see you, and you're not going to continue doing that to the tenants of St. Paul's. I also want to tell you all, as the government, that we need to freeze rent increases. I can't say that enough. And if you want to protect tenants, take a look at AGIs, above guideline increases, because I'm telling you, man, putting a new painting in the lobby downstairs should not hike your rent into the high heavens, but it is for some of my folks in St. Paul's.

Well, I could talk forever. I'm not even sure how long I've been talking, so I'm not going to take up much more time from my colleague in University–Rosedale. I will try to end positive here.

We have lost businesses. There are many people who are afraid that they may lose their home, and frankly, there are some who are just afraid they'll lose their mental health. Heck, sometimes I, as an MPP, break because of how sad this pandemic is and how much help people are asking for, and it just appears that the government's not

listening. But I do want to end on the high note of Joanne Vannicola, a community member who created a community food table. I didn't even get to address food insecurity, but that's a whole other issue that has been exacerbated through this pandemic.

So I say that to say this: We will get through this, but we need to come out of it better, and we can't go back to the past. We need a new and better normal. While Joanne is doing an incredible job, and all the other folks who are doing an incredible job collecting food, making homemade masks, that cannot replace the responsibility of this government to make sure that none of our community members are on a bench, feeling left out.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for University–Rosedale.

**1520**

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** I rise today to speak to Bill 184, the Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act. I share my colleagues' concerns about the lack of notice that we received that this bill was going to be debated today. Housing affordability is the number one issue in my riding. Even once the pandemic had started, it continues to be the number one issue in my riding. In order for me to do justice to the 100,000 people who live in University–Rosedale and the tenants and landlords across Ontario, it is important that we are given the time that we need to review bills of this size so that we can speak properly and represent our residents as best we can, so that we can produce the best legislation Queen's Park has to offer.

I will be sharing my time with the MPP for—

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Waterloo.

**Ms. Jessica Bell:** —Waterloo today; thank you for that.

Another issue that I'd like to raise is the timing of this bill, given that we are facing a global pandemic. My office, like many of yours, has been inundated with calls from people who are concerned about the lack of PPE available in long-term-care homes and shelters. They're concerned about their loved ones who are in long-term-care homes and they're desperate. They're desperate. They want them to survive.

They're concerned about the delays in testing, how the type of testing that has been rolled out tends to be more reactive than it should be, when it should be proactive as well, so that we can really get a handle on this thing. The reality is that we are one of the richest provinces/states in the world. Other countries have been able to get a handle on testing, which means that we can also do it as well. Then in addition, we are behind on contact tracing. So this virus is ahead of us every single time we turn around.

They're the issues that we are facing in University–Rosedale, and it is a concern to me that we are not using the precious time we have in Queen's Park to tackle those top-of-mind issues that address the global pandemic that we are all facing. Instead, we are dealing with Bill 184.

An additional thing that I would also like to raise is what this bill doesn't speak about when we're talking about housing during a pandemic. When people contact my office to talk about housing during the pandemic, there

are a few key issues they bring up. Number one is the issue of student housing. Because of the presence of the University of Toronto, we do have student housing in our riding. Student housing is exempt from the Residential Tenancies Act, and a lot of these students have been instructed that they now need to go home or find alternative accommodations because it is no longer safe to be housed in student housing where they share kitchen facilities, lounge room facilities and so on.

But unfortunately, these landlords are not willing to offer to these students a cancellation of their leases, so many of these students are in a situation where they're paying upwards of \$1,700 a month for an apartment that they are no longer able to use. That is a housing issue that is happening right now during the pandemic, but it is not addressed in this bill.

The second housing issue that I am seeing during the COVID-19 pandemic is the issue of paying rent. Time and time again, I've had tenants contact me, terrified because they do not want to be evicted during a pandemic. The subsidy that the federal government is providing them is not enough to cover the exorbitant rents that we pay in Toronto: an average of \$2,000. They don't want to be looking for a new apartment during a pandemic and expose themselves to this very serious illness. They are concerned that once the temporary hold on evictions is lifted, that will open up a mass eviction process where landlords will go to the Landlord and Tenant Board and apply for their tenant to be evicted because of non-payment of rent.

