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Mardi
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Service linguistique et des publications parlementaires
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 March 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 mars 2021

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

Ms. Jones moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters / Projet de loi 251, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les questions de traite des personnes.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Solicitor General to lead off the debate.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you, Speaker. I am honoured to open the debate on Bill 251, the Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021. I will be joined this morning by my colleagues the minister for women and children's issues as well as the Attorney General.

Human trafficking is a vicious and violent crime that preys on the young and vulnerable and can leave its victims feeling broken and forgotten. Sadly, while COVID-19 has forced us to put our normal lives on hold, human traffickers are expanding their efforts to exploit those at greatest risk, including those who are isolated from supports or increasingly communicating through digital platforms.

For survivors of human trafficking and those who support you, it may feel as if the world has forgotten about you as it grapples with the threat of COVID-19. But, as I said on Human Trafficking Awareness Day, our message here in Ontario is crystal clear: Ontario has not forgotten—not then, not now, not ever. This is precisely why we are bringing forward even more tools to fight this crime, support survivors and raise awareness.

Human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide. It disproportionately impacts children and youth, particularly those most vulnerable. As I do every time I speak about this heinous crime, I will remind members of this House that the average age of recruitment into trafficking is just 13 years old.

This isn't a problem that only happens somewhere else. Most of all police-reported incidents of human trafficking

in this country happen right here in Ontario—and those are only the offences that we know of. Calls to the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline suggest that only a small fraction of incidents are ever reported to the police. I know that all of us in this House worry about the number of incidents that go unreported.

We know that human trafficking crimes are, by their very nature, hidden and that for many reasons, including threats and fears of retribution, it is particularly difficult for victims and survivors to come forward. This only underscores how important it is to raise awareness of the issue among the general public.

Before I speak to the specific legislative proposals outlined in the Combating Human Trafficking Act, I would like to remind members of the important context that this bill fits into. A year ago this month, our government launched a historic \$307-million anti-human trafficking strategy. This strategy takes a proactive approach to combatting human trafficking while ensuring the necessary supports are in place to help the survivors deal with the trauma. It has four main pillars: intervene early, support survivors, hold offenders accountable and raise awareness.

Due to the complexity of this crime and the incredible trauma involved, it's crucial that the social services and justice sectors collaborate on this issue. But the fight against human trafficking is larger than two ministries. Combatting human trafficking takes co-operation and collaboration across governments and many groups, including police, community agencies, families, schools and, of course, the youth themselves. Whether that's the hotel and motel association, Truckers Against Trafficking, teachers and those who care for our young people, those who work in rest stops and gas stations along our highways, the list is endless, Speaker. More and more, these groups are joining the fight, and I want to applaud them for their commitment to this cause.

And let me be clear: While we have been working tirelessly to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, that has not dampened our resolve when it comes to making a difference in this issue. Along with the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues and the Minister of Education, in August we launched two new educational tools to help raise awareness for this critical issue among our province's young people.

From my ministry, we reinvested \$6 million from the proceeds of crime directly back into the hands of local police to up the fight against human trafficking. Examples of successful projects already include bringing together municipal, First Nations and provincial police to improve

community responses to human trafficking to help survivors access the supports they need to safely move forward with their lives, and launching comprehensive education campaigns targeting groups that are more susceptible to becoming victims of human trafficking, such as women in low-income groups, Indigenous and immigrant women and at-risk youth.

The proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, also builds on the actions that have already been deployed and are under way to fight the increasingly sophisticated criminal networks that perpetrate human trafficking crimes across our province. For example, we have ramped up the intelligence efforts of police services related to the identification and interception of human trafficking activity. We have also made strides in detecting and monitoring traffickers within the correctional system.

In addition, we are expanding the Ontario Provincial Police Child Sexual Exploitation Unit with an additional 23 members, both uniform and civilian, to their current complement. This is an analytical hub aimed at identifying and disrupting those intent on the sexual exploitation of children and to rescue the victims. These initiatives have laid the groundwork for the proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, which reinforces Ontario's commitment to fight human trafficking and demonstrates our ongoing leadership in responding to this pervasive crime.

Under the proposed act, we have introduced two new pieces of legislation: the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, and the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, which would replace the Hotel Registration of Guests Act. We are also proposing amendments to the following acts: The Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, and the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017. The world understands a lot more about human trafficking in 2021 than was the case even in 2017. These two acts needed to be updated to address gaps and align with the anti-human trafficking strategy.

Together, the proposed new legislation and legislative amendments build on our \$307-million anti-human trafficking strategy by:

- first, providing a long-term provincial response to human trafficking and emphasizing that all Ontarians have a role to play in combatting human trafficking;
- strengthening the ability of the children's aid societies and law enforcement to protect exploited children;
- assisting more survivors and people who support them in obtaining restraining orders against traffickers with specific consideration for Indigenous survivors;
- increasing the government's ability to better understand the impact of human trafficking through the collection of non-personal data; and
- providing law enforcement with more tools to locate victims quickly.

0910

As we walk through the legislative proposals before the House, I will focus on the law enforcement-related proposals and the proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021. Minister Dunlop and Attorney

General Downey will speak further on the other aspects of this legislation.

The proposed Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, would be the first of its kind in Canada. Speaker, I would be remiss in not commenting on—the foundation for much of this work happened as a result of opposition activities with my friend and colleague the Minister of Infrastructure Laurie Scott.

The proposed Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, as I said, would be the first of its kind in Canada. If passed, the legislation would support raising awareness of human trafficking, and it would provide a sustained, long-term and comprehensive response to human trafficking. This would be achieved by mandating Ontario to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy that it reviews regularly and updates to help the province stay ahead of traffickers. It would also emphasize the role that Ontarians have to play in combatting human trafficking by training certain individuals and organizations on how to identify and appropriately respond to suspected instances of human trafficking.

If passed, the proposed act would also implement the ability to collect non-personal data so that decision-makers can better understand the impact of the strategy and respond to human trafficking. It would establish the power to require companies that advertise sexual services to have a contact for law enforcement and other entities. This contact would be used to request information in support of a human trafficking investigation.

The Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, would specify how and when police services can access hotel guest registry information without a court order in certain emergency situations when an order cannot be obtained. It would also provide authority to expand guest registry requirements to other types of accommodation providers, such as short-term rental companies, following consultation with the sector so that we get that definition exactly right.

A key area that this legislation focuses on is training and reporting requirements. Organizations can help stop human trafficking by training employees to spot the signs, especially in sectors commonly used by traffickers, including hospitality and transportation. As I outlined earlier, we have many partners ready and willing to play their part. Under this proposed legislation, Ontario would become a national leader on training individuals and organizations on how to identify human trafficking and respond appropriately.

The legislation would also establish the critical ability to collect data regarding trafficking. In order to bring traffickers to justice, we have to be able to better understand the crime. The collection of non-personal data will enable the government to conduct research and analysis to plan for the delivery of programs and services under the anti-human trafficking strategy, and to evaluate whether existing supports are working, where they can be improved and where new supports should be added.

This legislation would also create new requirements that will help law enforcement move quickly to conduct

investigations. Under the proposed legislation, companies that host advertisements for sexual services must provide a contact, such as an email address or a telephone number, that police and other relevant entities could use to request information to support investigations into suspected human trafficking. These companies would be required to make the contact available in a prescribed manner and respond to requests directly at this contact within a prescribed period of time. Failure to comply with requirements for companies that advertise sexual services could result in penalties of up to \$50,000 for an individual and \$100,000 for a corporation.

We understand the scope of advertising for sexual services and that many of these ads are posted online by companies outside of Ontario's jurisdictional reach. Fighting human trafficking takes co-operation and collaboration across many sectors. While requiring that advertisers doing business in Ontario comply with proposed points of contact information, we will work with other provinces, territories and the federal government to help address this interjurisdictional issue.

Similarly, if passed, this legislation would provide police the authority to access hotel guest registration information that is collected in the context of the proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021.

Most hotel and motel operators unwillingly and unknowingly provide infrastructure for human traffickers. The market exploitation of short-term rentals has added to the inventory and created new opportunities for traffickers. These facilities offer accommodation to move victims while providing privacy and anonymity to traffickers who relocate their operations frequently to evade detection by law enforcement. Hotel rooms are also used by traffickers as a base for recruitment.

Hotel and motel operators are taking a firm stand against human trafficking. I would like to thank the Hotel Association of Canada for their leadership in raising awareness of human trafficking amongst its members and supporting training programs and other anti-trafficking processes.

That is why we are proposing to repeal the outdated Hotel Registration of Guests Act and replace it with a new Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, which would support our anti-human trafficking strategy. The new act will help deter human trafficking in hotels, motels and resorts by enhancing awareness of human trafficking and supporting police investigations and enforcement.

The proposed new act will:

- through enabling regulations, allow the enhancement of information collected in guest registries and establish a length of time registries must be maintained;

- modernize the definition of “hotel” to reflect changes in the accommodation industry, including short-term rentals—more on this part in a moment—and

- describe the circumstances under which registries would be made available to police.

First, enhancing guest registries: Hotel guest registries have served as a valuable tool in human trafficking

investigations. The more thorough and accurate the information provided, the stronger the tool. Currently, the Hotel Registration of Guests Act requires hotels to collect the name and place of residence of every person admitted as a guest. Given the connection between human trafficking and the hotel sector, more information, and more reliable information, is required.

In some cases, shady owners and operators willingly allow misleading information, such as a false name or a statement regarding their place of residence, to be entered into the registry. The proposed new legislation would include regulation-making authority to enhance the information collected in guest registries and establish a length of time that registries must be maintained. What additional information may be required will be confirmed through the regulatory process and through further consultation.

Number two is modernizing the definition of “hotel.” Based on consultations with Ontario's tourism and hospitality sector, the government is modernizing the definition of “hotel.” This was requested by the sector in order to enhance consistency and to more accurately reflect the modern industry.

In addition to hotels, short-term rentals are often used as venues for human trafficking because they also provide traffickers with privacy and anonymity. Policing stakeholders have told us that the use of short-term rental units by traffickers is on the rise. The proposed new legislation would include regulation-making authority to prescribe other accommodation providers, such as short-term rental accommodations, to maintain a guest registry.

Let me be clear here: This is an expansion of the current requirements. Accommodation providers other than hotels are currently not in the scope of the previous Hotel Registration of Guests Act, which is exactly why we are replacing it with a new and modern framework. We will consult with the broader accommodation sector to understand how the requirements of the legislation could apply to other businesses. This is an opportunity to work with short-term rental companies as we develop the enabling regulations for accommodation providers who must keep a registry.

0920

Number three is the authority to access hotel guest registration information. More victims may be identified and located, and more traffickers may be deterred, by specifying how and when police services and First Nations police services can access information from guest registries. And it will set a framework for when police may urgently demand to view information without a court order under exigent circumstances, such as the threat of bodily harm to a victim or destruction of evidence.

The proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, will lessen the accommodation industry's vulnerability to trafficking and respect the balance between safeguarding privacy while supporting law enforcement in deterring human trafficking. Enforcement is an important tool to encourage compliance and deter offenders, which is why we are proposing penalties for non-compliance. Under the new proposed Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021, owners or

operators are liable for fines of up to \$5,000 for failure to maintain a guest registry, knowingly and willingly permitting false information or failing to comply with demands from law enforcement.

Speaker, human trafficking feeds off the vulnerable and destroys the lives of the innocent. It also fuels other criminal activities such as gun smuggling and gang violence. No part of this province is immune to human trafficking as a point of origin, place for transit or destination for the victims. The physical and emotional trauma that trafficking causes makes it very difficult to recover and live a safe and healthy life. Complex and targeted supports like the ones this government has invested in can make a huge difference.

Ontario must take the lead in the fight against human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of our children and other vulnerable people. I would like to thank our brave child welfare and social services first responders, victim support workers, and health and mental health care professionals who care for and seek justice for the victims and the survivors. You are our front line against human trafficking, and we are by your side in this fight.

Our government voiced its commitment to tackling human trafficking very early on in our mandate. We worked with a wide spectrum of stakeholders to establish the comprehensive \$307-million anti-human trafficking strategy. These legislative changes, if passed, would reinforce the strategy's key objectives of raising awareness of the issue, protecting victims and intervening early, supporting survivors, and holding offenders accountable. It would also support law enforcement to dismantle criminal networks and help deter human trafficking.

I will now turn it over to my friend, colleague and co-lead, Associate Minister Dunlop.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the associate minister, Ms. Dunlop.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I rise to speak on behalf of the second reading of Bill 251, the Combating Human Trafficking Act. As the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, as a mother, as a daughter and as an Ontarian, combatting human trafficking is a priority for me and for our government. While I have not been impacted myself on the issue of human trafficking, the issue is very personal for me. I want my daughters to be safe wherever they go and with anyone they meet. I also want to ensure that if something as horrific as human trafficking does occur, there is help for them and for our family to heal and rebuild.

This bill, which brings together legislated proposals from four different ministries, is an example of the across-government approach we are taking to address this crime. These legislative proposals represent strong measures to fight human trafficking in Ontario. Proposed changes, if passed, will better protect victims of human trafficking, support survivors and increase tools to hold offenders accountable.

Tragically, human trafficking has become a growing threat to women, children and other vulnerable people around the world—a threat that we are also facing on a

daily basis here in Ontario. Unfortunately, our province is a hub for human trafficking, accounting for just over half of police-reported incidents in Canada in 2019. It is a horrific crime that poses real and serious danger, robbing the safety, health and livelihood of those who are being exploited and abused, often resulting in long-term trauma. For the victims and their families caught in this awful criminal activity, it is a nightmare existence.

Speaker, while I have said some of what I will be speaking on before in this House, all of it bears repeating. Human trafficking can happen in any community and anyone can be a victim, but young women and girls are particularly at risk of being targeted for sex trafficking, especially those from Indigenous communities and other racialized groups and youth in care. Nearly three quarters of victims identified by police are under the age of 25, and 28% of victims are children under 13. It should also be noted that the majority of cases of trafficking are not reported, so those numbers are very likely much, much higher. It is a crime that disproportionately impacts vulnerable populations and individuals, as traffickers assess and manipulate vulnerability to their own benefit to target, lure and groom their victims.

Others who may also be at risk of being targeted by traffickers include people who identify as 2SLGBTQIA, newcomers, migrant workers, persons with disabilities and people who may be marginalized, such as persons experiencing mental illness or addictions challenges, poverty, homelessness or bullying.

Our government has been absolutely clear: This despicable crime is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. We will do whatever it takes to protect our children and youth from human trafficking, as well as provide the supports victims and survivors need to help them heal and rebuild their lives.

When I first became minister in 2019, I had the opportunity to participate in numerous round tables with survivors, Indigenous communities and organizations, those on the front line, police officers and more to learn first-hand about human trafficking in this province. One thing that was stated over and over again was the importance of having these discussions and the need to have a strategy. Speaker, it is unfortunate we need a strategy about human trafficking. It is a shame that we need to raise awareness about this issue. Human trafficking should never be occurring. It should never be something considered by any individual, and no person should ever be trafficked.

We heard from the members at the round tables about the need for the strategy, and I am proud of the work that myself, the Solicitor General and the Attorney General have been doing with our federal, provincial and territorial partners to raise awareness across the province and call on the federal government for a strategy.

Speaker, this is why Bill 251 is an important next step in our five-year strategy to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, accompanied by an investment of \$307 million. This strategy, announced on March 6 of last year, is a comprehensive action plan that plays a

proactive approach across government to raise awareness of this issue, protect victims, intervene early, support survivors and hold offenders accountable.

In designing and implementing this strategy, our government has benefitted greatly from the experience and expertise of survivors, front-line service providers, Indigenous communities, Indigenous-led organizations, law enforcement, advocates and champions for victims and survivors. I want to thank every single person who came forward to share their stories, their experiences, their thoughts and ideas on how we can work together to protect individuals, raise awareness, support those who have been victims and also hold those committing these crimes accountable. We could not have created our strategy without you.

I would also like to thank some of my members: the member from Mississauga Centre; my neighbouring MPPs, the member from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte and Attorney General, and the member from Barrie–Innisfil; the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington; the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore; and so many other individuals in this House who have held round tables, whether in person—once upon a time—or virtually to talk about human trafficking. I would express my sincere appreciation to hold round tables in all of our communities across this province, and I know I would be happy to attend with any member, because the more we can do to educate the public—it will be the number one thing we can do to combat human trafficking in this province.

Over the last 12 months, as the world faced a global pandemic, human trafficking didn't stop or take any breaks, but we didn't either. We have taken strong action and made significant progress in delivering on our strategy, including on a wide range of supportive initiatives across government.

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In collaboration with the Minister of Indigenous Affairs as well as First Nation, Métis and Inuit communities and organizations, we released an Indigenous-focused education campaign designed by and for Indigenous people to support youth, communities and caregivers; connect people; and provide resources to help address the needs of Indigenous victims and survivors.

Through the work of my colleague and friend the Minister of Education, we have updated the elementary health and physical education curriculum to include mandatory learning about online safety and consent to keep kids safe and respond to the growing threat of human trafficking.

With the member from Brampton West, the Solicitor General and the Minister of Education, we released an interactive digital education tool to help children and youth learn about how traffickers lure, groom and manipulate young people into trafficking, so they are equipped to recognize when it may be happening to them or to their friends.

Through the work of the Minister of Transportation, we are partnering with the trucking industry, including the

Women's Trucking Federation of Canada, and ONroute locations to raise awareness on Ontario's 400-series highways.

With the Attorney General, we have invested in enhanced specialized services for victims through victims' service agencies and we have reinvested cash and proceeds seized from criminals to help fight human trafficking.

From our Solicitor General, my co-lead and an incredible advocate and champion on this issue, we have also provided grants for anti-human trafficking projects delivered by community police services. And we are investing up to \$96 million over the next five years in community-based and Indigenous-specific services across the province to provide more supports for victims and survivors, particularly children and youth. These community programs do incredible work to support victims and survivors, especially our children and youth, who are often the targets of traffickers.

Just last week, I was able to join our Minister of Health virtually with Casandra Diamond and Alison Peck in Newmarket, who have two incredible programs to serve survivors, to allow them to heal and rebuild their lives. They both do tremendous work, and I am proud to support them and their organizations.

Let's not forget the work, advocacy and efforts of the Minister of Infrastructure on this issue while in the opposition. Her Saving the Girl Next Door Act, 2016, paved the way for much of the work in this bill and what Ontario has done on this issue. She is a champion, and it is an honour to stand with her and beside her.

We have made progress in challenging times, but there is always more to do. We are committed to continuing to fight to end human trafficking and to supporting survivors in Ontario.

To strengthen our response, we need to be constantly adding new tools and mechanisms to our toolbox and engaging key sectors. Last week, our government did exactly that when my colleague the Solicitor General introduced legislative proposals to strengthen Ontario's ability to help victims and survivors, better protect children and youth, and strengthen our actions to fight this crime. The proposals contained in Bill 251 offer a multifaceted approach to combatting human trafficking. This is because human trafficking impacts so many sectors. We all have an obligation to be part of raising awareness and making a change.

The proposed Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, if passed, would require the province to maintain an anti-human trafficking strategy and support a sustained long-term response to combat human trafficking. Speaker, we are very proud of this proposal. This requirement would be the first of its kind in Canada and would position Ontario as a leader in anti-human trafficking efforts in the country. It would mean that any government, regardless of political stripe, would be required to continue working towards eliminating human trafficking in this province and supporting victims and survivors. This is of momentous importance, in line with other pieces of legislation that

have similar requirements embedded on other key issues, such as a requirement for the government to maintain a poverty reduction strategy via the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009. That's because these issues require us to all work together in a non-partisan manner with all sectors. Support is not limited to one ministry, one person, one political party or one government. It requires all of us.

The proposed act would also create enabling authority to require persons who may be prescribed at a later date in regulation, and upon further consultation, to:

- post or disseminate information about human trafficking;

- provide or receive anti-human trafficking training as part of employment, such as recognizing the signs of human trafficking and how to appropriately respond to suspected instances, and;

- report suspected instances of human trafficking to a prescribed body, such as the police or a hotline.

Given the complexity of human trafficking, we know that it requires not only a cross-government approach but work across jurisdictions and with various sectors. These provisions would support the strategy's efforts to raise awareness of human trafficking in targeted sectors, contributing to better identification, attitudes and behaviours towards human trafficking, including enhancing the ability to appropriately respond to suspected instances and connect survivors to supportive services.

If passed, this act would send a strong signal that all persons have a responsibility to help combat human trafficking, while affording flexibility to compel, for example, sectors or businesses to prioritize anti-human trafficking efforts, if required.

Much of the current issue is that individuals don't know that trafficking is happening in their neighbourhoods and communities. Just last week, I was speaking to a school and a girl mentioned that she had heard of trafficking because of the movie *Taken*. While that is one way trafficking occurs, the majority of victims in police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada are Canadians. We need to acknowledge that this is very prevalent here.

I'd like to make note of the necklace that I have. Many people have asked why I wear this specific necklace. I purchased this through a friend named Luma, someone who I've never actually met in person, only online. I met friends of hers at a Women's Day event last year. We were talking about human trafficking at our table. This was a group of women from Oakville who were telling me that a young lady in their neighbourhood had been trafficked. Her mother noticed things were different. She was acting differently, behaving differently. She approached her, and luckily they were able to have the conversation. She told her mother what was happening, and they approached the police. But just that one story, how that spread through the community and raised that awareness. So Luma started making these necklaces and was donating proceeds of this to organizations to fight human trafficking and to raise awareness in Ontario. I thank her and her small online-run business for the work that she has done to raise awareness of human trafficking.

Prevention and early intervention are key pillars in our government's strategy to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation. Bill 251, through the proposed amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, would provide significant tools to better protect children and youth from this crime. If passed, these proposed amendments would:

- clarify the role of children's aid societies to intervene in situations where a child is a victim of sex trafficking, or at risk of being trafficked, through new grounds for protection;

- authorize child protection workers and peace officers to remove a 16- or 17-year-old victim of sex trafficking, for a limited period of time, to another location to give them an opportunity to voluntarily access protective measures and/or supportive resources;

- increase penalties for traffickers who interfere with or harbour a child in the care of a children's aid society for the purposes of sex trafficking.

Our goal here is to bring youth to supports that they may not even know exist. We know that it takes many opportunities to remove someone from trafficking, but we need to start somewhere. Allowing a victim to see that there is help for them when they need it is key. This includes community supports and culturally appropriate care for youth.

I also want to remind everyone that traffickers largely target children and youth, especially those who are vulnerable. These are our young people who are being tormented and hurt by these criminals.

Taken together, these proposed amendments are important new measures that would strengthen the authority of children's aid societies and law enforcement to intervene in child sex trafficking cases, discourage traffickers from interfering with children in the care of a children's aid society, and promote consistent responses across the province.

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Speaker, human trafficking is a societal challenge for everyone in Ontario. The proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act is a result of engagement with survivors, a wide range of partners, Indigenous communities and Indigenous-led organizations who gave us their best advice and counsel. We regard the measures in Bill 251 as important new tools to further our work in fighting this crime. Putting an end to human trafficking will take all of us working together in this House, across all levels of government, across the country and across various sectors.