What landlords and tenants want right now are clear guidelines around what is going to happen once the pandemic has subsided and tenants are expected to pay their rent again. Will they be evicted if they don't immediately pay all their back pay? Will they be evicted if the landlord is not willing to negotiate with them? Landlords and tenants want to know, but that key housing issue that we are facing during this pandemic is not in this bill, Bill 184. If we are going to be talking about housing right now, we should be talking about some of those key housing issues that we are facing.

I do also want to emphasize that there are some aspects of this bill that are more hopeful than bad. The reason why I want to turn to them is because recognition should be given when I see steps that are being taken in the right direction. For example, the decision to increase penalties for landlords that engage in bad-faith evictions is a step in the right direction.

In my riding, Airbnb is rampant. Every time I canvas, I will bump into an Airbnb house with a lock on the door that you can get in with a pin, or I'll bump into an Airbnb tenant who will say, "I'm just here for a few days." But what that means is that every Airbnb place that exists means a tenant has been evicted previously, and it's a concern. Often, that Airbnb has begun because a landlord has engaged in a bad-faith eviction. They have said they'll move in, they're going to do renovations. But as the months go by, it becomes very clear that this property is instead going to become a short-term rental. Increasing

penalties for landlords that engage in bad-faith evictions: That is a good move.

An additional thing that I think is a positive step in the right direction is the decision to increase compensation for people who are evicted for renovations or personal use and to also expand the definition of who is eligible for that compensation. Right now, people who live in apartments where there are five apartments or more are eligible for more compensation than people who just live in a basement apartment. This would expand that. I also see that as a good move, because in my riding there are many people who don't live in the big purpose-built rentals on Spadina or Walmer; they live in basement apartments or they live on the second or third floor. This could benefit them.

An additional thing that I also see as being a step in the right direction is the decision to give the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit a little bit more teeth. I don't know if you have called the Rental Housing Enforcement Unit; I have. It is a waste of time. They don't have the staff to tackle the many issues that we are facing with violations that are happening with tenants and landlords. Right now, in my riding, there are a lot of Airbnbs that have been temporarily banned. Yet, for many houses in my riding, they continue. There is nowhere to call. I call the city; they say they don't have the enforcement mechanisms. I call this residential housing enforcement unit; they cannot help. The fact that there is some movement to strengthen that is a step in the right direction.

That said, I do have some concerns, and I do want to address some of the concerns. Number one is about the residential housing enforcement unit. While giving it more teeth is a step in the right direction, what the residential housing enforcement unit really needs is more staff so that when we call, there is a staff person who is available to investigate. If you just provide them with more enforcement but you don't give them the staff to do it, it doesn't amount to very much. It's not going to help the tenants and landlords in my riding.

Some additional concerns that I see: A lot of the issues that we are facing during the COVID-19 pandemic are not addressed here, and I'm asking you to move forward on them. That would include subsidies for renters so that they can continue to pay the rent and so that landlords can continue to have some kind of rental income. There need to be clear guidelines. This government needs to come forward with clear guidelines for what is going to happen once this pandemic is over, so that renters are not suddenly evicted because they can't pay \$4,000, \$6,000, \$8,000 in back pay up front. They are not going to be able to do it. That is a problem for them. Many of them are living in fear right now.

I also have some concerns around the Landlord and Tenant Board institution in itself, which could be addressed in this legislation but it is not. Right now, as it currently stands with the Landlord and Tenant Board, it is stacked in favour of the landlord. What is also concerning is that the vast majority of landlords that go to the Landlord and Tenant Board have legal representation.

What that means is they're prepared, they're organized, they know what the Landlord and Tenant Board is going to do, they know their argument, they have their case and they often win.

But in the case of the tenant, the tenant by and large does not have representation. What that means is that they often lose. If we are introducing a bill to protect tenants, as we are in Bill 184, I encourage this government to look at moving forward with requiring that everyone, especially tenants, has some kind of legal representation when they go to the Landlord and Tenant Board to make things more fair, so that everyone knows what their rights are and can make a good and solid case. That is not in this bill, and it should be.

**1530**

I've also got concerns with the tracking mechanism that is within Bill 184. What I've found in my riding is that you'll have a landlord, they'll come up, they'll evict someone because they want to jack up the rent, and then they'll do it again and again, every 18 months. The problem with that is that the Landlord and Tenant Board doesn't track any of that, so this government doesn't actually know who these bad faith landlords are.

The tracking mechanism that is currently in Bill 184 is not strong enough. It essentially depends on the renter, who has already left the apartment, to do the investigative reporting to find out if their former landlord has done the right thing or not. No renter I know is going to cycle or bike or drive around a former apartment and gather evidence in order to make a claim to the Landlord and Tenant Board—that they will probably lose, because the rules are stacked against them. And as it currently is written, they get no compensation if they're proved right, essentially. There's very little compensation available to them, so why would they do it? They're not.

There would be better protections if there was a proper tracking mechanism in place so we could find out who these landlords are who are constantly doing the evictions. The onus is on the government to do the investigations so that if there is a renter who is illegally evicted, they are found, the former renter is properly compensated and the landlord is properly fined for doing the wrong thing. That should be in this bill.

Finally, I want to address some of the bigger issues that face our housing market right now. I'd like to use an analogy that Geordie Dent, the executive director of the federation of metro tenants of Toronto, used. He said it's like this: Imagine we were in a desert and there was an oasis and some people came along and thought, "It would be a really good idea if we bottled up all of this water in this oasis and sold it to everyone for—I don't know—200 bucks a pop. And we'll sell it in little amounts so that we can maximize our profit." That's kind of like the housing market right now, where investors are benefiting more than people who simply want a place to live so that they can continue to exist in Toronto and lead good lives here.

Housing has become less about a human right, and it has become more about a place for investors to make a lot of profit at the expense of people who are really struggling

to get by. This bill, I believe, doesn't address that root-cause issue of how we're going to make housing affordable, how we're going to make housing available to everyone so we can continue to live a good life here.

One of the key ways to do that is to introduce real rent control. When I'm talking about real rent control, I'm talking about looking at vacancy decontrol so there's a limit on how much a rent can go up once a tenant leaves and expanding rent control so that it includes not just older apartments and homes, but includes new apartments as well. Because if we're going to build a 70-storey condo, it's not very beneficial for a renter to move in there at some discount rental rate, and then the landlord can just increase the rent once they've invested their lives in that property. It's not easy to move; it is expensive to move. People don't want to do it. So that is not a fair bargain, and it is certainly not fair for renters in this housing market.

That's what I have to say about this bill. I look forward to it going to committee. I urge you to consider what we are saying, I urge you to do the right thing for renters during COVID-19 so we can survive, and I urge you to use this global pandemic as an opportunity to shift the balance and make our housing market more fair for everyone—not just now, but moving forward.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** The member for Waterloo.

**Ms. Catherine Fife:** Well, it has turned into an interesting afternoon, hasn't it?

First of all, I want to say I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from St. Catharines.

I'm going to take five or six minutes just on Bill 184—primarily, Mr. Speaker, to speak about the critic, who was denied her opportunity today to do her one-hour lead.

The member from Toronto Centre is a strong and passionate advocate for tenants in her riding, across this city and across this province. She actually has a private member's bill on the docket, and that private member's bill would undo some of the damage that's contained within this bill. It would close the loophole around rent control, which this government lifted as of November 15, 2018. One of the first things they did was signal to the developers and landlords in the province of Ontario, "It's okay. You don't have to worry about offering fair rent on all new builds." Her private member's bill would reverse that, and I hope that after this pandemic, when we're all in this together, the government may rethink this rent control piece and this loophole that is clearly very open and is actually pushing people out of the market.