To hear the harrowing stories and strength of victims, survivors and their families is to realize that this is a fight Ontario cannot afford to lose. It is a fight that Canada cannot afford to lose. We owe it to victims and survivors to do everything we can in our power to drive this criminal activity from our province, strengthen our ability to support them and to better protect children and youth.

I am also imploring all provinces, territories and the federal government to do the same. We need a stronger national strategy on this issue. Trafficking doesn't stop at our borders between Manitoba and Quebec, and it isn't stopping at the US border across our province.

We need to help because it is all of our responsibility to protect victims and survivors. This could be your sister, your daughter, your best friend or neighbour, or even you. And so I ask members of this House to give due and careful consideration of the measures we are proposing in Bill 251. Our government believes that this bill, if passed, will strengthen our efforts to combat human trafficking, better support survivors and help keep our young people safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): During the debate, the Solicitor General did say that we would hear from the Attorney General, so that's who we'll turn to now for his part in this debate.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful to share my time today with my colleagues the Honourable Sylvia Jones, Solicitor General; and the associate minister responsible for women's issues, Jill Dunlop.

As both of them have said, this is an issue that crosses all ministry boundaries. I haven't seen an issue before that so easily crosses boundaries, because everybody wants to do what they can do within their ministry. It reaches even beyond the three that you're hearing from today, because this is such a heinous crime that touches on everything from finance, and how people finance this heinous activity, to cultural sectors and tourism sectors. It really is something that all the barriers came down so that we can get this right. This historic and very important legislation is the result of a lot of work across government.

I expect the full support of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, because this is not a political issue. This is a looking-after-our-children issue. I say "children" because, as Minister Jones indicated, the average age of recruitment is 13. Just pause and think about that for a moment: 13 years. We're talking grade 8. What were you doing in grade 8, you know? Just think about that.

Last week, Minister Jones and Associate Minister Dunlop introduced this groundbreaking Combating Human Trafficking Act that enshrines in law protections for survivors of human trafficking, stronger tools for law enforcement and measures to deter human traffickers.

Speaker, the issue we're speaking about today is an absolutely heinous crime that poses a devastating threat in our communities. It's one that our communities have been dealing with for years, but unfortunately, the situation has gotten worse.

I have a unique perspective on this, I think, or at least not an average perspective on this. My mother was a founding director of the York Region Abuse Program. It was a program that facilitated the recovery of adult and children survivors of childhood sexual abuse. It gave me a window into what actually happens in our communities. The discussions that I had, in an age-appropriate way but an understanding of the serious issues and the devastating impacts it has on people in our community—not just the victim but the victim's families. It touches on a lot more than we expect it will. Once you see it, once you know that it's out there—it's one of these things that once you tune into the conversation, you start to see it in other areas, you

start to be more aware of where it could be. And it's exactly that kind of awareness that we need to raise so that people are aware, so that they are on guard for it.

Really, if you look at the stories of some of the survivors, these are normal kids. These really are the kids next door. This is not some foreign concept. We're not importing people. We're not doing a lot of the things that you'd like to think that we're doing, because then we can distance it from our own experience. But it's actually people from our communities and from our neighbourhoods. That makes it more personal, if you tune into it.

Talking about the power differential of abuse, a lot of the abusers, a lot of the people who are doing this are not necessarily disenfranchised. These are people with some power who are abusing their power and they're creating power over individuals.

I'm really proud as Attorney General to be able to contribute to solving this problem. The legislation will help advance our government's comprehensive strategy aimed at dismantling human trafficking networks and stopping their crimes. The Ministry of the Attorney General is proposing changes in the legislation through restraining order provisions that would protect victims, including children, and those who support and care for them. The restraining orders will support not just the individual but their support structure.

The Combating Human Trafficking Act would give judges the discretion to lengthen restraining orders beyond the current limit of three years in order to support and protect victims for a longer period of time. We're also proposing an amendment to clarify who specifically could apply for a restraining order on behalf of a child, because we all know that sometimes people need advocates, and victims in particular need advocates. This change responds to the needs of Indigenous families and communities by recognizing customary care arrangements.

The act also includes provisions that would protect other people, such as front-line workers and survivors' family members. These proposed restraining order amendments would help give victims, their families and front-line workers more protection, as traffickers would be required by law to stay away from them. These are important changes and they build on significant investments and efforts we've made to support human trafficking victims and their families.

Speaker, we need to put the weight of government prosecution, the weight of government resources in the way of these individuals. As you have heard from the Solicitor General and Associate Minister Dunlop, these people prey on the young people. They put them into a situation where they continue to victimize them and haunt them, for lack of a better word, after they've been rescued.

When you say "rescued," it's not like you go in—if you talk to Karly in Durham or you talk to others—you grab them and carry them out and rescue them like a burning fire. You have to gain their trust. You have to develop a relationship. The police services, the front-line services and the others have to develop enough of a trust relationship, and that trust relationship is probably borne

of previous experience for some of these girls primarily. If you don't have that trust, you're not going to be able to provide the services that they need. And if the services aren't working properly, word gets around pretty quick that you shouldn't trust them, because even though they want to help, they can't help.

We need to put the services in place. That's what this is about. That's what the restraining orders are about, making sure that they not only exist, but that they are working properly so that we're not just going to protect the individual victim, we're going to help provide protection for those around them, for their caregivers and for those who are providing the supports to them. That gives a level of trust that the system is actually working, that they're putting their arms around them and providing a level of protection. That's very important in terms of gaining the trust and helping them in the way that they need to.

This act is critical in terms of moving us forward on so many levels, and on this piece in particular. But we didn't just start here; we've been working at this for some time. Last year, we announced an investment of more than \$7.5 million over five years for dedicated supports, including culturally appropriate supports for survivors of human trafficking and victims. Local victim support organizations do an exceptional job making a difference in the lives of survivors, particularly during the past very challenging year.

The funding we are providing helps meet the needs of human trafficking victims by reducing financial barriers that many victims face in attending court—very simple things like cost of travel, meals, accommodation or court-appropriate attire. All of these things need to be in place to support the individual with their particular needs. Sometimes part of this is used, and sometimes all of it is used. It just depends on what the particular need is, but we need those in place.

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The funding also covers essential expenses for human trafficking victims in the immediate aftermath of a crime, for things like transportation or meals, a place to stay, including dental care. There are other services that are important that you see fairly systemically. It also helps survivors break free from the control of traffickers by providing essentials such as a mobile phone to help access services and re-establish support networks.

Mr. Speaker, the things that we take for granted, the cellphones that we have, the ways that we can reach out and communicate—traffickers know that they need to cut off those lifelines, and they do cut off those lifelines. So when somebody comes out of a situation and they're being rescued, they need those immediate supports. They need that phone so that they can phone potentially a family member, their key support structure. They need to be able to get a hold of the people who are helping them with their victim supports. We want to make sure that they have what they need to re-establish their support networks and bring those to bear, in addition to all of the things that we're trying to do to help them.

Our investment also enables front-line workers to better respond to the specific needs of human trafficking victims: for example, offering earlier intervention, safety planning, referrals for appropriate local needs, needs assessments and help with applying for supportive programs. That can be any number of things. Local programs work hand in glove with each other to try to create a seamless series of networks to help support individuals, whether they stay in the individual location or whether they move. It's the reality of how things are happening. We need to build structures to reflect that reality and not expect them to fit into our structures.

Human trafficking victims, many of them young women, are usually required to testify against an accused trafficker. They need a lot of help to prepare—not just legal help; they need emotional help. The Ministry of the Attorney General has hired additional victim witness workers in Ottawa and St. Catharines and Durham, three areas that see high volumes of human trafficking prosecutions. What do those three areas have in common? They're all major highways. They're all major thoroughfares. That's how it works. That's where it happens primarily. Although there are other areas, it's those major highways and those major centres—not just those, but ones like those.

These workers share their experiences and insights with victim witness staff in other regions and work with prosecutors to ensure the victims receive information, help and support to better understand and participate in the court process. The court process can be confusing at the best of times. If you've never dealt with it before, if you're encountering it for the first time, let alone being victimized, being brought into a situation—and again, that power differential that I talk about. Think about having to testify against your trafficker, who has been a menace, an oppressor in your life. So you need those supports.

We have also confirmed ongoing support to enhance a program that provides free legal supports for human trafficking victims and those at risk of being trafficked, so they can apply for restraining orders. I talked about the restraining orders earlier, but we actually have a program that helps them apply for their restraining orders. They don't just exist out there in the ether; we will help. We will help them get those restraining orders, if they're either a victim or at risk of being a victim.

Speaker, this is the first program of its kind in Canada. I'm really proud of that. And 100% of the applications for restraining orders that have been applied for have been granted. I'm pleased that Ontario is able to provide this kind of support. Through this program, a team of specialized lawyers provide free confidential legal advice. They offer victims help with completing their restraining order applications and provide representation at application hearings in any Ontario court of justice, which is where you would apply.

Free legal support is also available to parents and guardians of a child survivor or a child at risk of being trafficked, to help them apply for restraining orders. In fact, 30 of these applications that have been successful were on behalf of children. Two of those children were as

young as 13 years old, which takes us back to where we started—the average age of recruitment: 13 years old. Imagine being in grade 8 and applying for a restraining order from your potential trafficker. Unbelievable—and that's exactly why we're doing this. The restraining order amendments in the proposed Combating Human Trafficking Act would strengthen the work of this important program and provide victims and their families with more peace of mind.

I want to take a moment to talk about Indigenous-specific supports in our justice system. Ontario is enhancing existing Indigenous-specific victim services to better meet the needs of Indigenous survivors, their families and their communities. These programs are designed, developed and delivered by Indigenous people, for Indigenous people. They consider factors such as language barriers, remote communities and legacies of laws and policies aimed at destroying Indigenous families and communities and requiring assimilation.

Speaker, as we need to support human trafficking victims at every step, we must also hold human traffickers responsible and accountable for their crimes. And because human trafficking cases are often complex, we need a comprehensive, coordinated and specialized team of prosecutors spanning all areas of the province. Our dedicated provincial human trafficking prosecution team takes on human trafficking cases and advises front-line crown prosecutors across Ontario. They develop and deliver training to prosecutors, police and victim/witness assistance staff. They also work closely with police officers and services to improve human trafficking investigations and prosecutions.

My ministry has been expanding the specialized team over the past year and holding offenders accountable through enhanced investigations and the vigorous prosecution of charges. This hard-working, dedicated team with six human trafficking prosecutors in the greater Toronto area has expanded, to 10 prosecutors last October, and as of April this year, less than a month from today, we will increase it to 14, covering every region of the province.

I want to talk about another program that has helped us fight human trafficking at the grassroots level. Ontario's Civil Remedies Grant Program invests cash and assets seized from criminals into community programs to help victims and prevent crime. Grants from 2021 total \$2.5 million, and this funding is being invested in 33 local projects focused on preventing human trafficking, crisis counselling, research and public education.

We are fighting back against the menace of human trafficking by investing in training, surveillance technology and equipment to help police and prosecutors crack down on criminal networks that prey and profit on young and vulnerable people. We are funding programs supporting victims of human trafficking, including mental health services, specialized care and support and education and training opportunities.

Through this initiative, we are funding training for front-line officers to help them better detect and investigate human trafficking. Through this initiative, we are

taking money out of the hands of criminals and putting it back in the hands of those who make important contributions to support the victims of crime.

In addition to helping to fund these local projects to fight human trafficking, funds seized are also reinvested directly to compensate victims. In order to ensure compensation reached victims sooner and to provide a more complete set of tools to police and prosecutors to fight crimes like human trafficking, our government made changes to civil forfeiture laws in the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act passed last year.

Ontario was once a national leader in deterring crime through property forfeiture. However, since establishing these laws in 2001, our province had fallen behind in the best practices the other provinces had. They had updated their civil forfeiture laws to keep up with the crimes that fuel gang activity and profits, like human trafficking.

We knew we had to take action on all fronts when we looked at shocking data that showed that two thirds of human trafficking crimes reported in Canada are here in Ontario. I think when I say that, people in this Legislature say, "Yes, I know; I have heard the two thirds. You keep repeating the same stats." Well, I want to keep repeating the same stats. The average age of recruitment is 13. Two thirds of all human trafficking happens in Ontario. They bear repeating because on the off chance that somebody just tuned in, I want them to know these shocking and heinous stats.

So we passed that legislation to align Ontario with Canadian best practices by moving to an administrative civil forfeiture system that makes it harder for criminals to hold onto their proceeds of crime. These are proceeds that would otherwise fuel illegal and gang activities that put communities and people at risk of crimes like human trafficking.

Our reforms allow personal property, like cash or cars, used by criminals for illegal activities to be forfeited administratively and without a court order in uncontested cases. This can free up valuable time and resources for the police and the courts. Our proposed changes would also create cost savings, allowing more proceeds of offences to be reinvested directly to support to victims. This is another way our government is sending a signal to traffickers that their criminal activity won't be tolerated. Again, this is such a heinous crime that covers all sectors of our society that we really need to bring all our resources to bear.

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Before I conclude, I'd like to give recognition to another member of our government who has been integral to the driving efforts to stop human trafficking in Ontario. Minister Laurie Scott phoned me one day—

Interjections.

Hon. Doug Downey: Yes, Minister Laurie Scott is such a champion.

She phoned me one day. This was back in 2015, I think. This was before I was running or elected or anything; I was just somebody who had been around in the law world with the Ontario Bar Association and others. She asked me to join a group of people talking about human trafficking.

Again, I had some sense of the heinous nature through my mother's experience but really had no idea until I came to that table and talked to police officers and talked to prosecutors and talked to front-line workers and heard from people.

Minister Scott has been championing this from the beginning. She has advocated for human trafficking legislation for years. I had the privilege of being part of that advisory group that led to the Saving the Girl Next Door Act in 2016. That really was the catalyst for moving things forward. I'm glad that when our government came to power, we picked up the mantle on that and that we are doing something about that. From 2016 to 2018, really not enough happened, and then we came in and we got to work right away. We crossed all boundaries in all sectors. This important legislative work is a tribute to Minister Scott, and I was glad to contribute to dealing with the scourge that human trafficking is.

I want to conclude my time by reaffirming my support of our government's unprecedented efforts to stop human trafficking in Ontario. The Combating Human Trafficking Act and our anti-human trafficking strategy is helping survivors and their families recover and safely start a new life, and it is holding human trafficking networks fully accountable for their heinous and reprehensible crimes.

I'm honoured to have contributed to this landmark legislation and am proudly a part of putting our strategy into action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions.

Ms. Jill Andrew: As a survivor of child sexual abuse, I certainly understand how heinous every form of gender-based violence, sexual violence is. Human trafficking, which of course includes sex trafficking, is equally heinous, as is labour trafficking or organ donation, for instance. Of course, this bill doesn't address the full comprehensive complexity of human trafficking.

My question, actually, to the Attorney General—he mentioned very eloquently that two thirds of all human trafficking happens in Ontario. They have repeated how heinous this crime is. Yet, of 200 or so programs that applied for funding, only 27 received funding. I'll talk more about that in my lead, but that's a question I have. The talk doesn't match the dollars.

The question is, why didn't the government talk with Airbnb? That's the biggest site, even bigger than hotels. Why didn't you all talk to Airbnb?

Hon. Doug Downey: We are turning over every rock and looking around every corner to find ways to support those who are supporting others. Grant programs are one avenue. We're looking at and constantly re-evaluating whether the grant programs match the outcomes that we need. Without a grant program, quite frankly—during COVID last year, we found that \$7.5 million, and we phoned the sexual assault centres, we phoned some of the advocates all throughout Ontario and said, "What do you need? What do you need to provide the services in this environment that you didn't have before?" We have been rolling out money in conjunction with those service

providers. I look forward to doing even more as time comes.

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank all of my honourable colleagues for their very passionate speeches, starting off with the Solicitor General, the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, of course the Attorney General, and also the Minister of Infrastructure for all the hard work that she has done over the years.

Mr. Speaker, it's great to hear that the government is addressing the hotel industry. With the growth of a lot of the short-term rentals, such as Airbnb—I'm wondering if the Solicitor General can tell us, how do we plan on capturing these short-term rentals? I recognize that obviously they're not included in this legislation and it would be done through regulation. I'm wondering if the members can shed some light on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The Solicitor General to respond.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm really pleased that you've raised this, because it is an important consideration.

As more and more hotels and motels educate their staff, then it does drive the traffickers to other short-term rentals. We are absolutely going to be dealing with this through regulation, and they will absolutely be included, because we understand that that is where a lot of the activity happens when there becomes a spotlight on the hotels and motels.

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

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you to the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the member from Simcoe North. It's a really important topic. Many of them talked about how once you learn about it, you really, really learn about it.

I want to thank Lynzy Lalande and Cristina Scarpellini from Angels of Hope in Sudbury, who had a session in the basement of the library. That's where I first learned a lot more about human trafficking—and really, we should be saying "human slavery," to give it the sting that it deserves.

The resources in Sudbury are resources across Canada. The human trafficking hotline is 1-833-900-1010, which I think is important to share. We also have Angels of Hope, as I said; the Sudbury Women's Centre; SAVS, Sudbury and Area Victim Services; and Sudbury Community Legal Clinic.

In 2019, 30% of the legal clinics' budgets in Ontario were cut, resulting in about \$133 million. I'm just wondering if the government, realizing how difficult human trafficking is to combat—I know they're having 14 special prosecutors, they're helping with restraining orders, but let's prosecute people. Will they restore the funding to the legal clinics?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To respond, the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: We need to make sure that the resources are best placed with those who are best equipped to deal with it.

Legal clinics do amazing work in Ontario. They deal with landlord-tenant issues. They deal with social benefit appeals. They deal with a whole variety of things.

But this area is fairly specialized—it's the victim services; it's the victim witness programs. There are a series of programs at sexual assault centres. We've put millions—\$7.5 million announced last year—in that area. We've equipped them with more tools. We've enhanced the VQRP+ program to provide things like cellphones for the victims and to put the resources in their hands when they need them. To talk about clinics doing that work—it's not really part of the area. I'll be happy to chat more about that later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank Ministers Downey, Dunlop and Jones for introducing the Combating Human Trafficking Act. It is very important in my community, and we have a lot of advocates on this issue.

The Solicitor General talked about how we are including Airbnb in the legislation as the economy is revolving—we have the sharing economy.

I also want to talk about what the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues spoke about and ask her—when she spoke about the changes to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act regarding the removal of certain youth in care to safe locations. Can the minister please expand on the age cut-off for 16- and 17-year-olds?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The associate minister to respond.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for that important question.

We do recognize the vulnerability, as do human traffickers. They prey on young, vulnerable people. We know that the numbers in child welfare are incredibly high. About half of all victims who are young women in the child welfare system had been involved in human trafficking.

We made the changes to the child welfare modernization last year. We were really looking at changing a system to be more preventive and to offer services upfront, because we see the number of young women, and boys too, in group homes who end up being trafficked.

The changes to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act included clarifying the role of children's aid societies—because there's a current lack of clarity in that act—moving forward, but also authorizing child protection workers and police officers to remove 16- and 17-year-olds and to get them to places of safety, because as we said, these are victims who are as early as—

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

1010

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friends in government for bringing this legislation forward. As people have said, it is important that we act on this as a Legislature.

My question, for whomever would like to respond, is about the allocation of the \$307 million involved in this legislation. We have some fantastic advocates back home

in Ottawa Centre, and as the Attorney General just mentioned, there is specific expertise that's required in gaining the trust and confidence for people to come forward.

It wasn't clear to me in reading the preparatory language around this legislation about which organizations would qualify for this funding. I would love my friends in government to clarify that. Is this funding largely to go to police services, which is certainly one source? Or are we going to make sure that those grassroots community leaders get access to the funding they need to help people be safe?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To respond, the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you for the question. It's a really excellent one. We are continuing to consult. We made the announcement last year of the \$307-million investment. In the interim, in the last 12 months, we have been working directly with community agencies, with justice partners, with survivors to listen and understand exactly where the investments can best be placed.

I think we all understand that there are so many opportunities. We would love to be able to fund them all, but we really are listening very closely to the survivors, to the organizers working in the field and to the justice partners, including our police, to make sure that what we do is the most effective way to ensure awareness and education.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Time for a very quick question and answer.

Ms. Donna Skelly: It is to the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues. I've heard from the minister and others about the importance of providing tailored supports for Indigenous youth, who are simply more vulnerable to being trafficked. Can the minister provide more detail about those supports that are being offered?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Back to the associate minister.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for that question. In fact, when I first became minister of this portfolio, the first round table I attended was in Thunder Bay with the Ontario Native Women's Association and the incredible work that they are doing to protect vulnerable Indigenous women and children.

I was speaking with Cora, the executive director, recently. She told me that in the time since they have run their program in 2018, they have helped 116 women exit human trafficking and move forward with employment services etc. That's just one great example. But it's obviously very important to provide culturally appropriate services where necessary.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

WEARING OF JERSEY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): It is almost time for members' statements. Before we do that, the member for Peterborough–Kawartha wants to rise on a point of order to ask for unanimous consent.

Mr. Dave Smith: I seek unanimous consent to wear my George Armstrong commemorative Maple Leafs jersey during statements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member is seeking unanimous consent before he delivers his member's statement this morning. Are we agreed? Agreed.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SERVICES FOR SENIORS

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Today I would like to thank Dr. John Lord, Kay Wigle and Doug Cartan, members for Seniors for Social Action Ontario from my own riding of Kitchener Centre. In our meeting last week, they shared research that showed that the government continues to see aging through a lens of frailty. They explained that this lens is short-sighted. It pushes government decisions to support little more than attending to the issues in long-term care.

Now, don't get me wrong: We have to fix the long-term-care system. But people would not be forced to wait indefinitely for long-term-care beds if we invested in the lives of elders in our communities right now.

They provided solutions: build a system on a foundation of autonomy and choice. In fact, they supported my call for a seniors' advocate, because they believed in the vision of having an independent and empowered space in the Legislature that focuses solely on addressing systemic issues like low wages, unsuitable housing and the inability to age in place.

We share this vision with the National Association of Federal Retirees; Advocacy Centre for the Elderly; Care Watch Ontario; CanAge, Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy Organization; the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; Older Women's Network housing committee; Accessible Housing Network; Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition; and the Waterloo Region Health Coalition. They all support this bill.

So let's call Bill 196, the Seniors' Advocate Act, to committee so that communities like mine can make sure that their solutions become law.

JUSTIN CLARK

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I rise today to speak on the passing of Justin Clark, who was described as a gentle giant of disabled advocacy after he won a landmark case in 1982 to live independently. Justin passed away at the age of 58 last week.

Justin loved visiting with family and friends, and was known to play bocce once or twice a week at an Ottawa rehab centre. Born in 1962 with cerebral palsy, unable to walk or talk, he spent his childhood in the Rideau Regional Centre institution.

After he turned 18, Justin's parents would not allow him to go camping with his friends. His efforts to have

their decision overturned would eventually lead to one of Canada's most important trials. His powerful testimony, communicated by pointing out symbols on a board, changed the minds of skeptics in the room and received a standing ovation from parents.