It's quite something. She's a renter herself, so she's living her advocacy on a regular basis. She wanted me to get on the record that there's a long-standing history in this place of PC governments ceding control of housing to the private sector, and it began with Premier Harris back in 1995-96. Of course, we're hearing a lot about Mr. Harris these days because his legacy on long-term-care homes, particularly Chartwell, will be a lasting legacy of that particular Premier. Here we are in 2020 still talking about the damage that was done back in 1995.

Unfortunately, this Bill 184—listen; I know the minister well. We've served in opposition together. I think he has good intentions in crafting a bill, but this bill still will not address the core gaps that we see on the landlord side, on the tenant side and on the Landlord and Tenant Board. I asked him earlier about how students will be addressed. The answer that we got honestly does not address the key issues that students are facing in all of our ridings. We have landlords going into student houses unannounced. Sometimes young females have been in those residences. We have landlords who are taking key deposits and never giving that money back. You know what we call that? We call that stealing. That's what that is.

We have landlords who change the rules of who can be in the house, whether or not they can have pets, whether or not they can have air conditioning, or whether or not the heat turns on. This is not going to be addressed by an inflexible Landlord and Tenant Board, regardless of how many adjudicators this government tries to hire. Students in the province of Ontario, unfortunately, will not be addressed by Bill 184, and that's a real shame.

The minister also spoke in his lead, which he got to do, about how vacancy rates are problematic. In a lot of communities across Ontario, vacancy rates are very low. In Waterloo, they're very high; they're just unaffordable. People cannot afford them. Students cannot afford them; seniors cannot afford them. Those middle citizens who find themselves trying to downsize out of their homes and don't want to go into retirement or long-term care home—those options are not for them either. So affordability is still not addressed by Bill 184, and that, for us, is seriously a missed opportunity.

The minister, I feel, with his language was trying to find that balance between landlords and tenants, and yet because of COVID-19, because we are in a middle of a state of emergency because of this pandemic, I look at a lot of these issues through the lens of seniors. I was thinking about my former colleague from Welland, Cindy Forster, who brought in bill after bill to try to get private residential housing under control—some guidelines.

If we ever get a public inquiry, this will be the next travesty that we see in the province of Ontario. These are private homes being sold as retirement residences, and there's a huge power imbalance. There are no guidelines; there's no oversight. They're in Niagara. We know that. They're in Toronto. They're in Waterloo. They're in Kitchener. They're under the radar, and we've seen criminal cases come forward. Cindy Forster raised this many years ago. The owner and the operator of these homes take the pension cheque. They've stolen from their clients. They deny them food. They're promised a retirement setting—and there's no government oversight. There's no regulation. Perhaps this will come out if we actually ever get that public inquiry. Right now, of course, it's a big issue in Niagara and Hamilton, particularly with the Royal Crest Lifecare Group.

1540

Mr. Speaker, I was really enjoying that brief moment when we were all pretending that we're in this together.

What we've seen today is that the government—really, out of spite; let's be honest. You've denied the member from Toronto Centre her opportunity to represent her riding, to represent her citizens. You've undermined our democratic responsibility. I have to say, in my eight years here in this House, I have never seen it. I have never seen that. Honestly, we have all tried to have our members back, because we understand that if she had her chance to speak in this House, she would know this legislation inside and out. We all had five minutes to prepare for this.

As my colleague from St. Catharines takes over now, I really want you to go back to your House leader and say, "This is not the way that we should be conducting ourselves." It is disrespectful to us as colleagues and it is disrespectful to our democracy.

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

**Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens:** I rise today with quite a bit of pleasure on behalf of the residents of St. Catharines. I'm going to be quoting what I heard earlier, now that this debate was thrown on us, as we've all heard. But I'm not going to even bother complaining about it, because I think we have to speak about the wrong, the wrongdoing of what we're doing here in this House today. We should really be debating about good legislation, about public inquiries into nursing homes that we've sent our Canadian military into—who have now contracted COVID-19, the fear of most Ontario residents and residents across Canada.

I heard this quote earlier. It says, "Build more homes. That's what this bill is about. We can build more homes." Well, let me tell you a story about St. Catharines. My previous government job was being a municipal councillor. If you build more homes and you cut the red tape to build more homes, that's great, but nobody is going to live in them, because they can't afford it. They can't afford it.

Not only that, but what happens is, big businesses and corporations come into Niagara and cookie-cut through our beautiful farmlands—cookie-cut through. They build these big, huge, monstrous homes in small neighbourhoods, in wartime neighbourhoods where you have your beginning families with two little children. They buy this house that they can afford, and then these huge corporate builders come in and they buy up these lands, they build these huge homes, they charge—the average rent in St. Catharines right now is \$1,300, and that's unaffordable for anyone who's working a part-time job.

They come in and they build these huge homes. We call them monster homes. They put them in these beautiful little subdivisions that starter families have tried to start raising their families in, and they jack the rent up. Well, guess what? Then we have people who can't afford to live in these monster homes, and it just tears apart our really nice neighbourhoods.

Another thing I have to get back to is our farmlands, the cookie-cutting of what could happen to our precious grape fields. I don't know if you've ever been to Niagara-on-the-Lake or St. Catharines. We have some beautiful wineries there—beautiful wineries. Those are our farmlands. And

if you start cutting the red tape and you start letting big corporations or big builders come into Niagara and build up big homes, well, guess what? We lose our wineries and businesses. It's okay, though. This government likes to cut red tape. I put yellow tape around it, and I will put yellow tape around the St. Catharines area, because guess what? I'm looking over there at the Niagara West MPP, and he knows how precious our farmlands are, how precious it is to protect them and not cut through red tape, and not let big builders come in and build these big five-storey homes in our neighbourhoods and within our farmlands, because that will ruin our industry of our wineries.

I almost always, always, always want to also talk about seniors: seniors who, right now, during COVID-19, are in fear. They're living in fear. They're living in these homes, lonely, first of all, because they don't understand the pandemic of COVID-19. But we're sitting here—to the fine folks of St. Catharines—debating the landlord and tenant act, or Bill 184, and we have seniors sitting at home worried about COVID-19 and the pandemic that we have right now, and seniors and veterans and the community abroad who are really worried about not being able to afford the rent next month, not being able to afford their bills.

Residents are instead sitting there worried about eviction—possibly being evicted. This government said, “We'll put a law”—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Thank you. We now have time for 10 minutes of questions and answers.

Questions?

**Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong:** Yes, Speaker, I have a question, actually, and it pertains to the issue of homelessness. The member from London West talked about it in London, of course, and I just wanted to get her to expand a little bit about what the city is doing with respect to addressing the social housing crisis and the repairs that they were talking about, and how helpful that will be to this province and how we should be advocating for municipalities.

We should be advocating for this province, the provincial government, to help municipalities address those needs of repairs in social housing.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the question from my colleague, the member for London–Fanshawe. I think that if there's a lesson from COVID-19 in terms of homelessness, we have figured out how municipalities can step in and get people housed. In London, we have seen a coordinated, collaborative effort across community service agencies to really move people who are sleeping rough and to get them into places of safety.

That has been an effort that has been mobilized by the COVID-19 pandemic, but it is an approach that we can use going forward, hopefully, when we are out of this pandemic and looking forward in this province. It has proven to be very effective. Agencies have stepped up, and it has been a tremendous thing for homeless people in our community.

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

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** My question is to the member from Toronto–St. Paul's. The member covered very well, I felt, the experiences of tenants across Toronto and across the province, so my question is: This bill, we know, is essentially stripping tenants of their rights and making the evictions process much easier, making it easier for landlords to evict tenants. Right now, we have a moratorium on evictions, but we don't have rent subsidies, we don't have rent relief, we don't have rent forgiveness—nothing, no rent program from this province.