Judge John Matheson read his judgment aloud: "We have all, all of us, recognized a gentle, trusting, believing spirit, and very much a thinking human being who has his unique part to play in our compassionate, interdependent society."

"Justin's spirit lives on through our memories. His innocence and capacity to love knew no bounds. Those who came to know him felt his warmth and joy in being with them," said Robbie Giles, his former childhood teacher.

I would like to end my statement with a quote from Justin Clark's 2018 interview with the CBC, featuring his motto: "I had a good life. I will go forward."

LABORATORY SERVICES

Mme France Gélinas: The complaints against LifeLabs are non-stop. Twelve months after LifeLabs pivoted to booked appointments rather than walk-ins, the call centre still keeps people waiting for hours, only to drop the call. Ask Tulio about this.

Their website says, "We are currently experiencing technical issues." Ask John about that.

If you are lucky enough to get through, there will be no appointments available whatsoever for weeks on end. Ask Louise about that.

Once you show up for your long-awaited lab appointment, there is still a chance that you will get there and they will be closed. Ask Paul or ask Mr. Armstrong; they found that out. Or Nicole and Leo: They were told that they had no record of their appointment.

Or you will wait outside for a long time before anyone opens the door to let you know how much longer you may expect to wait outside in minus-27-degree weather, like Madame Thériault found out.

LifeLabs is the only lab provider in all of Sudbury and Nickel Belt. It is a private, for-profit lab. Their poor performance is having a ripple effect on our entire health care system. Specialists do not want to discharge patients from our hospital, and many patients have to reschedule their long-awaited specialist appointments because of problems with LifeLabs.

Minister, at a minimum, recognize the price our health care system is paying by allowing LifeLabs to continue to fail us all. During a pandemic, people's lives and health hang in the balance.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Ms. Donna Skelly: Good morning. I stand this morning to speak about how proud I am of our government's vision and commitment in supporting the cultural and recreational sectors through this pandemic.

Our government is investing over \$2.5 million to expand and improve access to three culture and recreation

facilities in my hometown of Hamilton. Our investment will help finance the construction of a new 75,000-square-foot building at the Ancaster Agricultural Society's fairgrounds, the expansion at the Hamilton Children's Museum, and energy-efficient and safety improvements at Dundas Valley School of Art.

The new fairgrounds will include a show ring for equestrian competitions and a large space for trade shows, events, fairs and concerts. Outdoor events can now be brought inside. The fairgrounds will host shows year-round, creating jobs and supporting the local economy.

Nearly \$1.2 million will be invested in expanding and making the Hamilton Children's Museum more accessible. A rehabilitation project will make Dundas Valley School of Art more accessible, reduce energy costs and make it a healthier environment. This will improve the lives of people in Hamilton.

1020

Our government recognizes that fairs, museums and arts centres have been among the hardest hit during the pandemic, and we want to deliver on these projects.

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Ms. Catherine Fife: The Financial Empowerment and Problem Solving Program is a budget item worth fighting for. It has had a profound impact on the lives of vulnerable individuals and their communities. Funding expires on March 25.

I first became aware of the value of this program through the advocacy of some of the best people in Waterloo region, Joe and Stephanie Mancini of the Working Centre. To date, across Ontario, FEPS has improved the financial literacy of 464,097 Ontarians and helped them access \$794.5 million in new income.

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, in Waterloo region, the local delivery agency, the Working Centre, has completed 1,344 tax returns and supported 2,294 people with money-related issues, including financial education workshops for those on low incomes, like Donna, a 64-year-old factory worker who had been laid off and was being hounded by creditors. Her FEPS worker helped her create a financial plan and obtain benefits at 65 in order to support herself. Not only was this a financial success, but Donna has also said that following this support, her blood pressure was lower and her doctor was able to address her diabetes medication. Financial stress had been making her physically sick.

To end this program now would surely cause harm to my community and others across the province. The return on investment is clear, and I ask that this funding be included in budget 2021. It's not only the right thing to do, it should be considered an intelligent and compassionate investment in our communities.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. John Fraser: Ontario's vaccine rollout is the greatest public health initiative in this province's history.

It's not an easy feat to vaccinate 14 million people. It requires a lot of coordination and planning.

That's why in December, I put forward a motion for debate in this Legislature calling on the government to ensure a clear and transparent vaccine rollout that prioritizes high-risk Ontarians, includes biweekly reporting and monthly appearances by the vaccine task force at the Select Committee on Emergency Management Oversight. The motion passed unanimously. It was an agreement that all parties in this House wanted the government to be successful in the rollout, because it meant that our communities would be protected.

Now, almost three months later, here's what has happened: Ontario took a vaccine holiday over Christmas while other provinces were vaccinating residents in long-term care. It took us nearly half a million doses and 60 days to get to the 70,000 people we said we had to get to first, residents in long-term care. Now, the central online booking portal won't be ready until the middle of March, and public health units? Well, they have had to go out on their own. AstraZeneca was approved yesterday, and the government said, "We're not quite sure what we're going to do with it yet."

We all have a stake in this rollout. The government needs to be open and transparent about what they're doing and work with all members of this Legislature to ensure that the rollout is successful.

GEORGE ARMSTRONG

Mr. Dave Smith: On January 24, one of my childhood heroes passed away. When I first started to play hockey, I wanted to wear number 9. My brother wore it, Gordie Howe, Rocket Richard and Bobby Hull. It seemed all the great players wore number 9. My father told me I should wear 10. When I asked why, he said, "Because 10 is greater than nine, and George Armstrong is the greatest Leaf ever." I wore 10 for the next decade.

George made his NHL debut in 1949, playing two games with the Leafs before returning to the Marlboros. That season, Stoney reserve in Alberta gave him a nickname that he'd keep throughout his career: Big Chief Shoot the Puck, because of his Algonquin heritage. Conn Smythe described George as the greatest Leaf "captain, as a captain, the Leafs have ever had."

I have been lucky to call his son Brian my friend for almost two decades now, and through that friendship, we were able to get George to autograph Leafs' sweaters every year to give to a player in the Under the Lock Hockey Tournament. We did it to inspire young players to emulate George.

A Hall of Fame career, captain of the Maple Leafs, four Stanley Cups, his statue on Legends Row and number 10 retired, and yet George remained extremely humble. His son Brian opined, "Even in death, dad was humble. He did it in a pandemic so we couldn't have a public ceremony at centre ice of the Scotiabank Centre to celebrate him."

Thank you, "Chief" Armstrong, for inspiring so many.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We all know that in the last election, New Democrats and Conservatives ran on a promise in order to deal with electricity prices—hydro prices going through the roof as a result of policies put in place by the former Liberal government, and people have had to pay ever since.

Well, imagine how people back in our ridings are feeling—a government that has been in office now the better part of three years, that has had all kinds of opportunity to be able to deal with fixing some of the systemic problems that were created under the Liberals that have risen electricity prices, such as signing some of the contracts that they did. And what do people do now? They look at their hydro bill, and it's still going up.

If you look at people's hydro bills who live in rural and northern Ontario especially, where they don't have a choice other than to either heat by propane, heat by wood or heat by electricity, many people are having to do electricity for a number of reasons and are paying hydro bills in the neighbourhood of \$800 to \$1000 per month.

People cannot afford this, and they're asking all members of this House to implore on the Conservative government to maintain its promise and to drop hydro rates by 14% and not raise them each and every year in the way that they have. Do people appreciate that we've had a temporary pause on time-of-use pricing? Yes. But that is now over and people's hydro bills are going through the roof.

You should keep your election promise. If not, I'll tell you, people will remember next election.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'll again remind members to make their comments through the Chair, not directly across the floor. Members' statements?

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Parm Gill: Not a lot of people know that my riding of Milton includes a significant rural component where access to high-speed Internet is a serious issue. Especially during this last year, it has been evident that proper access to Internet is critical for our students, families, small businesses and farmers.

That is exactly why our government created our Up to Speed strategy, Ontario's first-ever broadband and cellular action plan. With this plan, our government is investing \$63.3 million over five years to bring high-speed Internet to Milton and other parts of our province. Through the strong actions being taken by our government, I have worked closely with providers CENGN and Mage Networks to finally bring Internet service to rural Milton.

The design of this program has been finalized, and I'm proud to announce that home installations for high-speed Internet will begin as early as the first week of April. This means families, students, businesses and farmers in the north part of rural Milton will soon have reliable access to high-speed Internet that they can depend on.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Norman Miller: I rise today to talk about the thing that represents hope for all of us. This is, of course, vaccination. We've had some challenges with the supply of vaccine coming from the federal government, but they are telling us that those challenges are now behind us.

In Ontario, we are using local public health units to deliver the vaccine. This is important because of how large and varied our province is. The same plan that will work in Toronto won't work in Parry Sound–Muskoka or anywhere else in rural Ontario. That local planning has been happening for some time.

Both the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit have released their vaccine rollout plans. Both health units will be using max vaccine clinics to start with. In Muskoka, the clinics are located in Huntsville and Bracebridge, which started giving vaccines yesterday. In Parry Sound, the clinics will be located in Sundridge and Parry Sound.

There are, of course, more than four towns in Parry Sound–Muskoka. As more vaccines are available, both health units have said that there will be more places to get a shot, and I will certainly be encouraging this.

1030

This past weekend was the first weekend seniors over 85 in Muskoka could sign up to get a shot, and there were some glitches with the sign-up system. For those who ran into difficulties, please try again and sign up for the waiting list. The health unit is only scheduling based on the vaccines they know they have, but they will be using the waiting list to contact more people as they receive more doses.

I'm confident that the vaccines are safe and will enable us to return to our normal activities. I'll be happy to roll up my sleeve for a shot when I'm eligible, and I encourage my constituents and all Ontarians to do the same.

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

VICE-CHAIR OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Yesterday, on Monday, March 1, 2021, the official opposition House leader, the member for London West, rose on a question of privilege concerning the recent election of a member from the government party to the position of Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Standing order 120(b) requires that the Chair of the estimates committee must be a member of a recognized opposition party. The member for London West pointed to a long-standing practice, however, that committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs have generally shared a party affiliation, which is correct. In addition, she argued that a deviation from this practice amounts to a breach of parliamentary privilege. The government House leader also spoke to the matter.

Before I address the substance of the member's argument, I would like to take a moment to briefly discuss parliamentary privilege. Erskine May, the pre-eminent authority on Westminster parliamentary procedure, defines parliamentary privilege in the following terms on page 239 of its 25th edition: "Parliamentary privilege is the sum of certain rights enjoyed by each House collectively ... and by members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals."

There are a number of specific parliamentary privileges, each one falling into one of these two categories: the individual privileges of members and the collective privileges of the House. Examples of individual members' privileges include freedom of speech, exemption from jury duty and exemption from being subpoenaed to attend court as a witness. Examples of the collective privileges of the House include the right of the House to the attendance of its members, the right to institute inquiries, the power to discipline and the right to regulate its internal affairs.

While the opposition House leader's written notice made a claim of addressing its argument as a matter of privilege, the member's presentation in the House made a case purely about the procedural orderliness of what occurred in the Standing Committee on Estimates when it elected its Vice-Chair. The member did not establish how the matter impacts upon any of the privileges of the House collectively, her individual privileges as a member of the assembly or the ability of the Standing Committee on Estimates to fully discharge its role. No nexus to parliamentary privilege was shown or demonstrated.

I therefore find that the member has not established that a *prima facie* case of privilege exists in this instance. In effect, the matter raised by the member is a point of order, but because the orderliness of the procedure in question occurred in committee, it is beyond my consideration. Speakers have long held that matters arising in committee must be dealt with in committee and may only find their way to the House through a formal committee report made pursuant to standing order 124(b).

In closing, I will note that our formal rules of procedure, the standing orders, are but one element of a mixture of sources that inform and determine how parliamentary business is conducted. Precedent, tradition, custom and long-standing practices are also part of our procedure. Insofar as they work well and have done so for a long time, careful consideration should be given when changes and deviations are being contemplated. It is one of the collective privileges of the House that it has the right to settle its own code of procedure, and as a collective activity, it works best when all members have the opportunity to discuss and understand the motivations and possible impacts of changes to procedure and practice, even if not everyone might agree.

I want to thank the member for London West and the government House leader for their submissions.

I understand the member for London West has a point of order.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, point of order: I seek unanimous consent to immediately pass private member's motion 141, calling on the Ford government to mandate paid sick days to help keep Ontarians safe in the fight against COVID-19.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for London West is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to immediately pass private member's motion 141, calling on the government to mandate paid sick days to help keep Ontarians safe in the fight against COVID-19. Agreed? I heard a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

It is now time for oral questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is for the Premier. Back on May 24, the Premier announced that people should line up for asymptomatic testing of COVID-19. In fact, this is opposite from the advice that he was being given by experts, including his own Chief Medical Officer of Health, and we all recall the results. We saw what happened.

In fact, the Premier's own minister was on the side of the experts, and pretty concerned by the sounds of it because at the commission into long-term care, here is what she said: The Minister of Health said, in distancing herself from this decision, "I would say that this was something that was very important to the Premier and that you would really need to speak to him about that." So the Minister of Health and at least three of the government's top experts all were advising the Premier against massive asymptomatic testing.

The question is: Why did the Premier ignore the expert advice, ignore his own minister and claim he was acting on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health when, in fact, he was doing the opposite?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Well, I can certainly say that at the time we were very concerned about community transmission. We were concerned about community transmission, which was then finding its way into our long-term-care homes because there were people coming in—essential visitors, sometimes staff—who were asymptomatic. It was something that was a concern to the Premier. It was a concern to me. It was a concern to the Minister of Long-Term Care. It was a concern to everyone. And so, as a precautionary matter, the Premier felt very concerned that we do something and start doing that asymptomatic testing, so that we could stop the community transmission, but especially that transmission that was going into long-term-care homes.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We all know that the consequences of this decision of the Premier's, which was contrary to the advice he was being given, were serious. Our lab system became overwhelmed. People could not get the test results adequately or quickly enough in long-term care, which cost folks their lives. There were lineups. We remember those pictures: lineups of families with children, sometimes for hours and hours and hours on end, to get those tests. It was a debacle.

My question to the Premier is, why did he suggest that he was taking the best advice necessary to save lives when, in fact, he knew he was ignoring the best advice?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, that was not the case at all. As we were increasing the testing, we were also increasing the lab capacity, which, as the member may recall, started at about 3,000 tests on a daily basis through Public Health Ontario and grew to a system where now we are able to process over 100,000 tests in a day. At about that time, we had significantly increased our capacity and built a network in very short order, including hospital labs, university labs and community labs, as well as Public Health Ontario. So as we were increasing the testing, we were ensuring that we also had the lab capacity to be able to deal with that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, look, it's not just the testing. The Premier ignored or acted contrary to advice on the testing, as we've just talked about, on the risks in terms of what was happening to vulnerable people in long-term care, on the framework that the government first announced. In all of these situations, the Premier did not act on the advice of experts or, in fact, his ministers. In fact, the Minister of Health, again, couldn't defend the Premier and said to the commission that you really need to speak to the Premier about that, regarding the testing.

So why did the Premier claim he was acting on expert advice when, in fact, it's very apparent he wasn't? And will he attend the long-term-care commission himself to have that question asked? Will he voluntarily go to the commission and tell everybody why he made those decisions?

1040

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, the Premier has indicated and he has followed the recommendations of Dr. Williams, the public health measures table and Public Health Ontario every step of the way. From building up our testing capacity, building up our lab capacity, getting the vaccines and setting up the commission that he has, the vaccine task force, every step along the way he's followed the medical advice, which has gotten us to the place, I would indicate, where Ontario is right now.

The actions speak louder than words. Ontario, right now, stands at 72 cases per 100,000, the lowest in Canada except the Atlantic bubble. So I think that something has been done right. The Premier has followed the expert

advice of the medical advisers, and it's serving Ontario well.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nobody in this province believes the loss of 4,000 vulnerable seniors in long-term care is a victory, so it's shameful that the minister responds in that way. But look, I want to talk now about the Minister of Long-Term Care, and so my question is to her, Speaker.

The minister very clearly told the commission that she knew that there was a problem with access to PPE in long-term care, that she knew that there wasn't enough staffing in long-term care—in fact, she was very worried, apparently, about what might be happening in long-term care—and she also knew very clearly that there was no iron ring of protection around long-term care.

So my question is, why did the minister feel it was her role to back up the Premier's claim that there was an iron ring around long-term care when, in fact, she knew that that protection did not exist?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: There is no doubt that our government took every measure and every tool that it possibly could as the science evolved around this virus. And let me be clear: This is the government that is addressing the systemic issues that have faced long-term care for decades. It is this government that has approved \$1.38 billion in surge funding to the sector. It is this Conservative government that put forward a \$1.9-billion staffing plan that will hire 27,000 new staff. And it is this government that announced a training support program for an additional 8,200 PSWs.

It is this government that is raising the daily average of direct care to four hours, and it is this government that is building 15,000 new beds and redeveloping another 15,000. I urge the opposition to support us. Join Team Ontario as we rebuild—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, it is this government that failed to learn the most important lesson from SARS, and that is the precautionary principle. This minister should have been paying attention to what was happening in long-term care. No one should die when we're waiting for evidence. That's what the SARS lesson was. While we're waiting for the evidence, if we think something is happening, we should act quickly and save lives.

Yesterday, the minister said that she knew of "anecdotal cases," and that there was a "paucity of research," notwithstanding the fact that she knew that she was worried about what was happening in long-term care. How could this minister, how could this Premier, how could this government ignore the most important lesson from the SARS Commission, the precautionary principle? How can that happen, Speaker?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Long-Term Care to respond.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: As the member opposite was aware at the time, the evidence was still evolving. Around the world, there were different opinions, and that is how science works.

Our government is modernizing long-term care, and the opposition continues to play politics and stand in the way. During the second wave, they voted against key stabilization measures, like emergency orders that allowed for the redeployment of staff and prevention and containment funding for homes across this province. The Leader of the Opposition herself voted against \$10.8 million, to date, for long-term-care homes in Hamilton fighting COVID-19, and she would have denied money to critical PPE, staffing and renovations. And after years of advocacy, the NDP couldn't even support our government's commitment to an average of four hours of daily direct care in the budget.

We are zeroed in on modernizing long-term care. Once again, I say to the opposition: Join us in being part of the solution.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again, Speaker, this government and this minister and this Premier did not take the most important lesson from SARS. You don't wait for the evolution of a crisis where thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people die because you didn't bother to get ahead of it and take the lessons that you should have taken.

This is what Cathy Parkes said just yesterday. While the minister kept her silence all along, Cathy Parkes said this: "April 22, 2020.... The day we had to bury my father.... I speak on national news through unbelievable grief in an attempt to speak" out "for those who need help." Cathy Parkes was not an expert. She wants to know from this minister, "Imagine what you could have done had you" actually "spoken" up? "Imagine." That's what Cathy says.

How can it be that the minister who knew that the seniors in long-term care were at risk didn't call the Premier on the fact that the iron ring was a hollow promise? Why did she not speak up and save 4,000 lives in long-term care?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Long-Term Care.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: The points made are exactly why we were making every effort on PPE, on testing, on surmounting obstacles, like the delays that we met with Health Canada being unable to approve rapid tests. These have been ongoing efforts.

When it comes to families—I have gone through this with family members. I can only imagine how excruciating this must have been for people, this tragedy that was unfolding not only in Ontario, but across Canada and around the world. Some good must come from this.

That's exactly why our government is addressing all these areas that were so long neglected and rebuilding and repairing a system that was left to decline in terms of a staffing crisis, in terms of the capacity. We are repairing

and rebuilding a long-term-care sector that was neglected for decades—the capacity issues, the four-bed ward rooms that were left to languish under the previous government and supported by the NDP.

We will continue to do the important work to address these issues that set the stage for this tragedy. We will continue with dedication and commitment to address this.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Local public health units have started their own vaccination rollouts, but like every single step through this crisis, they have again found themselves on their own and in the dark. Mayors, including from the GTHA, are raising concerns that while they have responsibility for running the province's vaccine rollout, they still haven't heard back from this government about the funding that they need to actually get this important work done.

When will the Premier let cities, municipalities know if they are going to receive any money whatsoever to do the job that this Premier has left them responsible for?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: I thank the member very much for the question. In fact, we have been in regular communication with the local public health units, with the CEOs of the hospitals and with the municipalities as well with respect to their efforts to assist with the vaccine rollout.

The public health units are receiving financial assistance for the work that they're doing, and we've also asked municipalities to help out with areas for mass vaccination clinics, like community centres—yesterday we were at U of T's Mississauga campus, where they're opening a mass vaccination clinic—and other areas, such as arenas. We are working very closely with municipalities, and there are discussions going on with respect to all aspects of the clinics that are going to be brought forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Cities and municipalities are telling us that they've already started to spend the money, even though they have no idea whether they will be able to pay their bills when everything is said and done. Local public health units are moving heaven and earth to overcome this government's too little, too late vaccination plan and actually get shots into people's arms right now. They should not have a plan, a vaccination strategy based on crossed fingers and hopes that the cheque will show up at some time in the future, maybe, if you're lucky.

Cities, municipalities need clear answers from the province, and they needed those answers yesterday. What is the government waiting for? When is this government going to get its act together and finally step up with a clear vaccine plan that includes the funding that cities and municipalities need in order to do their job?

1050

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, we do have a solid vaccination plan that involves all 34 public health unit

regions as well as the municipalities. General Hillier has been in regular contact with them. I've been involved in a number of the conversations, as well. They're dealing with all aspects—the expenses with the clinics, with the organization of the clinics.

Some of the public health unit regions have come out in advance of the central booking agency becoming available on March 15, and they're already booking clients who are over 80 to come in to receive their vaccines. In fact, in the Guelph-Wellington area, they've already vaccinated over 50% of their over-80 population. This is in the context of working within the system that we have.

Once our big system comes online on the 15th—it was tested yesterday, because we don't want to see it fail as it has in other jurisdictions. We want it to be solid and to stand up to the pressure that we know is going to be coming, because people are anxious to know when they're going to be receiving the vaccine.

It is a solid plan, it is rolling out, and we're making sure that people are receiving the vaccines in a timely manner.

COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Deputy Premier, who is also our Minister of Health. This is all concerning the vaccine rollout.

Deputy Premier, I know that this topic is on the mind of everyone right now, and I am sure that it's the only thing you can think about, as it remains your top priority. Getting the vaccines into people's arms is the most important task at hand right now.

I know, under the leadership of General Hillier, our province is in steady hands as we are implementing a great plan that has ensured the top-priority populations are being fully vaccinated. This includes successful vaccination programs administered in our long-term-care homes, residents in our retirement homes, vaccinating our front-line health care heroes, and Indigenous partners in remote communities.

Can the Deputy Premier please share with my constituents in Chatham-Kent-Leamington more information about the vaccine rollout and what it means to all Ontarians?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for the question. I first want to congratulate the member on the great news about the birth of his granddaughter, Shiloh. That is wonderful news. Congratulations.

The member is correct: The vaccine rollout is our number one priority. And it depends on every member of Team Ontario.

I first want to thank General Hillier and our front-line heroes for their leadership. Over 727,000 vaccines have already been administered in the province of Ontario. Our public health units are doing a fantastic job, and there is an overall plan.

That's why it was a real privilege yesterday to be at Trillium Health Partners, University of Toronto Mississauga, and the region of Peel clinic yesterday.

Clinics like this will play a major part in our vaccine rollout across the province.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Deputy Premier, for your kind remarks. Baby Shiloh is doing fine. I almost want to break into a Neil Diamond song, Shilo.

We are seeing innovation and leadership throughout this province from different public health units. In my region, the Chatham-Kent public health unit has begun vaccination appointments for those over 80 years old. In Ottawa, people over 80 who are in high-risk neighbourhoods have been able to book vaccination appointments using the city's flu immunization booking system. In Toronto, a pilot program to bring COVID-19 vaccines directly to Toronto seniors living independently is already up and running. And in Guelph, they've begun the process of vaccinating residents over the age of 80 after completing vaccinations for residents and staff in all of the long-term-care and retirement homes.

As more vaccines come in, we'll put up more mass vaccination centres. Can the Deputy Premier please elaborate to this Legislature more about the groundbreaking work being accomplished at mass vaccination centres across the province?

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thanks, once again, to the member.

During conversations that we had with local public health units and heads of council last week, we made it clear that we will need them every step of the way, to help execute and improve on this plan. This will be a team effort that we're going to see right across the province, no matter if it's the hospitals or the public health units or even the private sector as well.

Here's one example of one of the mass vaccination centres set up, from the folks at U of T Mississauga—and what leadership they have shown. Clinics like this will play a major part in our provincial vaccination plan. Our plan is the most comprehensive vaccine distribution plan in Canada, tailored to each one of our 34 public health units.

With the great news about a third vaccine now approved for use, we expect shipments will become more reliable and consistent over the coming weeks and months and, hopefully, that will allow us to vaccinate more Ontarians within a much shorter period of time.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Sara Singh: Good morning, Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, this government once again voted against giving workers in Ontario paid sick days, voting instead to continue forcing families in places like Brampton to choose between going to work and getting sick or staying home but not being able to pay the bills.

This Premier has already said that he thinks that spending money to keep families in Brampton safe is a waste of money. Why does the Premier think that families in Brampton aren't worth investing in?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise to answer this question once again.

The very first piece of legislation that this Legislature approved when COVID-19 hit the province of Ontario was job-protected leave, to tell every worker in the province that if you're impacted by COVID-19, if you're home in self-isolation, if you're in quarantine, if you're a mom or a dad who has to stay home and look after a son or a daughter because of disruptions to the school system, you're not going to be fired for that. Furthermore, we eliminated the need for sick notes during COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, we negotiated a \$1.1-billion deal with the federal government, in partnership with all provinces and territories, to deliver now four weeks of paid sick days for every single worker in the province of Ontario. I would implore every opposition MPP to come clean with their constituents: Let them know there's four weeks of paid sick days for every worker in Ontario.

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

Ms. Sara Singh: Many hard-working families in Brampton are stuck between a rock and a hard place right now. Our medical officer of health, Dr. Loh, has been crystal clear: Essential workers across the region of Peel are still going into work sick because they cannot afford to miss a day of work. Our mayor has been clear: Paid sick days will save lives in our city.

Families in Brampton have been on the front lines of this crisis, but years of neglect by the Liberal government in our health care system have strained our health care resources. And now large numbers of essential workers are being ignored by this Conservative government.

Speaker, again to the Premier: Despite what this government thinks, families in Brampton are not a waste of money. It's actually the fiscally prudent thing to do so that we aren't straining our health care resources in our city. When is this government going to stop fighting New Democrats and finally give families in Brampton the paid sick days they need to stay safe?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Labour to reply once again.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: The opposition party won't take yes for an answer. There are now four weeks of paid sick days for every worker in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, to quote the Leader of the Opposition: On February 16, she said, "What we want to see is paid sick days in Ontario, 10 paid sick days, seven—rather, 10 sick days, seven paid—and that would, yes, be the employers' responsibility."

There's \$800 million left in the bank account. There are four weeks of paid sick days for every worker in the province of Ontario. It's up to every elected official to let workers know that this program is out there for them. That's what we're doing on this side of the House. You should join us.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, I'll remind members to make their comments through the Chair and not directly across the floor.

The next question.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Long-Term Care. I've read the minister's testimony before the long-term-care commission and in it she repeatedly states that she raised concerns about staff working in more than one home, asymptomatic transmission and the need to stabilize the workplace. Clearly, given the minister's training and experience, she knew there was a lot at stake.

Last spring, BC and Quebec moved quickly to stop workers from working in more than one home and to raise their wages to stabilize the workforce. It took Ontario one month to do the same—one month, in a pandemic.

1100

Speaker, through you, can the minister explain why it took so long for Ontario to take the same action as BC and Quebec?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. In hindsight, you go back and you say, "What was happening? What was the historical information that was understood at that time?" Many, many people were working around the clock to address these issues.

If we look at long-term-care homes, they were in the front lines against COVID-19, not only in Ontario but around the world. We were using every option at our disposal to prevent and contain the spread of this virus. We implemented surveillance testing for residents and staff, and this helped to slow the outbreaks by catching new cases early. The Premier pushed personally, and so did I, to have every resident and staff member tested in wave 1 as part of our testing strategy, which is absolutely key to asymptomatic spread. Despite the reluctance of some, we pushed for implementation of rapid testing in wave 2. More than 1.5 million rapid tests have been shipped to over 550 homes.

The previous government, propped up by the opposition, had 15 years to bring about the "revolution" in long-term care—

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

Mr. John Fraser: The Minister of Health said that the Premier blew testing wide open, which impacted long-term care, so I'd like to remind the minister of that. It's like we learned nothing from the first wave.

Last June, Quebec said, "We need to get 10,000 PSWs," and they went out to find them. They only got 7,000.

But at the same time, homes were begging this minister for a plan. That plan came in September, and in that plan, there was \$14 million to recruit and train PSWs and \$42 million for security guards in long-term care. The plan didn't protect residents from the second wave. More people died in the second than the first. There was no iron ring.

The minister announced last week essentially the same plan that Quebec did eight months ago—eight months ago, in a pandemic. It's too late, Minister. Speaker, through you to the minister, why did it take your government eight months to announce the same staffing strategy as Quebec did last June?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: You know, if the member opposite would get his facts straight, it would be much easier to have a discussion.

The reality is that Quebec hired orderlies. They are not PSWs. Quebec was not able to hire 10,000, and they lost trainees through attrition, who then had to pay back the government. This is not the approach that we took. We used the resources that were available to us, making sure that we marshalled the hospital sector, we created matching portals, and many of our efforts helped homes in stabilizing their staff.

It's been neglected for many, many years. Our government knows that the previous efforts by the previous government, supported by the NDP, were grossly deficient. So we're committed to increasing quality care: \$1.9 billion by 2024-25 annually to go to supporting the requirement for 27,000 new positions. We've taken action all through this, and that \$150 million to help train 8,200 new personal support workers—

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

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Ski resorts and amusement parks are an important economic driver in Ontario, and they play a critical role in the success of Ontario's tourism sector. These attractions employ thousands of Ontarians and contribute to Ontario's being a truly four-season destination. There are also countless businesses and jobs that rely on the success of these attractions.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, ski lift and amusement device operators have been acutely impacted. Just yesterday, I met with two ski resort owners via Zoom who shared the hardships that they've experienced due to COVID.

Ensuring that these businesses and the world-class attractions they support have the support they need throughout the pandemic is a priority of our government. Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services speak to the support being provided to ski lift and amusement device operators?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent. Not only is he a very proud grandpa, but he's very proud of his riding, and I know he works so hard because of that pride. I'm pleased to answer his question with regard to what our government is doing to provide relief not only for ski hills, but amusement parks across Ontario. We're facilitating this through our oversight of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, as well as the Electrical Safety Authority.

On an annual basis, fees are typically paid to TSSA for regulatory services like licences and safety inspections, under the assumption that ski hill operations would resume, but we all know that due to the pandemic, amusement parks and ski hills alike unfortunately were unable to operate through their peak season. So, Speaker, I'm very pleased to share with you that these fees for this year will be returned to them. We're providing approximately \$2 million in financial support to enable TSSA to refund the fees already paid for the 2021 season, and we're reducing ESA's oversight for the—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Minister, for that insightful response. This is very welcome news.

Speaker, by providing financial support to the ski and amusement sectors, we are helping to address the financial barriers that many ski lift and amusement device operators are facing. Ensuring that these attractions are around after the COVID-19 pandemic is important to enable a healthy tourism sector.

The recovery of this important sector will be largely dependent on Ontario's success in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, Speaker, can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services explain what further supports may be available to support this very important industry?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: As I was mentioning earlier, we are actually looking to ESA to enable their recipients—their registrants, if you will—additional relief, by \$150,000. The Canadian Association of Amusement Operators has noted that this fee waiver will be a huge savings for their industry.

Over and above that, beyond the two oversight fee waivers, supplementary transfer payment funding of up to \$175,000 may be available to TSSA in the current fiscal year, on an as-needed basis, to help with the provision of additional temporary relief.

You know, Speaker, it's very important to recognize that we all continue to look for ways to support our industries throughout this province, but I'd also like to take this moment to give a shout-out to TSSA. They've hit a milestone. I'd like to congratulate them on the release of their new customer relationship management IT system. This is another critical step to modernizing as a regulator and moving towards a risk-based approach as technical safety and standards are upheld in Ontario.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Premier. Thunder Bay is still in a COVID crisis. Our cases keep rising. We're in lockdown. Our hospital is filling up. Finally, more resources are on the way, but this government took so long. More help is needed.

For months, the opposition has proposed sensible choices like paid sick leave and capping class sizes so we could stop this lockdown cycle. Yet this government won't

work with us. What is this government's plan to help Thunder Bay for the long run, to make sure this doesn't happen again?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much to the member for the question. This is an obvious concern with respect to the breakouts in Thunder Bay. That's why last week the Chief Medical Officer of Health, working with the local medical officer, decided to apply the emergency brake to put Thunder Bay into grey, a lockdown area, to prevent further transmission and to make sure that our hospitals and health care services are not being overwhelmed.

Additional supports have been provided. There has been additional money that has been placed into the hospital to allow for more beds to be created. But it is the variants of concern that are a priority right now, and dealing with them, trying to get them under control. We know from the modelling that has been done that the variants are going to become the dominant strain within the next several weeks. That is something that Dr. Williams, the local medical officers of health—and the vaccine task force, of course, is working to do vaccines as quickly as possible. But we're very aware of the concerns in Thunder Bay and are sending extra help to help the local medical officer of health deal with this outbreak.

1110

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Again, my question is for the Premier. While we're on the subject of COVID in Thunder Bay, I wanted to speak about providing health care at home. As we struggle with high rates of community spread in Thunder Bay, we could provide care at home instead of hospitals. This is one more way we could keep people safe.

My constituent Shawna receives transfusions every day at the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre. Shawna would greatly benefit from having her treatment in her home, but because she can take care of herself without help, transfusions at home are not funded. What will the ministry do to help as many people as possible to stay safe and receive the health care they need at home?

Hon. Christine Elliott: The member is absolutely right that we are doing whatever we can to make sure that people can be treated at home if their health condition permits it. That's why we passed the Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act, which is going to modernize the delivery of home and community care by bringing an outdated system that was designed in the 1990s into the 21st century.

There are many conditions where people can be treated at home. Dialysis is one example—overnight dialysis, and others as well. But we're taking further steps to make sure that we are going to be able to allow people to stay in the comfort of their own homes to receive treatment, either by visiting nurses or personal support workers, or, in some cases, we're able to connect people to virtual assistance so

that they can monitor their conditions at home without having to go either out to see their family doctor or to be admitted to a hospital. We are redesigning and modernizing the system so what you've suggested can actually happen, that people can be cared for in their own homes.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Coteau: My question is to the Minister of Long-Term Care. Minister, your testimony to the long-term-care commission makes it clear that while you and your deputy minister were concerned and you actually advocated for stronger and earlier restrictions in long-term care, those concerns were ultimately ignored.

On June 17, 2020, the Premier told this House that the Minister of Long-Term Care had more experience than the entire opposition combined. Speaker, through you: Why does the minister believe that the Premier chose not to listen to her, her deputy minister or her ministry over concerns when it came to earlier restrictions and increased staffing in long-term-care homes?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. We were listening to the experts. Long-term-care homes are the front line in the fight against COVID-19. Certainly, as a family doctor for many, many years, who started looking after seniors at age 14—I spent 46 years looking after seniors and advocating for them, so this is very close to my heart.

We implemented surveillance testing of residents and staff. It helped slow the outbreaks—layers and layers of defence while the science evolved, while the experts around the world disputed the evidence and went back and forth. It took months for the evidence to come forward.

As the Minister of Long-Term Care, I took my responsibility, my obligation and my duty very seriously. So when we go forward, we understand the importance of staffing, the importance of the capacity. Both these two key areas were left to languish for so many years. We're building 15,000 new beds—

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

The supplementary question?

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's clear that the Premier was not listening to the Minister of Long-Term Care.

The Premier told Ontarians that he was going to build an iron ring around long-term-care homes. On June 24, 2020, the Premier told this House that his Minister of Long-Term Care was up later than anyone else in this chamber, making sure that that iron ring around long-term care was there. But clearly, there was no iron ring, and we know, thanks to the Minister of Health, that the Premier had no problem overriding the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health when it came to opening up COVID-19 testing to all Ontarians last spring.

Speaker, through you: If the minister doesn't believe that the Premier chose to ignore the concerns that she voiced, why did she not speak out sooner to ensure that there was, in fact, an iron ring around our long-term-care homes here in Ontario?

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: I'd like to remind the chamber that it was the Premier who was constantly looking for PPE, bringing manufacturing of PPE to Ontario. It was the Premier who listened to my concerns about asymptomatic spread, about issues surrounding the lack of capacity in long-term care, the lack of staffing. It is the Premier who, every step of the way, made sure to advocate for more testing, because that is exactly what we needed in long-term care because of asymptomatic spread. It is the Premier who went to bat for all the residents in long-term care, and I appreciate everything that he did for Ontarians and continues to do.

We're committed to addressing the long-standing neglect by the previous government for staffing, for capacity—\$1.9 billion annually by 2024-25. It is a Conservative government that is bringing the solutions to long-term care after decades—decades—of neglect. The self-righteousness wafting from the other side—

Interjections.

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

The next question.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the minister of children and women's issues.

Last week on Monday, we celebrated Human Trafficking Awareness Day. We heard from the Solicitor General and this minister about the devastating impact trafficking can have on individuals and their families. It's unimaginable that someone would do something so horrific to another person. We also heard that many victims are children and youth, which potentially robs them of their well-being and futures. This type of crime is disgusting and it cannot be tolerated.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington, I have held town halls to raise awareness about this issue. I'm also proud to say that I have held three public seminars. The last one had in excess of 600 people present, comprised of parents, grandparents, students, children, teachers etc. I'm grateful to community groups in Chatham-Kent-Leamington for their assistance: victims services, the OPP, Chatham-Kent Police Service, Chatham-Kent Health Alliance. And, of course, we also heard from survivors—a real eye-opener.

Can the minister inform my constituents who haven't attended my town halls and other Ontarians of what some of the signs of trafficking are?

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington for that question, and thank you for your incredible advocacy to support victims and survivors of human trafficking. I would encourage all members of this House to host similar virtual town halls at this time. It's incredible that you had over 500 people come out.

Speaker, raising awareness is the first line of defence in combatting human trafficking. That is why our first pillar in our anti-human trafficking strategy is raising awareness. These signs include abuse such as bruising, cigarette

burns, branding or tattoos of names or symbols; not being allowed to speak for themselves; not having any belongings or money. For children and youth in particular, as they are being groomed, you may notice that they're withdrawing from family and friends; have a second cellphone; they're skipping school and hanging out with older groups of people; wearing new clothes or changing their appearance, like hair colour. These are just some of the many signs that we all need to be aware of.

Trafficking can occur anywhere and to anyone. It can be your daughter, your granddaughter, your sister, your best friend at school, your neighbour or even you. I encourage all Ontarians to go to ontario.ca/humantrafficking to look for more signs of trafficking and where to get help.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

Speaker, the minister is absolutely right: Raising awareness is the first line of defence. But we cannot do that only in this House. We need to be raising awareness and informing people about trafficking across Ontario.

It is imperative that more people understand that trafficking is happening, and it's also equally as important that individuals know where they can go to get help. So I thank the minister for providing that website and of course the phone numbers on that website.

One thing I often hear when speaking about this issue is that it only happens in big cities like Toronto and not in small towns or areas like mine. There are many other misconceptions about trafficking across the province. Speaker, did you know that the 401 cuts through Chatham-Kent, and it's not too far from Leamington as well? Motel and hotel owners need to be more aware of what's actually going on.

Clearly, more needs to be done to inform the people of Ontario, including our children and youth, of what could happen. Therefore, can the minister inform the House of what she is doing and what this government is doing to raise more awareness about this issue?

1120

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thanks again to the member for that question. Human trafficking can happen anywhere and to anyone, and it is not limited to big cities. That being said, children and youth are more targeted and more vulnerable, as well as Indigenous women and girls, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and those in the child welfare system. That is why we created programs last year to help these individuals learn about the signs for themselves and for their friends.

I want to commend, again, the Minister of Transportation for working to raise awareness at ONroutes across the province. Speaker, I am also so proud of our government and the campaign we launched to raise awareness. As many in the House have seen, we have worked to create ads for children, youth and parents so that they know the signs. These ads can be seen across different media platforms. I also want to encourage everyone to go to Twitter and check out @StopTrafficking to learn more. It's a great tool and full of information.

Speaker, this is a crime that can quietly occur and devastate lives, but if we all work together to raise awareness and inform our constituents about it, we can save lives and build better futures.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: My question is to the Premier. Over the last year, small businesses have suffered like never before. They are counting on timely and reliable support from this government. That's why I'm alarmed by the number of small businesses in Parkdale–High Park that have been unable to access the Ontario Small Business Support Grant. Some are waiting for a decision more than six weeks after applying, and others have been denied the grant because of a wrong assessment.

Small business owners and workers cannot afford to wait; the bills are piling up. What is the Premier doing to address this?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member from Willowdale and parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Stan Cho: I'm glad to hear the member address the importance of assisting small businesses throughout this very difficult time.

Speaker, I want to remind this House of just a few of the measures we've introduced from the beginning to support small businesses. We reduced property taxes up to 30%, a permanent measure for small businesses. The NDP voted against that. We reduced the EHT, a tax on jobs. That means 30,000 of the smallest small businesses in this province will save on that tax. The NDP voted against that. We invested \$680 million in additional investment into broadband infrastructure, bringing the total to \$1 billion. Speaker, the NDP voted against that.

In fact, when it comes to actually putting action behind the words, Speaker, the NDP has a lot of talk, but when it comes to the action to support small businesses, what do we get from the NDP? Crickets.

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

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Speaker, one small business owner in my riding has been waiting for weeks just to be able to make a small change to his application. Another was asked by an administrator to send documents to an email address that doesn't exist. These operational failures are unacceptable for small businesses on the brink of survival.

Can the Premier ensure that every small business affected by these issues will receive the Ontario Small Business Support Grant?

Mr. Stan Cho: I'm very proud of the small business support grant program. In fact, over \$1 billion has reached the hands of the small businesses throughout Ontario, Speaker. In fact, the average waiting time for those applicants for the small business support grant program is 12 days—12 days, Speaker—and that means that people in Toronto have received over \$200 million. That is real relief that businesses can put towards weathering the storm.

Now, when it comes to certain applications, the ones that are more complex or the ones that have errors will take longer, but the average time is 12 days. I want to encourage the member, if there are challenges with that, to contact us. We will help them through that application process to make sure that the businesses are going to get the supports they need until COVID-19 is a memory for all of us.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Roman Baber: My question is to the Minister of Education. Parents and caregivers all over Ontario are shocked and scared by the cruelty of child isolation policies articulated by regions and school boards across the province. Peel and York regions asked parents of dismissed cohorts to keep children isolated from others, including family. Dr. Richardson, an infectious disease physician and professor emerita at University of Toronto, called this a "cruel punishment," especially for young children, that could produce significant and long-lasting psychological effects.

Yesterday, the Associate Chief Medical Officer of Health clarified that the province would like kids to be completely isolated, along with one caregiver, and kept away from the rest of the family, but to use common sense. What common sense, Speaker? How about single-parent households, or parents working shifts away from home? This government keeps inventing policies that defy human life. Public health has simply lost their mind.

My question to the minister: Does he disagree with doctors who insist that child isolation policies may amount to child neglect? Will he immediately put an end to such policies, and will he apologize for the cruelty displayed by this government and Public Health Ontario?

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

Hon. Christine Elliott: As the member may know, that guidance has been changed by Dr. Loh. He's not recommending complete isolation for children as a result of COVID, and he has walked that back. When he attended at the University of Toronto Mississauga campus vaccination clinic yesterday, he indicated that his guidance had been misinterpreted, and he clarified it. So it's not as terrible as the member is suggesting. It's very reasonable, considering the guidelines that we all need to follow.

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

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, I have not heard a response. In fact, the Chief Medical Officer of Health clarified that it should be a separation with one caregiver, but this cruel and unusual policy is almost province-wide. Lambton wants children to stay in their room at all times, including meals. TDSB, Wellington county and others have similar policies. Dr. Fulford, a pediatrics infectious disease specialist from Hamilton, doesn't understand how any health care professional would move so far away from "doing no harm" that they would propose to incarcerate a child in a room for 14 days.

A spokesperson said the minister had absolutely nothing to do with the development or approval of these guidelines, then or now—that's the Minister of Education—so the Minister of Education is abdicating responsibility and tries to pin this debacle on public health.

The government loves to say that they will always take the advice of the public health experts. This episode taught all Ontarians everything we need to know about the state of public health in the province of Ontario. My question to the Minister of Education: Given the experience of the last few days with cruelty and incompetence by public health authorities on full display, do you still believe that it's appropriate to always rely on the advice of the experts at Public Health Ontario?

Hon. Christine Elliott: In fact, the leaders at Public Health Ontario have done a tremendous job at containing COVID, and now setting up the vaccination clinics and giving advice with respect to children. In fact, what the medical officers of health have always advocated is for a quick return for children to school. That is one of the most important things that we can do for the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for York Centre, come to order and allow the minister to reply.

The Minister of Health to reply.

Hon. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker.

The mental health and physical health of children is one of the most important things that we need to protect during this crisis, and our public health units have done a tremendous job of doing that and bringing forward very sensible recommendations for us. But the return to school is something that we brought forward as quickly as possible, because we know that it is vital for their mental and physical health. We know that mental health is going to be very challenged as a result of this. Even after everyone has been vaccinated, the mental health concerns will persist, and we are putting hundreds of millions of dollars into helping children and young people with their mental health concerns.

TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. The Ontario tourism industry is suffering. They are angry and they are crying out for help. In my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, many outfitters face circumstances similar to those of Michel and Tom Watson at Kaby Lodge, who lost over 90% of their clientele due to the border restrictions. Accumulating growing debt month after month is not an option for these tourist outfitters or many others within the tourism sector.

Premier, the bleeding continues while this government stands idly by. Businesses are dying, and so is Ontario's tourism. Will this government step up and expand emergency programs to finally ensure that all Ontario tourism-based businesses are included?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: Of course we recognize, on the government benches, and we have from the beginning of this pandemic, that the tourism sector has been severely impacted by COVID-19. That's why we've outlined a series of small business measures throughout this pandemic, from the beginning, since March 2020: supporting these businesses, not just today, but allowing for permanent tax reductions—whether it was the EHT, the tax on jobs or property taxes for these operators—so that they can not only weather the storm today, but be prosperous once again tomorrow.

I'm glad to hear that the members opposite are finally talking about small business support—they voted against it all year last year; they voted against it in the budget this time around—and recognizing that more needs to be done. I hope that when we table our budget this year, the NDP will support the measures we're going to have, to continue to support the tour operators here in the great province of Ontario.

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

1130

Mr. Michael Mantha: Speaker, here are a few more proposals to help this government and the tourism-based businesses across this province: immediate grants that have greater eligibility, because too many businesses simply don't qualify for help as the current criteria and funding is far too limited. New Democrats proposed a series of measures through the Save Main Street plan to help small businesses keep their head above water.

Will this government take the measures I just mentioned, expand the eligibility of the Ontario Small Business Support Grant today and actually ensure that our tourism industry survives this unprecedented crisis?

Mr. Stan Cho: I want to let the House know that almost 80,000 successful applications have been granted in the province; that means that \$1.1 billion has been flowed to these businesses who need help right now. Recognizing of course that the tourism sector has been hit very hard, hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to support this ministry.

More of course needs to be done. More will be done to support these hard-working businesses, and we look forward to working with the members opposite for that recovery path. We're hoping this time around that the members will actually support and vote in favour of those measures that support small businesses instead of standing in this House every day and rejecting, through action, the support measures that we've put in place. We look forward to that collaboration, and I'm encouraged to hear the member opposite indicate that here in the Legislature today.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier. In a few weeks, the temporary residential evictions moratorium, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy are scheduled to end.

While the federal government has indeed stepped up to help Ontarians weather this pandemic, the provincial government continues to hoard \$4 billion in standard contingency funds with just four weeks left in the fiscal year. Individuals and businesses throughout the province are making sacrifices based on the understanding that we need to support each other and to get through this pandemic. We are only beginning the process of vaccinating all Ontarians, and we still face the threat of COVID variants.

Small businesses in Scarborough and on main streets across Ontario need certainty. Does the Premier intend to extend the moratorium on evictions until we have everyone in this province vaccinated and we can truly open the economy and get people back to work safely?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the many questions within that. Look, as we said right from the beginning and as the Premier has been very vocal upon, when we started out with this pandemic, a certain commitment was made between the federal government and the provincial governments: The federal government would handle transfers to individuals and people, allowing us to pour billions of dollars into health and long-term care. That is a commitment that has worked well. That is why we have been saying, right from the beginning, that we need to have co-operation not only with our federal partners but with our municipal partners. Of course, it's been enunciated by the Minister of Labour with an over \$1-billion plan for sick pay.

We will continue to advocate for the people of the province of Ontario. And to continue to have the resources that we need for health and long-term care, for education, we are of course continuing to encourage the federal government to continue with programs that help individuals, as well as those that we are—

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: This government continuing to hoard billions of dollars in contingency funds is not working well for everyday Ontarians.

We have seen from the FAO's labour report and from Stats Canada that tourism, restaurants, hospitality and service sectors have been the hardest hit by COVID-19. It is also understood that these sectors will be the last to recover once the pandemic is over.

Last week, the city of Toronto announced it has cancelled all outdoor events up to and including Canada Day celebrations. Across the province, expectations have been already drastically reduced for 2021. An example of this can be seen in Stratford where the Stratford Festival announced its season will be merely 5% of a normal year's attendance. With more events cancelled or scaled back, the spin-off jobs will not come back either. We see a youth unemployment rate of 22%.

So is this government, in its upcoming budget, investing in skills development for job-seeking Ontarians?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Member for Willowdale.

Mr. Stan Cho: There's a lot to unpack in that answer there. More supports will be outlined for small businesses. I look forward to tabling that budget later this month.

Speaker, the member opposite continues to mention contingency funds. I guess the member thinks that if she repeats the same claim again and again, somehow, it will become true. But the reality is that every dollar of the historic \$13.5-billion contingency set aside to support and protect the lives and livelihoods of the people we serve has been used, hard stop.

I know the Liberals are stuck playing partisan games and referencing numbers from the second quarter of last year, but our government is planning for today, preparing for the future during this very uncertain time. So if the Liberals can't join us in at least planning for that future, please join us in the here and now. Please join us at least in 2021.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Ms. Marit Stiles: This question is for the Minister of Education.

Speaker, a school in Scarborough is closed today due to an outbreak of COVID-19 where at least four people have tested positive for a variant of concern. As of this morning, COVID-19 cases have now been reported in over 13% of Ontario schools, with 23 schools closed due to outbreaks and 262 new school cases.

What's just as concerning is the number of asymptomatic cases that we do not know about. A month ago, the minister finally announced support for asymptomatic testing for schools, promising a program that would ramp up to 50,000 asymptomatic tests a week. Where are they? Where are they, Mr. Speaker? As of Friday, only 2,853 tests had been conducted province-wide in the last seven days.

This minister knew last summer. His own officials were saying, "Get an asymptomatic broad testing program in place." He refused. When will the minister pick up the pace?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate the constructive thoughts from the member opposite, as always. I want to just note some data points, because obviously, the member opposite has not checked the Web, where we actually post our asymptomatic data since we started it province-wide this winter, and as we started posting transparently the number of cases, outbreaks and school closures since last September—one of the few provinces that did that at the beginning.

In York region, we have 18 more schools identified for asymptomatic testing, 31 in Hamilton, 75 in the member's city of Toronto, 24 in Ottawa, 11 in Waterloo—the list continues.

Let me edify the member on the results so far. In Peel, of the 118 tests conducted in the past days, zero cases were identified. In Hamilton Catholic, where 114 tests were completed, zero cases were identified. In Hamilton-Wentworth, where 142 tests were completed, zero cases were identified.

Mr. Speaker, roughly 99.5% of schools are currently open in the province of Ontario—99.52% are open; 86.7% of schools have no active case reported at all.

We're going to continue to invest to keep our schools safe.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. Berns-McGown assumes ballot item number 60 and Mr. Glover assumes ballot item number 75.

DEFERRED VOTES

ACCELERATING ACCESS TO JUSTICE ACT, 2021 LOI DE 2021 VISANT À ACCÉLÉRER L'ACCÈS À LA JUSTICE

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

Bill 245, An Act to amend and repeal various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Ontario Land Tribunal Act, 2021 / Projet de loi 245, Loi modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois, abrogeant divers règlements et édictant la Loi de 2021 sur le Tribunal ontarien de l'aménagement du territoire.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have a deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 245, An Act to amend and repeal various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Ontario Land Tribunal Act, 2021. The bells will ring for 30 minutes, during which time members may cast their votes.

I'll ask the Clerks to prepare the lobbies.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1210.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 245, An Act to amend and repeal various statutes, to revoke various regulations and to enact the Ontario Land Tribunal Act, 2021 has taken place.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 42; the nays are 15.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Can I refer the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Barrie-Innisfil to say the committee the bill is going to.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): So ordered. The bill will be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

There being no further business at this time, this House stands in recess until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1211 to 1500.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 2, 2021, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 111(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

PETITIONS

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I have a stack of petitions from ridings across Ontario that are entitled, "No COVID-19 Evictions."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas renters across Ontario are currently having a hard time paying rent and other bills, especially if they have lost their income during the COVID-19 pandemic;

"Whereas there will be a rise in evictions across Ontario once the pandemic is declared over and the moratorium on the enforcement of evictions is lifted. Rent across Ontario is already too high and many families are barely managing to live month to month, with homelessness already a crisis;

"Whereas tenants are finding it increasingly difficult to find reasonable places to live once evicted, in part due to rent raises not being regulated between tenancies;

"Whereas the rights of tenants are already limited, and the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board is in dire need of resources;

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

"—Immediately halt Bill 184;

"—Subsidize 80% of rent up to \$2,500 for four months for tenants who have lost income due to the pandemic;

"—Restrict rent increases on both current units as well as new units post-2018;

"—Ensure that the Landlord and Tenant Board's rules prioritize a tenant's ability to preserve their home through the dispute resolution process;

"—Ban all COVID-19-related evictions."

I will happily sign this petition and make sure it gets to the table.

LIFE INSURANCE

Ms. Donna Skelly: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas at a time when many people, especially seniors, are struggling due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, more needs to be done to meet the needs of vulnerable people;

“Whereas important updates in order to modernize the Insurance Act are required;

“Whereas changes are needed to allow Ontario seniors to access the fair market value of their life insurance policies which could potentially give seniors tens of millions of dollars more than they now receive, each year;

“Whereas, if passed, Bill 219 would:

—modernize the Insurance Act to create a well-regulated secondary market in life insurance;

—provide access to an alternative financial resource and allow Ontario seniors to access the fair market value of their life insurance policies;

—ensure consumers are protected by requiring full, true and plain disclosure;

—require a 10-day cooling-off period;

—ensure the right to consult a financial or legal adviser;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario vote on and pass the Life Settlements and Loans Act.”

I support this petition, will sign my signature and hand it to the appropriate page.

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPENSATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Karly Hallett from Hanmer in my riding for this petition.

“Pandemic Pay....

“Whereas the pandemic pay eligibility needs to be expanded as well as made retroactive to the beginning of the state of emergency; and

“Whereas Premier Ford stated repeatedly that the workers on the front lines have his full support but this is hard to believe given that so many do not qualify; and

“Whereas the list of eligible workers and workplaces should be expanded; and

“Whereas all front-line workers should be properly compensated;”

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

“To call on the” federal “government to expand the \$4-per-hour pandemic pay to include all front-line” health “workers that have put the needs of their community first and make the pay retroactive to the day the state of emergency was declared, so that their sacrifice and hard work to keep us safe is recognized.”

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

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Dave Smith: I have a petition entitled, “Combating Human Trafficking....”

“Whereas human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing crimes worldwide and the majority of police-reported incidents of human trafficking in Canada happen right here in Ontario; and

“Whereas it’s important that Ontario is equipped to fight this growing crime and support victims and survivors with every tool at our disposal; and

“Whereas everyone deserves freedom from exploitation, fear and violence;

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

“Pass Bill 251, Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, so that:

“(1) There is an increased awareness of the issue, supporting a long-term provincial response and emphasizing that all Ontarians have a role to play in combatting human trafficking;

“(2) We strengthen the ability of children’s aid societies and law enforcement to protect exploited children;

“(3) More survivors and the people who support them in obtaining restraining orders against traffickers are supported, with specific consideration for Indigenous survivors;

“(4) The government’s ability to collect non-personal data to better understand the impact of the strategy and response to human trafficking is increased;

“(5) Law enforcement is provided with more tools to locate victims and charge traffickers.”

I fully endorse this petition and will send it to the table.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to thank Pierce Family Vision in Waterloo for collecting petitions, as they have done for almost a year.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas optometrists now subsidize the delivery of OHIP-covered eye care by \$173 million a year; and

“Whereas COVID-19 forced optometrists to close their doors, resulting in a 75%-plus drop in revenue; and

“Whereas optometrists will see patient volumes reduced between 40% and 60%, resulting in more than two million comprehensive eye exams being wiped out over the next 12 months; and

“Whereas communities across Ontario are in danger of losing access to optometric care;

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

“To instruct the Ontario government to immediately establish a timetable and a process for renewed negotiations concerning optometry fees.”

This seems reasonable. I will affix my signature and make sure it gets to the table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government of Ontario is fast-tracking Highway 413 even though it will cause irreversible damage to our environment; and

“Whereas Highway 413 will pave over 2,000 acres of prime farmland and 400 acres of the greenbelt; and

“Whereas Highway 413 will cross through important watersheds, threatening our clean drinking water and increasing the risk of flooding; and

“Whereas Highway 413 will mean more greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, moving Ontario further away from meeting our climate change goals; and

“Whereas Highway 413 will do nothing to relieve congestion, saving drivers only 30 seconds per trip; and

“Whereas Highway 413 will cost Ontarians \$6 billion to \$10 billion;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately cancel Highway 413.”

I fully support this petition, will sign it and send it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Mr. Arthur Schmitt, who lives in Lively in my riding, for these petitions. It's called “Neurological Movement Disorder Clinic in Sudbury....

“Whereas northeastern Ontario has a high rate of neurological movement disorders; and

“Whereas specialized neurological movement disorder clinics provide essential health care services to those living with diseases such as Parkinson's, Huntington's, dystonia, Tourette's and others; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is recognized as a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Immediately set up a neurological movement disorder clinic in the Sudbury area that is staffed by a neurologist who specializes in the treatment of movement disorders, a physiotherapist and a social worker, at a minimum.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Dave Smith: “Whereas since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has taken decisive action to protect all Ontario workers by implementing job protection leave, signing a \$19-billion agreement with the federal government in July, which includes \$1.1 billion to cover the cost of 10 paid sick days to the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit; and

“Whereas employees have the right to take this provincial leave if they are not performing the duties of their

position because of various COVID-19-related reasons, including caring for a child that's sick, isolating or those whose school is closed, and sick notes are no longer required; and

“Whereas no other province, including the NDP government in British Columbia, has introduced a provincial program since the federal government launched the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit; and

“Whereas there's a clear lack of awareness about the federal program due to pervasive misinformation, with less than 30% of the overall program accessed by workers nationwide;

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

“That all members provide appropriate and accurate information regarding resources and supports available, like the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit, to ensure the hard-working people of Ontario are aware of the supports available to keep themselves and their communities safe.”

I'll sign this petition and send it to the table.

DOCUMENTS GOUVERNEMENTAUX

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier l'École secondaire catholique Sainte-Marie à New Liskeard pour les pétitions.

« Accents en français sur les cartes de santé... »

« Alors qu'il est important d'avoir le nom exact des personnes sur les cartes émises par le gouvernement » de l'Ontario, telle « la carte santé...; »

« Alors que plusieurs personnes francophones ont des accents dans l'écriture de leur nom; »

« Alors que le ministère des Transports et le ministère de la Santé ont confirmé que le système informatique de l'Ontario ne permet pas l'enregistrement des lettres avec des accents; »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « qu'elle s'assure que les accents de la langue française soient inclus sur tous les documents et cartes émis par le gouvernement de l'Ontario. »

J'appuie cette pétition, je vais la signer et je l'envoie à la table des greffiers.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr. Dave Smith: “Whereas businesses need support to keep the lights on during this time of uncertainty and hardship; and

“Whereas helping employers survive this challenging period and providing stability is an essential part of our government's response to COVID-19; and

“Whereas COVID-19 has made the future uncertain and many businesses are facing risk factors outside of the norm;

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

“Pass Bill 238, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, so that:

“(1) Amendments are made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997;

“(2) New section 88.1 sets out a special rule for the calculation of certain premiums payable by employers for the 2021 calendar year. The Lieutenant Governor in Council is given regulation-making powers with respect to the calculation and the period during which the special rule applies. New section 167 provides that the minister may direct the board to provide the minister with information that the minister considers necessary for the proper administration of the act. The board is required to provide the information on or before the date specified by the minister and in the form specified by the minister. The minister may delegate the minister’s powers under section 167 to the deputy minister.”

I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it and send it to the table.

ANTI-SMOKING INITIATIVES FOR YOUTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank youth groups throughout the province who are collecting these petitions. They read as follows:

“—In the past 10 years in Ontario, 86% of all movies with on-screen smoking were rated for youth;

“—The tobacco industry has a long, well-documented history of promoting tobacco use on screen;

“—A scientific report released by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit estimated that 185,000 children in Ontario today will be recruited to smoking by exposure to on-screen smoking;

“—More than 59,000 will eventually die from tobacco-related cancers, strokes, heart disease and emphysema, incurring at least \$1.1 billion in health care costs; and whereas an adult rating (18A) for movies that promote on-screen tobacco in Ontario would save at least 30,000 lives and half a billion health care dollars;

“—The Ontario government has a stated goal to achieve the lowest smoking rates in Canada;

“—79% of Ontarians support not allowing smoking in movies rated G, PG, 14A...;

“—The Minister of Government and Consumer Services has the authority to amend the regulations of the Film Classification Act...;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—To request the Standing Committee on Government Agencies examine the ways in which the regulations of the Film Classification Act could be amended to reduce smoking in youth-rated films released in Ontario;

“—That the committee report back on its findings to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that the Minister of Government and Consumer Services prepare a response.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2021, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 251, An Act to enact, amend and repeal various Acts in respect of human trafficking matters / Projet de loi 251, Loi édictant, modifiant et abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne les questions de traite des personnes.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: I am thankful today to add to the debate on government Bill 251, the Combating Human Trafficking Act. The first thing I want to say—I want to make it perfectly clear—is that human trafficking is an atrocity. It is certainly something that shouldn’t exist anywhere in Ontario, in our country, in the world, for that matter.

As I mentioned this morning, I am a survivor of child sexual abuse and I certainly know the long-standing impact that gender-based violence can have on your life throughout the life cycle. So I see the relevance in putting forth a bill that speaks to human trafficking and that suggests that it will combat human trafficking. However, I do want to work through a few points within the bill that I feel should be flagged. I’d also like to address some of the social determinants, some of the social conditions that perpetuate violence, that allow it to fester and thrive. I’d also like to share and put on the record some reports that I found on human trafficking that provide a feminist, anti-oppressive, anti-racist lens on human trafficking.

The reason why that is crucial is because, upon reading this piece of legislation, it becomes clear to me that this bill is centrally about increased police powers. While the bill does suggest that police and child protection personnel would receive training—I’m assuming on human trafficking and anti-violence and anti-oppression and whatnot—I’d have to double-check the fine print. The bill does not provide training for community organizations working directly with those police officers upon, for instance, removal of that 16- or 17-year-old child from a dangerous circumstance. So I am left wondering how much this bill is rooted in community, how much it’s rooted in actually empowering community organizations—those that are run with an anti-oppressive, feminist, equitable, inclusive lens—that are historically the ones doing the work of addressing human trafficking, of addressing systemic, institutional forms of violence etc.

1520

We know that while there are many fine police officers within our policing institution, some could do with a bit more training when it comes to humanity. So when this bill, to me, reads as a power grab or as a police power opportunity, I do have some concerns, especially since the government did try to highlight—and I thank them for

this—Indigenous communities. They have mentioned racialized communities. The legislation or the—the popular conversation on the bill online, I think, even mentions LGBT communities. So there has certainly been an attempt to check all the boxes, so to speak. But I do wonder whether or not this bill provides the type of systemic, long-term training necessary for our first responders and for all the community agencies that should be working right alongside the police—not 12 hours after, but at the moment of contact. So that’s a concern I have.

I want to also mention that it is no secret that racial profiling and carding is still legal in Ontario. The Liberals sat on it for 15 years; they did nothing about that. And certainly this government has not done anything with regard to addressing racial profiling or carding, or even properly funding the Anti-Racism Directorate, for instance.

All of these pieces are connected. They’re connected to the issue of gender-based violence. They’re connected to the issue of human trafficking. They’re connected to the issue of supposedly wanting to address marginalized communities that are often ignored.

In that regard, the Ontario NDP certainly made a very strong statement on our desire to end police violence and to invest in Black, Indigenous and racialized people’s lives—folks who are disproportionately not only incarcerated but disproportionately impacted by all forms of violence—we should be able to agree on in this House. Some of our demands included a complete overhaul of police oversight. We called for a final ending of carding. We called for investment in alternative first responders.

This comes right back to my first critique on the bill and whether or not the bill extends the “generosity” of training to all those community grassroots organizations that, quite frankly, the very “victims” being rescued through anti-human-trafficking legislation would feel more comfortable with, as opposed to the unknown police officer. I am remembering a conversation we had with the ministry, where we tried to get information as to whether or not the police officer—is it the officer from the community? Is it the community liaison officer? Is it the person Jenny or Jerome sees at the community centre all the time or what-not, who may have a personal relationship with youth who are in danger? And it appeared that the answer to that was no.

So it really is important that we look at how we are offering training in the policing institution. We need to look at how we may need to demilitarize our police forces, and also giving elected officials the power to assert and set their policing budgets.

This Combating Human Trafficking Act boasts—I think it’s \$307 million, is it?—\$307 million, I believe, in investment into the community. I am left wondering how much of that \$307 million is invested in police as a first response to human trafficking, or how much of that is invested in social workers, in mental health care workers, in advocates and workers who have expertise in homelessness, for instance, or poverty, or even in our schools, with guidance counsellors or child and youth workers or any other kind of education worker.

I understand that this bill does speak to some—I believe they said to me that the White Ribbon campaign organization, which is an amazing organization just a step out of our riding, also contributed curriculum to this bill’s interpretation in education. That is certainly a good thing, but the reality is, it doesn’t matter what’s in the curriculum; if we don’t have the right humans to help facilitate bringing that curriculum to life, we have some problems on our hands.

One of our last calls with our End Police Violence, Invest in Black, Indigenous and Racialized People’s Lives request to the government was to seek out community-driven and community-led solutions to community safety. That’s sort of my broad piece on the caution that I have with regard to first responders and the role that they’re going to play. No doubt, they need to play a role, because human trafficking, as I’ve said, is an atrocity. It is violating. People lose their lives. It destroys mental health. It destroys families. It destroys communities. We know that Ontario is a hub for human trafficking, and I really want to say that it disproportionately impacts the most marginalized people in our community, who are already pushed out of the system every which way. So it is important work, but we do have a right to ask the government about their somewhat obsession with police-led initiatives being the only way of engaging an end to violence in our communities.

I also wanted to touch on the piece around the Hotel Registration of Guests Act. What is it? Yes, that’s it: the Hotel Registration of Guests Act. Sorry, I just got tongue-twisted for a second there. On first glance—again, excellent, and it really is. That piece is excellent. We have to have those names registered. We need to be able to track down these perpetrators. We need to have a way of holding them accountable for their behaviour.

Interestingly enough, though, the legislation does not address Airbnb. I didn’t know initially, but Airbnb is even a bigger thing than all the hotel chains in Ontario. It sort of strikes me as odd that the government did not consult with Airbnb, did not consult with Fairbnb, did not consult with short-term rentals when, in fact, research has shown that there’s an exponential rise, actually, in short-term rentals. Again, not to take hotels off the hook, but the question becomes why? Why did the government not consult with short-term rentals? I don’t know. Were short-term rentals—did those folks lobby the government? I don’t know. Is it an economic thing? Is there much to be gained from allowing Airbnbs and short-term rentals to be let off the hook?

The government says that Bill 251 would apply to short-term rentals, as well as hotels. However, the bill itself only mentions hotels and “prescribed” classes of businesses, so presumably the government can prescribe short-term rentals as a class, but why wouldn’t it make it explicit in the legislation?

1530

I think with this government, sadly, it really is necessary. We can only fully believe what we see in black and

white. I mean, just a small tangent, just a tiny tangent: Ontarians were told, “If you can’t afford rent, don’t pay it,” and we’ve seen how that played out. Again, we can’t take the government simply at word value.

And according to a cop, actually, quoted in a 2018 article, short-term rentals are more attractive to human traffickers than hotels. He said, “Human traffickers may opt to use Airbnb rentals instead of motels or similar venues because of the greater possibility for anonymity.”

So if short-term rentals are such a major concern—and hotels and motels, yes, but not at the high rate of Airbnbs and short-term rentals—then short-term rentals should be explicitly mentioned in the statute, instead of leaving it up to the government to maybe or not amend the act. That’s certainly one of the amendments that I would be asking. I’m sure that my caucus buddies here in the NDP are also eager to know why Airbnb and short-term rentals were left off the docket.

There are also amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act that will allow police or child protection workers to remove youth up to 16, 17 years old from environments deemed to be at risk or engaged in human trafficking. These are temporary orders that will likely place subjects of protection orders in foster or group home environments through CAS. Again, on first reading, hey, no problem, but again, I worry about whether or not these 16- or 17-year-olds may have mental health issues.

The sad thing with being a victim of violence and the terrible cycle of violence is that sometimes violence begets more violence. So I worry about the youth who needs to be supported, who needs to be removed from said dangerous circumstance, but who may present in a way that is hostile or present in a way that is “violent.” And I worry about the potential of those youth ending up dead.

We do know that the government has made substantial cuts to mental health services, and I think that that’s very connected to human trafficking, because I would argue that anyone who has lived through the trauma of human trafficking needs supports and needs counselling. Again, in terms of that first encounter, I just really hope that this bill makes some inroads to guaranteeing that victims of human trafficking aren’t further criminalized or further harmed, quite frankly, by those who are supposed to protect them.

We also know that group homes and foster homes—it’s not exactly the best gift to many racialized, Black and Indigenous youth. We know the long history of anti-Black racism, of anti-Indigenous racism, the legacy of colonialism, and we certainly know that many children in care—youth in care, whatnot—have perpetually received the short end of the stick. This is why, in seeing this bill on combatting human trafficking, it made me remember Irwin Elman. It made me remember our former provincial child and youth advocate and the work he did and the way in which he could advocate for youth in a way that an Ombudsman can’t, quite frankly. It also, of course, made me remember that it was this government that slashed the provincial child and youth advocate, because I guess they didn’t think it was a worthwhile thing.

Definitely, we want to end human trafficking. But I really think that this bill has an opportunity for more investment as opposed to less investment. And frankly, having a hero like a provincial child and youth advocate, who could support and advocate and be that caring adult and that familiar face some of these kids might need in their greatest hour of fear, is missing.

This morning, the Attorney General mentioned that two thirds of all human trafficking happens in Ontario. He mentioned that this is an incredibly central issue, that it’s an important issue, that it affects all sectors, and to that effect, we have to invest in it full throttle, whatnot—\$307 million, a huge figure.

What I’ve learned as an MPP since being elected in 2018 is that it’s in the fine print. So when the government says, in their released human trafficking strategy of March 2020—it promises to invest \$307 million over the next five years on a comprehensive action plan to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation via four key pillars: raising awareness of the issue, protecting victims and intervening early, supporting survivors, and holding offenders accountable. As far as I’m concerned, those are excellent suggestions, excellent pillars. But when I asked the government, through the ministry, for a breakdown of those figures—again, I wanted to get a sense of what we were dealing with. How much is going to the community? How much is going to survivors? What’s the police’s take of the cake? There were no real answers. But they did say they’d get back to us on it, so I did appreciate that.

The reason I bring up the \$307 million over the next five years is—none of us are guaranteed tomorrow, quite frankly, let alone the next five years. So I do wonder: What is in this very handsome chest for survivors right now, in 2021, for people who need to escape human trafficking? What’s in this for survivors in 2022? I’m not going to say it’s “misleading,” because I know that word is unparliamentary. So I’ll forget about that word. But it is difficult to get a tangible, practical application of abstract things when it’s five years away, when the crisis is right here in Ontario. Two thirds of Ontario are dealing with human trafficking, as the Attorney General mentioned this morning.

I also understand that over 200 programs applied for funding out of the human trafficking strategy—over 200 programs—and 27 were funded. Those programs were community-based programs. Again, where did the other 220-something or whatever—where did all of that go? Actually, it’s way more than 227. There I go for trying to do math on my feet. The bottom line is, where did it all go, if only 27 agencies or community organizations received funding out of this \$307 million? I just want to know where it all went.

To historicize some of these issues—actually, before I historicize some of the issues or I remind Ontarians of why we have two thirds of human trafficking here in Ontario, I just want to give a thank you to my colleague the member from Spadina–Fort York for his motion that he put through calling for forgiveness of OSAP debt for survivors of

human trafficking. I think this is certainly something that, if it's not on the table of this government yet—I hope you all will really consider this because, again, it takes a whole interministerial, intersectional, interdisciplinary approach, sort of like the intersectional gender equity strategy that I pitched to the government back in December 2019. I still haven't heard about that yet. Nonetheless, it takes a full intersectional approach to deal with human trafficking. If survivors are to make it, we don't need them having that financial monkey on their back, and I know the member for Spadina–Fort York and Project Recover's executive director, Richard Dunwoody, made a compelling case for this.

1540

I'm going to share a quote from “Layla”—her name is being protected for obvious reasons.

“I'm a human trafficking survivor, and as you may not know, along with that come many, many obstacles once you've regained yourself, trying to make it out of the world after, to pick up all the pieces you lost that no one thinks about.

“Every time that phone rings, my first thought is, ‘Collections, again. How much will I have to take out of my kids' mouths this month to please the government for a debt that was never my fault?’ I'm re-victimized and shamed over and over again, every time the phone rings. I have shelled out thousands of dollars to get back on my feet, that I've had to beg and borrow due to threats from collection agencies, who never understand that they may be talking to someone on the other line dealing with trauma, only to have zero help from the government with anything.

“I'm a mom, and supporting my children myself and trying to pay my debt off is almost impossible. But what do I do when I need a degree to further myself and my future? I never got my degree due to being pulled out of school by my perpetrator. And I still owe money for that.

“So what came out of this experience is two things: I didn't benefit from the degree, which I am now trying to pursue and I can't because of this outstanding, ridiculous debt; and every time that phone rings, it's a reminder of what has happened in my past life, the pain I went through, and also the pain of not being able to go for what I wanted when I wanted it.”

I think that's really powerful, and that really speaks to the government listening—the government needs to listen to survivors. I don't know who their consultations were with, per se; we know they weren't with Airbnb. But I don't know the ratio of survivors of human trafficking literally sitting around with the government, or via Zoom because of the current state that we're in—I don't know the numbers. What I know is, that call hasn't only come from Layla; that call has come from other folks who have experienced human trafficking, who have experienced gender-based violence, who are trying to make a life for themselves and have OSAP debt hanging over their heads. So I would really encourage the government to think about OSAP forgiveness for human trafficking victims.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Good idea.

Ms. Jill Andrew: It's a great idea, actually—a shout-out again to the MPP from Spadina–Fort York, who does incredible work and is such an ally to women and girls across Ontario.

On the note of victims and compensation: I believe it was the Attorney General or the Solicitor General—I can't remember which one it was, but there was some mention of victims receiving funding from the \$307 million, if I got that correctly. That is something that I would like to know, how that is doled out, because I would be remiss if I didn't remind the Legislature today of the Conservative government's cuts to victim services and compensation, which left many victims of violence out in the cold—literally, in some cases. I think it was the Victim Quick Response Program, which was sort of like the new flavour kind of thing. What that program did was that not only did it cut out victims of historical abuse from getting support, it actually made it necessary for victims to contact police officials first in order to get support. I kind of already discussed why some survivors may not be too excited to call the police first. It also took away upwards of \$25,000 that victims of heinous violent crimes could actually get their hands on to help rebuild their lives.

It makes you wonder: What if that hadn't changed? Maybe Layla could have paid off some of that debt. I've got to tell you: Something tells me that Layla isn't an elected official, so something tells me that Layla loses money when she gets sick. Something tells me Layla doesn't have paid sick days, right? So Layla is certainly up against a lot in trying to rebuild her life.

So again, I would expressly ask the government to think about the ways that previous cuts, which inform all their legislation, including the Combating Human Trafficking Act—how they could actually invest, not only in platitudes and words and “victim-centred.” All of these are great, but invest actual dollars in people's lives. Ensure that sexual assault centres, for instance, have access as needed to this funding, to funding that they have. We know already that the province has sat on billions of dollars from the federal government. COVID or not, if you're experiencing human trafficking, human trafficking doesn't know what time of year it is. Do you know what I mean? There are people being human-trafficked right now, during COVID-19, so there's no reason why some of those billions—it really does make you put it into balance when you think of billions, and then \$307 million. It kind of puts that into an interesting vantage point.

What sexual assault centres have said—I spoke to one person, the most recent person, this morning, actually, because I couldn't find her the other day, and her thing was, “Can sexual assault centres and workers like me”—like her, not me—“have access to training, to do the work of supporting victims who are left out because of changes within the VQRP program, because of legislation that focuses more on police intervention than it ever does on community-level support?”

It's no secret that we have a housing crisis, that we have a homelessness and poverty crisis. If I'm not mistaken, my dear friend and colleague from Beaches–East York was

one of the first to stand and say, “Please, Premier, let’s declare a homelessness crisis.” It was shot down, and I bring that up because many folks who are experiencing human trafficking are also transient. They’re also dealing with, obviously, income precarity. They’re dealing with housing precarity. So again, we cannot have shiny bills that have “Combating Human Trafficking Act” that don’t also consider direct funding for housing, direct funding for shelters.

On the point of shelters, from OAITH, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses: Some of their pre-budget consultation advice to the government included to stabilize violence-against-women enhancement funding into core operating budgets, that that should be stabilized, that it should be multi-year. They also mentioned the COVID-19 response in congregate settings: Continue these investments in the 2021 provincial budget. Alleviate the bottleneck crisis in violence against women shelters. Invest in more housing for survivors of gender-based violence.

1550

More affordable housing, supportive housing and programs to make existing housing affordable will work to ensure we have bed capacity. Bed capacity is a whole other issue. Hundreds of folks across the province are turned away from shelters—hundreds, if not thousands are turned away. That is something we have to consider as well.

I also wanted to say thank you to the offices of my colleague MPP Mamakwa from the riding of Kiiwetinoong and also my colleague the member for Toronto Centre, whose offices were very generous in sharing with me some of their insight on this issue.

I understand that the government has funded the Ontario Native Women’s Association. They applied for \$27 million but received \$10.8 million of that \$307 million, which is going to help them exponentially—it will—even though they didn’t get what they applied for. I know that they are very thankful for that investment and that they are doing a lot of work. That funding will allow them to branch out to other locations, because as of now, they had only branched out into Toronto. Of course, they were launched in 2017 in Thunder Bay. The \$10.8 million from the \$307 million that the government gave them will also allow them to expand locations in Timmins, Ottawa, Greenstone, Kenora, Napanee, Sioux Lookout, Midland, Peterborough, Hamilton and Niagara regions. I want to say to them thank you for the work they do and thank you for the lives that they will help impact.

But I’ve also heard from Indigenous community members that while support in one area is critical, it is truly, truly important that implementation must mean investment, both from the perspective of reaching and assisting victims, but also focusing on prevention of victimization in the first place, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous women and girls. This means investing in urban Indigenous community infrastructure, like friendship centres and ONWA, local shelters and housing providers in order to build up protective factors that inhibit human trafficking in the first place.

The response to this legislation—again, some folks, like the CCLA, have been wary once again of the government, once again about using combatting human trafficking as a pretense to increase police powers or to further direct resources to combatting trafficking to police, as opposed to some of the other places that I have mentioned. The Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres is also concerned that the provincial government is placing more resources with police and CAS in the face of the stated aims of the government’s anti-trafficking strategy to have a person-centred focus on victims.

People are cautious. People are watching. People are listening. Of course, we need supports. But here’s what one person said: “People across” Canada “are rightly demanding fundamental change to policing and a long-overdue shift in government priorities from armed police response to a focus on community safety, wellness and supports. They understand that truly addressing the deep institutional issues we face,” such as anti-Indigenous racism and anti-Black racism, “means taking a hard look at our province’s priorities.”

Maggie’s Toronto Sex Workers Action Project—and a shout-out to Maggie’s for the exceptional work they do trying to support sex workers: “Anti-trafficking laws and initiatives frequently do more harm than good by conflating sex work with human trafficking, supporting the prohibition of sex work, supporting racist anti-immigration policies and supporting the increased criminalization and surveillance of sex workers. Anti-human trafficking initiatives obscure issues of youth homelessness, Indigenous sovereignty, labour rights and migration rights for local and migrant sex workers, while supporting police harassment, stigma, violence and deportations as means of ‘rescuing’ and ‘rehabilitating’ workers, disregarding the actual needs and concerns of sex workers.”

The Ontario Native Women’s Association: “Indigenous women and girls comprise a disproportionate number of those sexually exploited in Canada through human trafficking. Violence and fear are a constant part of their lives. They are vulnerable to violence at the hands of their clients and yet are afraid to report sexual assaults to the police and health care professionals. In their previous experiences, they were not believed or felt blamed for the assault. They can’t turn to their pimps for protection as they are likely to be beaten, abused, and mistreated by them. They live a fragile economic existence often in poverty. Their housing is precarious as landlords evict women when they discover how they earn income. When women do find the courage to go to services in the community, they are often treated with disdain or disbelief.”

So those are some comments that have come from organizations with regard to human trafficking, sex trafficking, gender-based violence, and violence against Indigenous, racialized folk etc.

I am certain that the government has already taken a read of the Ontario Native Women’s Association’s report, which was prepared for consideration by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights study on human

trafficking in Canada in June 2018. I will not have a chance to go through the entire document, as I had hoped to, but this document really speaks to the institutional legacy of colonialism and how that is inextricably linked to human trafficking and cannot be separated. It speaks to the gross negligence, the vicious violence, quite frankly, of the Indian Act and the way in which that piece of legislation continues in many ways—based, of course, on anti-Indigenous racism, on sex-based discrimination—to create the very environments where women do not have access to power, do not have access to “status” and therefore find themselves, literally, between a rock and a hard place. So I think it’s a very important article.

It goes on to speak about how, between 1980 and 2014, police services in Canada reported 1,073 female Aboriginal victims of homicide. That’s a 2015 stat; it’s clearly higher than that now. We also know that because of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls—we don’t even know if the statistics are up to date. The Ontario Native Women’s Association believes that this is because efforts aimed to address and prevent violence against women fail to address the true causes of violence against Indigenous women, which are rooted in colonialism. They go on to say, “Ongoing colonialism, racism and marginalization is the root of the vulnerability of Indigenous women and girls to human trafficking.”

It is an excellent article. It calls for improved data collection on human trafficking of Indigenous people in Canada. I must say, this bill, in terms of the hotel name registry, will provide some supports in terms of data collection and possibly holding those who are perpetrators accountable.

It also speaks to the need for wraparound, 24-hour services to support these women—not services that are simply punitive, and also not services that are dependent on people leaving.

This article doesn’t mention this, but we have to also recognize that—the government spoke of kids who are 13 and under today, and that may be the dominant age group impacted. It may not be the popular opinion in this room, but there are people who are of legal age, there are women who choose to engage in sex work. It’s a profession and it shouldn’t be conflated with human trafficking, *per se*. There are some women who would take great offence at being called victims, because in their opinion—and I completely respect that opinion—they have made their chosen profession. People say all the time that politicians, lawyers—you know, if you’re a good liar, you’re a good politician or lawyer. I mean, we’re not liars. I’m not a liar. So I don’t think we should assume that people are unable to make their own choices and have their own autonomy.

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On that note, I had the honour of speaking with Dr. Nicole McFadyen, as well, from York University. She co-edited the *Challenging Trafficking in Canada* policy brief. It was published through the Centre for Feminist Research at York University. There is also a policy brief that she had noted to me from the Northeastern Ontario Research Alliance on Human Trafficking, and also asked the gov-

ernment to be familiar with Elene Lam’s work at Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network as well.

To quote Dr. McFadyen, Dr. McFadyen said, “I have been researching and working closely with migrant workers, sex workers, survivors of human trafficking and front-line service providers in BC and Ontario for over 10 years. The main take-away is that increased policing will never and can never end human trafficking. Only meaningfully addressing the root causes of trafficking, including structural violence, racism, inequality, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, poverty”—I won’t even have time to get into migrant workers, migrant sex workers, and also the way in which anti-human trafficking sometimes performs as a guise to get rid of certain people, too, whether they’re in trafficking or not; I won’t get to all of that today, sadly—“and the absolute dearth of intersection, anti-oppressive and anti-racist supports necessary, to name a few.” And she ends with “full stop.”

If I can have a moment, as well—let’s see, what do I have, 15 minutes—to walk through some of her work, *Challenging Trafficking in Canada*. I want to put some of this on the record. It was published in 2017. The editors and the organizations credited for this work are editors Kamala Kempadoo and Nicole McFadyen, Phillip Pilon, Andrea Sterling and Alex Mackenzie, and organizations that were consulted. I would definitely suggest that the government consult with some of these organizations that have been doing outstanding work, whether it is supporting and advocating for the rights of sex workers, or supporting and advocating for the rights of migrant folk, or simply pushing back on the status quo of law and order being the only call to action. That would include Maggie’s Toronto Sex Workers Action Project, No One Is Illegal Toronto, Pivot Legal Society in Vancouver, POWER in Ottawa—and I’m going to say this wrong—Stella, l’amie de Maimie in Montreal, and SWAN Vancouver. And of course, there is another list of exceptional persons. Documents and resources from the Canadian Council for Refugees; Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Network, Toronto; the Migrant Sex Workers Project in Toronto; the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change; No More Silence, in Ontario; and the Stepping Stone Association were all consulted, with permission.

This document is calling us to go beyond the sensationalism and heart-rending accounts of violence, which we know are real and we know are true, and try to prevent more harm by looking at the root causes of violence, but also by not conflating human trafficking—which again, I’ve got to say, this bill pretty much talks all to sex trafficking. It doesn’t address labour trafficking, it doesn’t address organ donation trafficking, which are also key issues that we would want to address, especially in a province where we don’t have pay equity, especially in a province where we don’t have a livable wage. Labour trafficking, I think, is an important thing for us to look at.

This article speaks to not only the conflation of human trafficking with sex work and how that makes it really damaging for sex workers who actually want to improve

their conditions of work, because the reality is, all of us go to workplaces—some are violent, some aren't; some are completely toxic, some aren't. But if stigma and shame is what leads the public discourse on sex work, adults who are consenting in any sexual exchange of any type, then we can see how that limits the conversation and prevents people from seeking help to have those workplace conditions be better.

I'll just take a few quotes out of the piece:

"Predictably, most resources spent on ending trafficking have been put into border control measures aimed at uncovering clandestine movements of people and prosecuting smugglers and/or traffickers. The main results of such practices are to make illegalized migrations much more dangerous. Migrants are increasingly being funnelled through more precarious routes leading to an unprecedented number of deaths.

"What 'anti-trafficking' discourse does is strengthen enforcement and policing in our communities and at the borders ... we are seeing increased collusion between immigration and law enforcement; i.e. police are racially profiling"—let's remember that's legal in Ontario, courtesy of the Liberal and Conservative governments—"people who look like immigrants, asking for their immigration documents, and then turning them over to immigration officials."

On the topic of colonial violence, they say, "Ending violence against sex workers is also about ending the violence of colonialism from state systems, such as child welfare, social services and the criminal (in)justice system that many of our communities face."

I also just want to say in these last minutes that, as politicians, while we are all angered—and I mean angered—by any act of violence against anyone in our community, let alone the most vulnerable, being children, for goodness' sakes. Black, Indigenous, purple, pink, white, green, orange—I couldn't care less. At the end of the day, we have to protect our children. I would say we even have to invest more in protecting those kids who are at the periphery. Make no mistake, that's Indigenous and Black children, disabled children, trans and gender-non-conforming kids and even young adults who are also trafficked and/or participating in or are being impacted by gender-based violence.

While all that is true, we need to also pay attention to the depictions of missing and murdered women and girls, for instance, the depictions of Indigenous women, the depictions of racialized women. Even as we're telling stories in this House and speaking up against human trafficking, we have to make sure we're doing that.

Let me see if I can articulate this well. We need to fight and create legislation that addresses human trafficking, but when we tell these stories that papers and magazines will write—and let's not be fooled, it's also for sales; the more sensational, the more sales—as politicians, we have to be responsible. When we get up and tell stories about these heinous crimes, which they are, we're also somehow flirting with racist or sexist stereotypical assumptions of

Indigenous women, for instance, as "naturally" susceptible to violence or Asian women or girls as vulnerable and silent and docile. When we tap into images or narratives that speak to that, we're actually doing more damage than good to those communities. Again, because of the conflation of human trafficking with sex work, many in those groups who have made an autonomous decision to participate in sex transactions are criminalized, and that is not what we should want.

o had to mention this because this blew my mind. This I had never heard of before: 95% of Chinese sex workers surveyed in Toronto and Vancouver stated that law enforcement would not be a strategy that they would use to seek assistance: "SWAN's survey of Chinese sex workers in Toronto and Vancouver demonstrates this lack of trust in law enforcement, with respondents citing fear of arrest as a primary reason for not reporting workplace violence to the police."

1610

Here's a quote from one of the workers: "Cops drive you far away and then they beat us up. They drive us to Orleans at two or three in the morning and they make us walk back. There are no buses. They make you walk back from the woods. The next day, you see the same cops and they don't say anything. If you say something, they arrest you for obstruction."

Apparently, there's a name for this: The practice is called "'starlight tours,' whereby the police pick up individuals, drive them to another location and drop them off to find" their way home. It is disproportionately applied to Indigenous people and has actually been condemned by Amnesty International.

Again, I want to state clearly, with a caveat—we know that we have some excellent police officers who are allies with Black and Indigenous communities, who are fighting the good fight and trying to address gender-based violence and human trafficking the best they can, but we cannot lose sight of the statistics. Sadly, the not-so-good apples, at least from my lived experience and those of many across the province of Ontario, quite frankly, have a different story to tell.

I also want to flag in these last few moments—and actually thank the government for mentioning LGBT folks as part of their remarks this morning. It will be interesting, of course, to see how those supports directly impact the lives of trans persons, for instance, who, as this report states, "experience erasures and silencing in nearly all forms of sex work and trafficking interventions.... Trans and gender-non-conforming individuals experience stigma, violence and a lack of social support, which have been associated with mental health issues such as 'anxiety, depression, suicidality and substance misuse.' This results in unemployment, poverty, high suicide rates, instances of physical and verbal abuse, greater difficulty accessing health care and higher levels of structural violence and social isolation than found in the general population. All of these contribute to trans persons being overrepresented in working conditions considered more 'at risk,' such as street work, engaging in risky sexual behaviour and

generally being ignored or underserved by social safety nets available to” many others in Canada and in our province of Ontario. “Trans persons are erased not just discursively, but very literally from our communities and society.”

They have a quote on the page that says, “Veronica D. was a 24-year-old migrant sex working trans woman from Mexico living in Toronto. In July 2014”—it says here, “she killed herself”; in my language, on the record, I might say “died by suicide”—“after facing unbearable difficulties with her immigration status and housing. Veronica’s death highlights the way that migrant sex workers face a web of barriers in getting the support they need to survive and thrive.”

Overall, Ontario legislation must include a plan, in my opinion. While we are supporting victims of human trafficking, which is very honourable, which is the right thing to do—it’s necessary. While we’re doing that, we must ensure that survivors—and I really would prefer to say survivors of human trafficking—have the structural and social conditions necessary to survive that human trafficking. Getting them out of the hotel on Richmond or whatnot is part of the journey. But I remember talking to a women’s advocate in my riding of St. Paul’s last year who said, “You know, Jill, if I can’t afford market rent, if I’ve gone from the shelter or the tent to supportive housing, and then I’m out of that and Ontario has no real affordable housing”—the government’s deals with developers have certainly made that pretty obvious, right? How is this person supposed to afford market rent?

The point of the matter is, it has to be a whole wraparound way of engaging Ontarians who have been trafficked in every single one of our ridings.

Again, I have to say this: While statistics may highlight Indigenous communities, what I would never want to be a part of, and what I would encourage the government to never be a part of, is essentializing Indigenous communities as somehow inherently violent or somehow inherently more likely to fall into human trafficking. Indigenous communities are not inherently violent. Black communities are not inherently violent. But white supremacy is inherently violent.

If the policies of this government do not take into consideration the equity and inclusive considerations, the amendments—I’m sure we’ll have many—such as the training of community-based folks, folks that the students—I shouldn’t be saying “students”; sorry. The young people—they can be students too, actually—need OSAP repayment, clarity around the role of officers and other child protection personnel with those children of 16, 17 years. If we don’t have that, then we have an incomplete piece of legislation.

Again, I’m thankful for the opportunity to speak to the bill, and I am thankful that this government has taken human trafficking at least seriously enough to invest some dollars towards addressing the issue, but we do need more. You cannot have a human trafficking piece of legislation without having sound legislation that protects labour rights of sex workers, sound legislation that provides housing for

people who are surviving human trafficking, sound legislation that gets people trained in good jobs afterwards.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Just for the record, Speaker: The member opposite talked about carding. The PCs, when we were in opposition, never supported carding at all. It was actually brought forward by the now federal leader of the NDP in a private member’s bill, and it was supported by the Liberals. I know that because I was the critic for community safety and correctional services.

We heard a little bit from the member opposite regarding police when it comes to keeping communities safe from trafficking. Isn’t one of the ways police forces can build trust—is by stepping in to protect victims of all backgrounds?

Does the member agree that our law enforcement partners play an important role when it comes to stopping trafficking, and does the member support them in this goal?

Ms. Jill Andrew: I absolutely believe that the policing institution plays a critical role in supporting community. Whether it’s victims of human trafficking, whether it’s a community in need of crossing the street with heavy groceries, I think our police, especially our community-based police officers, play an incredible role. But I do believe that because of how incredible that role is, we need to ensure that the policing institutions—this isn’t about individual cops, but that the policing institution is well-trained, well-served, well-equipped to handle the circumstances that they’re trained for; not ones that they’re not, such as mental health issues, which are often connected with human trafficking.

1620

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Brampton Centre.

Ms. Sara Singh: I want to thank the member from Toronto—St. Paul’s for highlighting the numerous issues with this bill.

I want to focus just for a moment, because as you said, members across the province are dealing with aspects of human trafficking. I know in Peel region between 2009 and 2016 we actually saw a 50% increase in human trafficking in our region, and it’s because we have the highway corridors going through our community. But what we’ve been hearing is that many immigrants, newcomers and international students are actually disproportionately impacted by trafficking in our community.

So I would ask the member from Toronto—St. Paul’s, can you please help us understand how Bill 251 does or does not actually address some of those systemic challenges facing racialized communities, like people in the Peel region?

Ms. Jill Andrew: The bill does make mention. There is an effort to “support” and to highlight the atrocities of human trafficking that happen to folks from racialized communities. I think that is clear, and I do thank the government for those efforts. However, it’s just not substantive enough.

Again, without a provincial Anti-Racism Directorate, without investments in Peel region, without having schools and hospitals and community centres and libraries and things to really engage youth that are culturally relevant and whatnot, it is very difficult to ascertain whether or not this bill goes far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question, the member for Peterborough-Northumberland South.

Mr. David Piccini: Northumberland-Peterborough South. Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you to the member for St. Paul's for her remarks on this. My question is, you spoke a lot about students and about things that we can do to support those who are trafficked and students. I know it's actually something folks wouldn't often hear—I've been working closely with the member for, I think it's Spadina—Mr. Glover—

Ms. Jill Andrew: Spadina-Fort York.

Mr. David Piccini: Yes, Spadina-Fort York—on how we can assist them. We now have a dedicated point of contact within the ministry to support those who have been trafficked with issues of, out of no fault of their own, loans that have accrued throughout the duration of time.

Can you speak to what more we can do as a government? Because we've been working diligently on that single window to make an easy point of contact. What more would you like to see being done on not only that but also on retraining opportunities going forward?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Well, I would say that that's an excellent question. That is an excellent question. I'm glad that that's on record. I will not speak out of turn, because I do not know all of the work that my colleague from Spadina-Fort York has been doing with you directly with regard to that. But what I would say is that one of the best ways that the government could support the member for Spadina-Fort York and the official opposition, quite frankly, is to support his motion demanding OSAP forgiveness for survivors of human trafficking and for us to be able to see transparently where some of that \$307 million is going, directly back to survivors. Because, as I said in my lead, the government slashed the up to \$25,000 that victims of tragic violence could access. So what are they getting directly with this bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Laura Mae Lindo: Thank you to the member from Toronto-St. Paul's for such an enlightening discussion about this bill.

I want to pick up on one of the points you said near the end that taking a 13-year-old out of a situation of human trafficking is just the starting point. I would love to have you speak a little more about why it's so important to invest in the wraparound supports for survivors that the government has actually been cutting.

In my own area, the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region, for instance, has an anti-human trafficking program, but they also were providing sexual assault prevention support to the universities in our area, which are also programs that have been underfunded historically.

So I'd like us to think about how we can broaden the vision of this particular bill and provide the supports for survivors that they deserve.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre, who also enlightened me about the Chelsea's Series project that's happening, serving the Guelph, Waterloo and Kitchener regions. This is an example of community organizations, community initiatives, coming together to support survivors, to increase dialogue around human trafficking, but to also have actions come out of those dialogues.

I will say this: Personally, as a survivor of violence myself, I know if it weren't for organizations like Tropicana, if it weren't for those after-school projects that got slashed by this government as soon as we got elected—for many students, those after-school programs are a lifeline. We need those kinds of community benefits in order to keep addressing—and wrap around that 13-year-old, who will be right back where we started if they don't have them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: This morning, the Attorney General, in his presentation, spoke about the value of lengthening restraining orders. Through you, Speaker: Does the member from Toronto-St. Paul's agree that it's important to lengthen restraining orders to keep offenders away from those who have gotten out of trafficking?

Ms. Jill Andrew: I think it is absolutely crucial for there to be a system in place that prevents survivors of human trafficking to have any access or fear of being accessed by those who have traumatized and violated them in unspeakable ways.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Beaches-East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I want to thank my colleague from Toronto-St. Paul's for such a brilliant exposition of this bill and all of the issues surrounding it. I wonder if you could talk a little bit more about your vision of what it would mean to start from an equitable, community-based notion of how you build supports and prevention of human trafficking.

Ms. Jill Andrew: Gosh, that is a big question. I think most of us in this House, probably, regardless of political stripe, stay up every night, or often nights, thinking about that question, though on this side of the House our approaches are vastly different.

For me, the beginning of community liberation stems in properly funding schools, properly funding communities, having community centres that are bustling with caring adults who are there to help; having green space where kids can play and be kids, and addressing discrimination and harassment when it arises so that certain kids aren't feeling disproportionately targeted or left out. And we have to address poverty and homelessness. We just have to address the fact that too many Ontarians don't know where they're sleeping tonight or don't have a lock on their door, because there is no door.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 101(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Glover assumes ballot item number 64 and Ms. Fife assumes ballot item number 75.

We're continuing with the debate. I recognize the member for Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: It really is an honour to rise and speak on a topic that we've actually had the chance to speak so much about in this Legislature. While it's a terrible thing that we have to speak about it repeatedly, I think it's important that we continue to raise awareness, and the work on this file is long from over. We have a lot to do. Today specifically, Speaker, I'm rising to speak about second reading of the Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, and about the heinous crime of human trafficking that we all hear about and witness victims and survivors of across this province every day in our constituency offices.

1630

If passed, this bill will enact the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy Act, 2021, and the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act, 2021. It will also bring in amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, and amend the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017. Together, the Combating Human Trafficking Act, 2021, will help our government and Ontarians across the province to respond to and fight human trafficking.

One of the key elements of this bill is setting out the framework, really, for a long-term provincial response to human trafficking, a long-term plan to increase awareness of this issue and a long-term plan to emphasize that all Ontarians have a role to play in combatting human trafficking. This bill also strengthens the ability of children's aid societies and law enforcement to protect exploited children in human trafficking. It further supports more survivors and the people who support them in obtaining restraining orders against traffickers, with specific consideration for Indigenous survivors.

Further, we're increasing the government's ability to collect non-personal data to better understand the impact of the strategy and respond to human trafficking in a stronger way. Finally, we're providing law enforcement with more tools to locate victims and to charge traffickers.

Speaker, I want to thank the Attorney General, the Solicitor General and, of course, the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues, who have worked hard to develop this strategy, the first of its kind, which was actually first announced a year ago. The introduction of this bill simply builds on that and, as I said, Speaker, really sets the framework for a long-term provincial response.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the work before the Progressive Conservatives formed government in 2018, the work that the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock did while she was in opposition. She took advantage of her role of holding the government to account by raising the important issue of sex trafficking.

Specifically, her private member's bill at the time, the Saving the Girl Next Door Act, 2016, was really a trailblazing bill that has paved the way for this work that we're now seeing, this comprehensive strategy that we're talking about now in this Legislature. Frankly, it has not only paved the way for this work in Ontario, but we've seen other provinces respond to her raising the issue. I know I've seen examples of it being mentioned in election platforms, because it's seen as that important to Canadians.

I know many members sitting in this Legislature have contributed in some way to the work we're talking about today, whether that's hosting a round table or through local advocacy and awareness with the partners engaged in this work in their own ridings. I know I remember probably over a year ago now, when the member for Chatham-Kent-Leamington first shared with me the work he had done. If I can call it a seminar, he held a local seminar, to just do what he could, to do his part to raise awareness on sex trafficking in Chatham-Kent-Leamington. I know a survivor was there who told her story, and over 600 people came. That's 600 people who now were able to go home to their families and share that story, to raise awareness in the community, and there's no doubt that that community is better off because of those efforts.

I want to mention one survivor specifically who has really touched me, essentially by her vulnerability to tell her story. We can't overlook that it's not easy for these victims to walk into offices of members of provincial Parliament and share their story. One of those survivors who I've been inspired by in Durham region is Karly Church, and many in this Legislature have gotten to know her. She's very involved in Durham region, working for victim services.

Also, it's incredible how collaborative our victim services in Durham region are with the human trafficking unit of the Durham region police. In fact, it's a model for other regions, how closely they work together.

I remember hearing another member in this Legislature mention that it's not as simple as walking into the hotel and scooping them up out of the hotel room. It's a complicated situation they're in, and it sometimes doesn't happen overnight, on the first visit. It takes building a relationship with people that are in these awful circumstances and building trust, truly, before many of them are comfortable to even take that step to consider whether they want to leave the situation they're in—everyday questions like how their needs are going to be met, their everyday needs on the other side. How are they going to pay for food? Where are they going to live? How are they going to protect themselves when their pimp tries to chase them down? There are a lot more supports that need to be in place and that we need to continue to build on in the years to come to make sure every victim that is rescued has a safe place to go, a safe place to live where they can be truly supported in a holistic way.

I do want to commend our government for taking action and really taking a step, providing leadership to fight this

modern-day slavery. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the fact that—every time I say it, and we've heard it many times in this House, it deeply disturbs me—the average age of recruitment to sex trafficking is 13 years old. I can't imagine any of us that have had family members, children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces at that age—to imagine them being taken advantage of in this way.

We all certainly have a lot of work ahead of us to make sure Ontario is a place, truly, where this kind of perpetration doesn't happen again. But I commend our government for taking a first step, for being an example of action on a file among the many jurisdictions in Canada where this is taking place and for working with our federal counterparts to strengthen our anti-human trafficking strategy at a national level, because there's a lot to do with the federal criminal law powers on this file as well.

The Combating Human Trafficking Act is a combination not only of the legislation we're here talking about today and amending existing legislation, but it also builds on the \$307-million commitment that was announced as part of Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy a year ago. That strategy, Speaker, was precedent-setting in our country. It was a strategy where our government announced that we would be investing \$307 million from 2020 through to 2025. That represented the largest total investment in dedicated anti-human trafficking supports and services in Canada.

Why is it needed? Well, we've heard different stories, and I want to thank all the members that have brought stories from their own communities to this Legislature to raise awareness. Human trafficking is not only a problem, Speaker, but it's a growing problem, and the pandemic has not stopped or slowed down the perpetrators of this crime and their networks. In some ways, the pandemic has only made it easier for these criminals to operate behind computer screens and in secret.

We have the unfortunate distinction in Ontario of being a hotbed of human trafficking, with two thirds of all police-reported cases in Canada happening in our province in plain sight: in our neighbourhoods and along our highways. For example, in my area—I represent the riding of Durham, in Durham region—the 401 corridor provides a convenient and major access point for this crime.

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I had the chance—it was a few years back now, when we were doing a lot more in-person—to do a ride-along with the Durham Regional Police Human Trafficking Unit. It was quite a shocking experience to be confronted face-to-face with this going on right in my own backyard, but where was it? It was in these hotels right along the 401. The traffickers have got to know which hotels have the most lenient policies for them to do their work. Perhaps it's because they don't require a major credit card, so everything can be done in cash. I'm going to speak more about the aspect of this bill that is bringing some accountability around the hotels that are involved with this. Hopefully, they don't realize, but certainly for those that realize and, we can argue, know part of this, there needs to be some accountability.

The member opposite raised a good point about Airbnbs. I did want to touch on that because I think it's very important. She was specifically talking about schedule 1 of the bill, which is the Accommodation Sector Registration of Guests Act. It brings accountability around creating a registry in these hotels that police can then access later when they have a suspicion of crime going on in the hotels. I think we can all agree that this isn't a crime that only takes place in hotels. Actually, the risk of only bringing accountability in certain accommodations is that then the perpetrators quickly find another place for this to take place in. So I want to share with the House—I've confirmed this with the government ministries that are responsible. It will be the Minister of Tourism who's leading the consultation around the regulations under this bill. That's because we want to very clearly define and make sure there aren't specific types of accommodations left out. It's very important that all types of accommodations that are being used by these traffickers are accounted for.

I now want to turn to schedule 2, which is, as I said, setting out the framework for a long-term response by the province. We announced a year ago the first anti-human trafficking strategy for the province, but this schedule is requiring that the anti-human trafficking strategy be reviewed at least every five years. I think that's an important measure of accountability. We've seen this in the past with other strategies, where that kind of accountability forces successive governments to talk about and revisit the issue and measure, "Is it working? Is it not working?"

One of the things I was amazed by when we formed government was the number of ongoing pilots that take place and are never actually evaluated for whether they're working or not working. We can't afford to just announce a strategy and then ignore it for 20 years. We need this accountability for governments to keep revisiting what's working, what's not working, because we certainly know the criminals on the ground are ever-adapting and changing to make their "business model" successful. That's how they see it, Speaker: They see it as a business—and it's a terrible thing.

I want to also highlight what it is that the government needs to consider when they're reviewing this strategy every year. We're requiring each government to consider certain paramount principles. The two I want to highlight are that it needs to be a review that is human rights-based—promoting and protecting human rights are foundational to an effective strategy—and we've spoken about the importance of listening to survivors. It sets out right in the bill, in the legislation, that it must be survivor-centred. It reads, "It is foundational to the strategy's success that people with lived experiences of human trafficking be empowered and that their expertise be recognized."

Speaker, I did want to highlight just specifically what schedule 1—this is the accommodation section of the bill—is requiring hotels to do and whatever other types of accommodation end up getting included in this after the consultation and regulation. But they actually require

hotels to keep a register of guests and record their names, residences and other prescribed information. If we hear in the consultations that other information is important, then there's that ability for the legislation to incorporate it in regulation.

The act also includes, as I said, accommodation providers, such as those that provide short-term rental units—and I know that was what the member opposite raised—because we know they are currently. Like, it's not that that will happen only if we put more accountability around hotels. It's already happening. There are lots of areas of the province where there are fewer hotels and so where's the short-term accommodation? Well, it's in other places and it can include things like Airbnb, so they, too, will be required to maintain a guest registry.

I want to specify—how will this registry be used? What powers are we giving to police? Police officers and First Nations constables will be able to make an application to adjust this for an order requiring the production of a specified portion of the register. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person is currently a victim of human trafficking or is at imminent risk of being trafficked, then the information in the register would assist locating or identifying them.

Now, I think we know that sometimes applying to a court is a bit too slow to keep up with what's going on, so that's why there's also a provision right in the bill where they would be able to make an urgent demand to view this information if there's no reasonable ground to believe the victim of human trafficking will suffer bodily harm or that the information recorded in the register will be destroyed within the time it would take to obtain an order. I think it's important that, while of course it's important there's accountability around these orders, there also needs to be the flexibility for police when urgently someone is at risk of imminent harm.

The act also clarifies how and when police services can access information from hotel guest registries to help deter trafficking and identify and locate victims.

Finally, I want to get a few names out and mention a shout-out to Durham Region Human Trafficking Coalition, Speaker. I just want to thank them and get all their names on the record because I have a minute left that, but that includes the great work of the Durham Regional Police Service human trafficking unit, SafeHope Home, Set Free Durham, Victim Services of Durham Region, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program—the Ministry of Attorney General is a key partner. Bethesda House, Carea Community Health Centre, Catholic Family Services of Durham, the Durham Children's Aid Society, Durham Mental Health Services, the Durham Rape Crisis Centre, DRIVEN, Herizon House, Lakeridge Health, Murray McKinnon Foundation, the Nijikiwendidaa centre, the Region of Durham Social Services, Income and Employment Supports Division, the Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre of Durham, Youth Justice Services and the YWCA Durham.

I want to thank everyone in Durham region who's working hard to fight this every single day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. We have time for questions.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member from Durham for her speech on this piece of legislation around human trafficking.

Listen, schedule 1 is very problematic for us. The fact that Airbnb's are not included in the registry is really actually concerning, and I'll tell you why. Richard Dunwoody is the executive director for Project Recover Inc. They're a not-for-profit who help survivors regain a financial footing. Their analysis, through credit card receipts, showed that traffickers use hotels and services like Airbnb's equally. Then I went to the lobbyist registry, and I found out that Airbnb has three registered lobbyists for the government: Shakir Chambers, who is working for Airbnb with Navigator; Nathan Rotman; and Alex Dagg. They are in-house counsel for Airbnb.

So please tell me that we are going to get Airbnbs included in the registry. Otherwise, you're losing half of the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Back to the member from Durham to respond.

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Ms. Lindsey Park: Yes, I'm happy to clarify that in the regulations all types of accommodation where this is taking place will be clearly defined. We don't want to miss any of them. That's why it's important that it's based on consultation and clearly drafted. Those consultations will be led by our Minister of Tourism. I know I'll be eager and my community will be eager to participate in those consultations, as I'm sure all of the members opposite will be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question.

Ms. Donna Skelly: To the member from Durham: This morning, we heard the Attorney General talk about the value of lengthening restraining orders.

Can you explain to us the importance of lengthening restraining orders to keep offenders away from those who have gotten out of trafficking?

Ms. Lindsey Park: The member from Flamborough—Glanbrook is absolutely right; this is an important piece of the bill. It's schedule 4. We're amending the Prevention of and Remedies for Human Trafficking Act, 2017, by allowing a restraining order to be extended for a period that's longer than three years if the court is satisfied that a longer period is necessary for the protection of any person that the order is intended to protect. There are loads of different circumstances that an individual is in when they're fleeing human trafficking and periods of time when those criminals, the very perpetrators, are still on the streets. So this is intended to provide flexibility to the police and provide adequate protection for victims in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I will agree with the government that there need to be tools given to the police and our

courts in order to deal with that. That's a bit of a no-brainer. But it seems to me that there needs to be a large emphasis put on what supports we give to individuals in order to, first of all, help them make the decision not to go there, if it is a decision—or, in the case that they're being forced, to have the kind of tools we need, when it comes to community supports, to be able to help people get out of that situation.

Ms. Lindsey Park: The member opposite is absolutely right. We've continued—since we formed government, many announcements of increased funding in Durham region to our local victim services to support this work. We've revised the VQRP, the Victim Quick Response Program, to be more responsive to the immediate needs of victims who are fleeing human trafficking. We've also announced this record-setting strategy—\$307 million over five years that will start to make the investments that are needed to fight this crime.

The supports are needed in advance to raise awareness—but also to make sure the right supports are there when any individual makes the decision that they want to get out. We need to have the supports there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Through you, Speaker: I heard the minister and others talk about the importance of providing tailored supports for Indigenous youth, who are more vulnerable to being trafficked. Can the member please provide more details about those supports offered?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I believe it was up in the Peterborough riding, with the member for Peterborough–Kawartha, that we actually announced the revised Victim Quick Response Program, to be more responsive to the immediate needs of victims when they're fleeing human trafficking. Human trafficking looks different in that area because there are so many different Indigenous communities, and what those immediate supports needed are can look different. That's why it's important that we introduced more flexibility to the Victim Quick Response Program. There's more work to do like that across government—to make sure programs are not just money on the table but are actually meeting the needs of victims on the front lines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: We know that often students are some of those who are most exploited and targeted in cases of human trafficking and sex trafficking, and we know that this will often leave these students in really desperate and precarious situations when they're looking for a path out of that kind of exploitation.

Why has the government not included a forgiveness of debt in this bill for students who have been victims of human trafficking, with respect to their education?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I think it's absolutely vital that we continue to support children and raise awareness in our schools and universities of this heinous crime. I know from hearing the stories of the seminars that are done in almost every high school in Durham region that when

victim services goes in and gives the presentation, there's almost always someone that comes forward afterwards and says, “I know someone who's going through this” or that they personally are going through it. Sometimes, it's the young boys who have gotten involved and are becoming perpetrators of something they maybe didn't realize—how terrible it was.

We need to make sure we continue to raise awareness in our schools and provide comprehensive programs not only to students but everyone who's involved, to make sure victims can be successful in recovering and re-defining their lives on the other side of human trafficking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Next question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: The member from Durham rightly spoke about the importance of the legislative requirement for reviewing the strategy on a regular basis. Through you, Speaker, could the member speak about what work might go into that?

Ms. Lindsey Park: This bill, if it should pass, would require that the Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy be revisited at least every five years, and I hope governments revisit it more than once every five years and are looking at it in their annual review of their programs.

Some of the key principles that the minister reviewing the program will be required to consider are that it's human-rights-based, that it's survivor-centred, that we all have a collective responsibility. They must consider intersectionality, cultural responsiveness, prevention, that it's trauma-informed, that it's informed by evidence, its sustainability and its agility. I think those are all very important principles that we've heard time and time again are important to consider—a holistic strategy to fight human trafficking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The next question.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm going to ask a question to the member from Durham. She mentioned that the reason why Airbnb was not included is because that's going to happen under consultations with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. However, interestingly, the ministry told me that the reason why Airbnbs aren't included is simply because of COVID and there wasn't time to consult Airbnb—even though, of course, we know the government and everyone here has been consulting through COVID over Zoom.

So I'm just wondering, when did your response become a different response from the one I got yesterday at 3 p.m.?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I don't want to speculate about discussions other members have had with the ministry. I'm not going to comment on that. But I can say that today, I've confirmed, after hearing you speak, that clarification, that there will be a consultation on the regulations to make sure all types of accommodations that this heinous crime is taking place in are included. It needs to be carefully considered. I don't think it should be rushed, and I'm really glad that this consultation will be taking place.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I recognize the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Speaker, just a point of order: If you seek it, you will find we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Barrie–Innisfil is seeking agreement that we see the clock at 6. Are we agreed? Agreed. The clock is now at 6.

1700

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SICKLE CELL DISEASE AWARENESS DAY AND THALASSEMIA AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA DRÉPANOCYTOSE ET LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION AUX THALASSÉMIES

Ms. Khanjin moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 255, An Act to proclaim Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day / Projet de loi 255, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation à la drépanocytose et la Journée de sensibilisation aux thalassémies.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes to make her presentation. I turn back to the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you, Speaker. I rise to speak to my private member's bill, a bill to proclaim June 19 in each year as Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and, of course, May 8 in each year as Thalassemia Awareness Day. This is a private member's bill that is co-sponsored by my colleague the MPP for Mississauga–Lakeshore. We both recognize, as everyone in this Legislature and across Canada recognizes, that there needs to be more awareness for these two different blood disorders that are so prevalent not only in Canada, but in Ontario. In fact, for example, with sickle cell, there are about 6,000 Canadians who suffer with this particular blood disorder, and of that 6,000, there are 4,000 who live in Ontario who have this blood disorder.

I wouldn't have known as much as I do about these disorders if it wasn't for Lanre. She came to my office. She's the founder of the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario, and she met with me when I first got elected. We met in my constituency office. She's very close by, just in a town next door, and she spoke to me about sickle cell and the need for awareness and what the province could also do to raise awareness, more resources and advocacy on the issue. She went into her story and how she got

involved with the Ontario sickle cell association, and it's very touching, because her brother was affected by sickle cell.

As she mentioned to me—and she provided a quote for me to read in the Legislature—she recognizes in the work that she has been doing with the organization that, “Globally, sickle cell disease ... and thalassemia are the most common genetic blood disorders affecting millions of people. Preventable complications suffered by individuals affected by these disorders include damage to vital organs of the blood and premature death.

“In the words of Sunday Afolabi”—this is her brother, Speaker—“in whose memory the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario ... was established, ‘I look forward to the day when no one will ever have to suffer from the debilitating complications of’” sickle cell disease.

“The province of Ontario recognizing June 19 as World Sickle Cell Awareness Day, and May 8 as International Thalassemia Awareness Day is a step in the right direction as we work towards equitable care for individuals and families affected by sickle cell and thalassemic disorders.”

That's from Lanre. I know she's watching, and many members of the Ontario sickle cell association. I want to thank them for their advocacy. Something we worked on together before this bill was tabled is, of course, we held a day here at Queen's Park, a reception where we had members who were affected by sickle cell—their families or they themselves—who came from all across Ontario to this Legislature to share their stories with them, and they were very touching. It allowed me to reach out to more members who were affected by this.

I speak with her often, but today a lady in my community—her name is Titi; she's a local entrepreneur and a data privacy professional, and she was very touched by sickle cell as well. Her story and a quote I want to read from her is: “Sickle cell anemia is a common genetic disorder that has been personally experienced by loved ones” of hers. The person who she knows who was affected by this is none other than Tosyn Bucknor. Many may know this particular influencer: She is not only publicly known—Tosyn is a friend; she was a friend of hers from a young age. Not only is she known in Nigeria as a famous radio host, but she's also a very well-accomplished lawyer. This is one of Titi's friends from a very young age. They were friends since age nine. It was reported and seen under the story on this individual, Tosyn, that she died at 37 years old from complications of sickle cell. She left a legacy behind, a husband.

Of course, all her radio fans celebrated the great personality she had. She loved life and she really lived it to the full extent. As Titi had told me, her friend was very well known, and she knew her from a young age. She said, “I watched as she lived through the many painful crises, as it's called, of being a sickle cell carrier. She lived her life and lit up the world in everything she chose to do: a lawyer, an on-air personality, but most of all a really good friend—a sister, a daughter. That Canada will choose to recognize June 19 at this point in time—not just as a formal recognition, but to actually raise and increase

awareness around the disease—is a very great step.” She goes on to say, “Thank you in memory of the many Tosyn Bucknors across the world, living here in Canada by birth Canadian or by adoption. We say thank you.” That’s the effect she had, from one of her very good friends.

Before I continue, Speaker, I did want to mention that I am sharing my time with my colleague who is also sponsoring this private member’s bill with me, the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore. I’ll let him continue on the importance of the bill and how we need to stand up for those individuals who are suffering with sickle cell and thalassemia, call out an awareness day and continue advocating on their behalf.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Yes, you did indicate that you were sharing your time. We turn to the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I’m honoured to join my friend the member from Barrie–Innisfil today in presenting Bill 255, the Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day Act. I particularly want to thank Lanre, the president of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada, and Riyad Elbard, president of the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada. It’s because of their dedication and hard work that we’re presenting this bill today.

Speaker, sickle cell disease and thalassemia are two of the most common genetic disorders in the world. It is estimated that up to 2% of the world’s population are healthy carriers of the gene for thalassemia. According to the World Health Organization, up to 5% are healthy carriers of this gene for sickle cell disease, with the percentage as high as 25% in other regions.

In both cases, patients have abnormal red blood cells that cannot provide proper oxygen. This can damage every organ in the body, including the brain, heart and lungs. The consequences can be devastating, from severe chronic pain to organ dysfunction and bacterial infection, and ultimately life span reduction by almost 30 years. To take just one example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that people living with sickle cell disease are at great risk for severe illnesses from COVID-19, and yet treatment, research and awareness of this disorder in general lag far behind other chronic illnesses.

Many Ontarians aren’t aware that they’re living with this gene, since they have no symptoms, but when both parents are carriers, there is a one-in-four chance that children will have this disorder. It is estimated that over 6,000 Canadians are living with sickle cell disease in some form. Since it’s so rare, many front-line health care workers have only very limited experience with it. We know that in some cases, people seeking treatment for pain from this disorder have been dismissed as drug seekers. The other issue is that painkillers don’t address the underlying condition, and in a crisis, any delay in treatment can be life-threatening or even fatal.

As Mr. Elbard says, “Thalassemia and sickle cell anemia are chronic and complex conditions that require multidisciplinary care ... similar to the province-wide care programs established decades ago for cancer.” At this

time, a stem cell transplant from someone without this disease is the only known cure for sickle cell disease. However, this requires a donor with closely matching bone marrow, like a healthy brother or sister. That isn’t always available. Fortunately, promising research is under way into other potential cures.

1710

It is also important to note the devastating impact that this disorder can have within certain communities. Mississauga–Lakeshore is home to many new and vibrant multicultural communities. Many trace their roots to India, Southeast Asia, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, the Middle East and the Mediterranean—all areas where sickle cell disease and thalassemia are particularly common. As Ontario becomes more and more diverse each year, it is important that we do everything we can to raise awareness of this disease that impacts our multicultural community, including new Canadians. At the same time, Ontarians of all races can have sickle cell disease or thalassemia. Thalassemia is common, for example, in the Italians from Sardinia, Sicily and Calabria.

June 19 is recognized as the World Sickle Cell Day by the World Health Organization and the United Nations. May 8 is recognized as thalassemia awareness day by the Thalassemia International Federation and by organizations around the world.

By formally recognizing the day in Ontario, we can help to educate communities about this disorder in schools, in workplaces across the province and help to raise awareness of the importance of early detection, effective treatment and prevention. It is true that this is only a small step, but we believe it will help lead to a more compassionate and better health care system.

I want to take a moment to thank everyone who has written to us to support this bill, from Dr. Robert Klaassen at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario and Dr. Ziad Solh at the London Health Sciences Centre, and especially parents like Mary Alfano from Mississauga.

Mary is the mother of twins with thalassemia. “How many times,” she wrote, “I have spoken to families only to find they were not aware of thalassemia, and the impact it may have on their lives.” This bill “marks the beginning of a new era. I see a brighter future for these kids, I see professionals working together to educate and inform people.”

I look forward to working together with the members to help make life easier for families like Mary’s.

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

Ms. Jill Andrew: While a day of significance on sickle cell and thalassemia is cute, this Conservative government has been in office almost three years. This government bill is performative. It is low-hanging fruit that panders to Black and other racialized community members with sickle cell disease. This shouldn’t be a political game. This is life and death for people with sickle cell disease.

A bill, like that of the member from Barrie–Innisfil, without any explicit standardized hospital universal protocol, any requirements for the Minister of Health to conduct

reviews to ensure health care funding is sufficient for patients with sickle cell disease, which we know it's not, and without full commitment to race-based data collection to ensure health care meets the needs of diverse groups with complex needs, is toothless legislation.

Our NDP bill, the Improving Access to Health Care Act, put forth by myself and the member for Nickel Belt—our health critic, at that—demands all of the above and more.

Sickle cell is a severe illness that impacts red blood cells. It affects the quality of one's life, can destroy families and is often fatal. Excruciating pain attacks can happen without warning. While sickle cell disproportionately impacts Black and South Asian communities, as the government now knows—understand that we've been talking about sickle cell for the last two or so years in this Legislature; they just woke up the other day—it is a disease that affects people of all races.

For far too long, Ontarians living with sickle cell anemia have received varying degrees of care when they rush to the emergency in crisis. Shamefully, many with sickle cell are mistreated when they most need help, from being callously and racially profiled as drug seekers or drug addicts to being subjected to incredibly long wait times while in pain and in many cases having pain medication withheld or dying in the ER because no one at the hospital knows what the heck to do and how to respond to sickle cell disease.

Organizations like the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario have been leaders in the fight, advocating for the universal protocol and all the previous commitments I mentioned at the top of my speech, long before I was ever the MPP for Toronto—St. Paul's, for years.

I met the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario's team—including president Lisa Bailey; Ulysse Guerrier, patient support director; and Alvin Merchant, communications and marketing director—who shared candidly their personal experiences with sickle cell and health care. I've also spoken extensively with doctors, including Dr. Moody.

SCAO and sickle cell communities across Ontario have been calling for a universal hospital protocol ensuring sicklers receive consistent quality of care at every single hospital in Ontario, from all front-line health providers.

A day is cute, but for goodness' sake, where's the meat? Where's the teeth? Where is the actual action in this legislation that's going to save people's lives and not be political simply because an organization's leader happens to live in the member's riding? This is ridiculous.

For 15 years, consecutive Liberal governments had the opportunity to improve health outcomes for people living with sickle cell through the quality-based protocol. But instead, they shelved this, leaving Ontarians with sickle cell twisting in the wind. Even former member of the Liberal Party Mike Colle tabled a bill on sickle cell, and it went nowhere. The Liberals were in power, and it wasn't a priority.

Now this government is in power. There is still no requirement in this government's day of celebration or acknowledgement to enforce the handbook, to enforce a

universal hospital protocol that saves lives. Hospitals are independent operators that receive provincial funding. There must be legislation on the table that calls for the universal protocol. The legislation must be real legislation, not a calendar-day nod. This should be about saving lives. It's about creating legislation that would actually save a minimum of \$43 million in health care spending. This government's bill does none of that.

I thank SCAO. I thank SCAGO. I thank every organization that has been doing this work, and people living with sickle cell. But community, led by SCAO, is demanding universal hospital protocol.

This bill is a birthday. It's a celebration. It's an acknowledgement day in the park. It's not about actual changes that are going to help save Black and brown and other racialized lives. It is toothless. Shame on the government for playing politics with my people's lives.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on behalf of my constituents of Scarborough—Guildwood. I certainly recognize the government members for putting forward this private member's bill to proclaim Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day.

Sickle cell disease and thalassemia are the most common genetic conditions in the world and affect many people in Ontario. Sickle cell and thalassemia diseases are important issues in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

I want to remind all members that in 2017, the House of Commons did pass a national awareness day for sickle cell on June 19. It's something that I certainly celebrate each and every year. This bill was sponsored by Senator Jane Cordy of Nova Scotia and championed by MP Gary Anandasangaree from Scarborough—Rouge Park. It is also recognized worldwide, by the World Sickle Cell Day, by the African Union, by the WHO and the United Nations, so it is appropriate that this Legislature affirms its support for these days.

In Scarborough, the fight against this disease has been spearheaded by the local health team at the Taibu Community Health Centre, under the leadership of executive director Liben Gebremikael. Since 2010, the community-based health organization has committed its focus on, how do we improve these services, particularly to the Black community? Taibu has been working with different groups engaged in the education, the advocacy and the psychosocial supports for individuals with sickle cell disease.

The Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, founded in 1981 by Lillie Johnson, has been working to educate and to raise awareness of sickle cell disease. I had the honour of meeting her at an International Women's Day event at the Jamaican Canadian Association and then again at her 97th birthday celebration, two or three years ago, in fact, when she was being honoured at Taibu Community Health Centre. I have got to tell you, she is a force. She was named to the Order of Ontario in 2006 for lobbying that led to sickle cell disease being included in the standard newborn screening across Canada, and Miss Lillie was Ontario's

first Black director of public health. Her advocacy for sickle cell screening has led to that newborn screening for all babies across Ontario.

1720

While I support Bill 255 to proclaim these days of awareness, it doesn't go far enough. Members opposite, we need to take action now. We need to implement the recommendations set out in the Clinical Handbook for Sickle Cell Disease Vaso-Occlusive Crisis, which was published by the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in 2017. This important document was developed and implemented by the previous Liberal government. We know that thousands of Canadians suffer with these diseases, and thousands more are impacted as friends and family suffer constantly.

We know that in the time of the COVID crisis, this concern has become even more acute, because people are looking at the compounding of these immune issues and the effects of COVID-19. In fact, when you think about mental health and anxiety, that support is just not there. This is Black Mental Health Week, and I want to make sure that we put those issues on record as well, because more support is needed.

I fully support moving ahead with the emergency room protocol that has been developed by Taibu Community Health Centre. It is implemented in Scarborough's three hospitals, but it's something that could be spread across all hospitals in Ontario to reduce the wait times, to reduce the costs and to improve patient care and patient services.

The last thing I want to say is that both of these diseases severely cut off the lives of individuals, sometimes by as much as 30 years. My schoolmate Brian Sinclair, who I met at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, had sickle cell disease. He was a gifted musician. He was a father, a son, a brother, an uncle, and sadly, after battling this disease for many years, he succumbed. His children will not have the benefit of their father. His partner will not have the benefit of her husband.

And so I support this awareness day, but we have to—

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

Mr. Rod Phillips: Thank you to all of my colleagues speaking on this important issue, and particularly thanks to my colleagues from Barrie-Innisfil and Mississauga-Lakeshore for bringing forward this important discussion and this important bill. Discussing sickle cell disease and discussing thalassemia are important ways that we bring awareness, and I do agree that it should not be just about awareness.

As I said in this Legislature last week in reference to Black History Month, my own riding of Ajax has a population of 16% identifying as Black, the largest percentage of the population of any community. Although these diseases do not just affect Black Canadians, that means that disproportionately it affects people in my constituency, and the challenges of it are something that has been shared with me by members of my constituency.

Some of the facts about sickle cell have been raised, and I think it warrants raising some of the broader issues, Mr.

Speaker. We know, because the research has been done by no less than the New England Journal of Medicine and a report I'd recommend from Dr. Power-Hays and Dr. McGann. This is from November 2020. The New England Journal of Medicine, known for dealing pretty explicitly and effectively with medical issues but not so much with social issues, speaks in this report about the role of anti-Black racism and the role of systemic racism in terms of the emphasis on a disease like sickle cell.

They point out that in the US context, although there are one-third fewer Americans who suffer from cystic fibrosis, there has been seven to 11 times more money spent on research than on sickle cell, and they ask why. From my own research, we find that here in Canada 50% more Canadians—and my colleague mentioned 6,000 in total, 4,000 in Ontario—suffer from sickle cell than from cystic fibrosis. Of course, we're concerned about everyone's concerns and diseases. And although we don't have the statistics they have in the US, we might imagine that they could be the same.

In the United States, we know the FDA has approved four drugs related to sickle cell—and I'll get back to those approvals because I think that is also something we have to be concerned about in the context of Canada—but there have been 15 drugs for the treatment of cystic fibrosis. So this raises important questions we have to ask about equity in our health system—important questions that I think the focus of these two days are pivotal in raising those issues.

This isn't the end of a discussion, as my colleague from Scarborough-Guildwood mentioned.

In 2017, the federal government created a day of awareness that aligned with the international days.

I think this Legislature should be proud that it is the first provincial Legislature to bring this forward. I know that the Canadian sickle cell association is very supportive of that and wants to see this conversation taken forward—but it is a conversation that has to be taken forward.

Mr. Speaker, I had the chance to speak with Biba Tinga, the president of the sickle cell association, and I have to give her and her organization credit for my education on this important issue. She talked, in particular, about what could be done and she said—and again, I reference the conversation with her.

The first drug that was approved by the FDA, Endari, was approved in 2017, and there are three further drugs seeking approval by the FDA that are currently in trials there. That same drug has been more than two years in trials with Health Canada and is not yet approved. Again, these are the things that we need to start to focus on, because treatments and support, in addition to what was mentioned by my learned colleagues—drugs to support the lives of the families and individuals affected are something that is within our reach, but we must make sure that Health Canada understands that these are prioritized amongst the many other things they have prioritized.

When you speak to someone like Biba—and I know that all of us speak to people and learn. One of the wonderful things about this role is that we get the opportunity to reach out and have these conversations. I

had to ask her after our conversation, “How is it that you came to be so informed and passionate about this?” It was because of her son Ismaël. They came to Canada when Ismaël was 15, and at that point, the kinds of treatments, like bone marrow transplants, that could work for 10% of patients and those who suffer from it weren’t available because he was past the age they thought was advisable. Ismaël is 32 years old today. She knows that sickle cell anemia reduces the lifespans of those affected by it. On average, for men, it reduces them to 50 years; for women, it reduces them to 60 years. So she is fighting on behalf of her son, who is 32 and more than halfway through his life, unless the kinds of actions that a day of recognition like this and the further actions that need to be taken are taken, and how those years will be spent—whether they’ll be spent suffering as the disease progresses, whether they’ll be spent dealing with some of the indignities that my colleagues talked about in the hospital system, in the medical system, or whether they’ll be spent healthfully and well and whether they can be extended. These are the sorts of questions that she’s fighting for, not just on behalf of her son but on behalf of all of those who suffer from sickle cell anemia.

In saying that, of course, I think the things that we are doing today are important. I know that Biba is watching; she asked for the Web address and she wanted to be here, virtually, to see this debate. I speak to her and I speak to all of those who have advocated for so long about this at the provincial level, at the federal level, and say that I think this Legislature is going to speak as one about the importance of these days—days of recognition are important—but also about the other important steps that we can do, whether it’s the drugs or making sure those drugs reach the formulary and are available treatments in our hospitals.

This needs to be a priority, and I very, very much support this private member’s bill.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, have no problem with a bill that proclaims June 19 of each year as Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and May 8 of each year as Thalassemia Awareness Day, but those are very tiny steps, Speaker, when the road to recovery is long. We’ve heard everybody talk about the chronic pain, the chronic disease of sickle cell disease. We know that we have to do better. We know what we need to do. But all we say is that we’ll have a day to talk about it some more.

1730

I am really proud of our health care system. I come from the health care system, and I know that Ontario has a top-notch health care system. But you know what, Speaker? Racism is alive and well in our health care system. That’s not something I’m proud of, but that’s something that I have to acknowledge. Why am I bringing that forward? Because most of the people who are in crisis with sickle cell disease are Black and racialized, and they are not receiving the care they need when they reach out to our hospitals, when they reach out to our health care system.

We all know that this is a genetic disease. We’ve known about newborn screening since 1972. It took until 1987 to

recommend it, and it took until 2006 before Ontario started to test newborns to see if they carry sickle cell. It took 34 years just to get Ontario to agree to do the newborn screening, which means that for kids who are 14 years of age or younger, we had a pretty good idea that they have sickle cell. But for anybody who is older than 14 years old in Ontario, many of them don’t know that they carry this disease and many of them will find themselves in crisis.

I’d like to talk about the clinical handbook. It has been mentioned a couple of times: the Clinical Handbook for Sickle Cell Disease Vaso-occlusive Crisis, which was published by the Provincial Council for Maternal and Child Health and the Ministry of Health of Ontario. This is a fantastic handbook. It was published December 12, 2017. And what did the Liberal government do with that handbook when they were in power? Nothing. And what has the Conservative government done with this handbook? Absolutely nothing. It has been shelved, although it was made by Ontario, for Ontario.

I wanted to share the story of John River. John River is an award-winning Canadian singer. He has sickle cell. He shared his story with us of going to the hospital, of being deathly sick, of being turned back home, of his mother having to put a buttoned shirt and a clean pair of pants on him while he’s unconscious at home to be brought to the hospital, otherwise they treat her son as a drug-seeking person—when he was that far away from dying, Speaker. It was his colleagues, other singers, who came to his rescue and used their platform on television to say that John River needed help. He was being discriminated against because he’s Black. He’s sick and he needs care.

This has to change, and a day to celebrate is just not enough. In 2021, we need to do more than this.

I, too, would like to thank everybody at Taibu for everything that they’ve done. Liben Gebremikael is fantastic. They’ve pushed this issue; the same with the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario.

We know what to do, Speaker. To celebrate the day—yes, sure. It’s not enough. It’s not enough.

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: I appreciate the opportunity to rise. I want to just, first off, express my gratitude to the member from Barrie–Innisfil for her leadership in raising this. In fact, one of my early memories in the Legislature upon our first few months of being elected was joining a sickle cell awareness event that I think you co-hosted, bringing community leaders, including from my riding, to Queen’s Park to raise awareness for this disease. So I thank you for that and for the opportunity to speak today.

Her bill, the Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and Thalassemia Awareness Day Act, would officially declare June 19 each year as Sickle Cell Disease Awareness Day and May 