When the moratorium is lifted—we know right now that tenants are receiving eviction notices already—and with the Landlord and Tenant Board process much easier to evict tenants, what does the member think or expect will happen? I think it will be mass evictions, and I would like to hear from the member as well.

**Ms. Jill Andrew:** Thank you very, very much to my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park for your concerns around the Landlord and Tenant Board and what I feel is going to be a bottleneck, a backlog of tenants who will possibly be tossed out because they will be unable to pay their rent. This is absolutely the concern of everyone that is calling our office in St. Paul's who is being intimidated or bullied by their landlords to pay rent with money they do not have.

What I will leave with this government and with Ontario again: This government could have come here today, Ontario, and they could have legislated in one day rent relief. They could have brought back rent control in one day, you know? These are the powers that the government has. As the NDP official opposition, we have put these forward: rent relief, rent control and rent freezes. None of these are in the government's legislation, and it is not protecting tenants to its full amount.

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

Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Clark has moved second reading of Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

Call in the members. There will be a—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Sorry.

All those in favour?

All those opposed?

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell, unless—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Thank you.

“Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I respectfully request that the vote on second reading of Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services

Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, May 27, 2020.”

This is signed by Lorne Coe, the chief government whip.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield):** Orders of the day? I recognize the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** No further business, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Percy Hatfield:** No further business? This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 1553.*





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Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
<b>Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	Markham—Stouffville	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
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<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby	
Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
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<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
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Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Parm (PC)	Milton	
Glover, Chris (NDP)	Spadina—Fort York	
Gravelle, Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
<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
<b>Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC)</b>	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harden, Joel (NDP)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hassan, Faisal (NDP)	York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston	
<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
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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	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	Dufferin—Caledon	Solicitor General / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC)	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	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
<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	
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
<b>Nicholls, Rick (PC)</b>	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (PC)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
<b>Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)</b>	Ajax	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)</b>	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
<b>Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)</b>	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Guratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
<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 Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Walker, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (PC)</b>	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Associate Minister of Energy / Ministre associé de l'Énergie Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
<b>Yakubski, Hon. / L'hon. John (PC)</b>	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
<b>Yurek, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (PC)</b>	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

**Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Wayne Gates  
Lorne Coe, Wayne Gates  
Randy Hillier, Andrea Khanjin  
Jane McKenna, Judith Monteith-Farrell  
Michael Parsa, Randy Pettapiece  
Kaleed Rasheed, Peter Tabuns  
Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts  
Jill Andrew, Ian Arthur  
Stephen Blais, Stan Cho  
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife  
Randy Hillier, Mitzie Hunter  
Andrea Khanjin, Sol Mamakwa  
David Piccini  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

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

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Daryl Kramp  
Robert Bailey, Jessica Bell  
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover  
Mike Harris, Daryl Kramp  
Sheref Sabawy, Amarjot Sandhu  
Mike Schreiner, Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens  
Daisy Wai  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak  
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe  
Rudy Cuzzetto, Taras Natyshak  
Rick Nicholls, Billy Pang  
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri  
John Vanthof  
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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Roman Baber, Will Bouma  
Parm Gill, Natalia Kusendova  
Suze Morrison, Lindsey Park  
Gurratan Singh, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos  
Kevin Yarde  
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**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité  
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam  
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau  
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi  
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas  
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed  
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly  
Vijay Thanigasalam  
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**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent  
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas  
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Toby Barrett, Stan Cho  
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife  
John Fraser, France Gélinas  
Christine Hogarth, Norman Miller  
Michael Parsa  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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

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Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett  
Will Bouma, Stephen Crawford  
Mitzie Hunter, Laura Mae Lindo  
Gila Martow, Paul Miller  
Billy Pang, Dave Smith  
Jamie West  
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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

Chair / Présidente: Natalia Kusendova  
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian  
Aris Babikian, Jeff Burch  
Amy Fee, Michael Gravelle  
Joel Harden, Mike Harris  
Christine Hogarth, Belinda C. Karahalios  
Terence Kernaghan, Natalia Kusendova  
Robin Martin  
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum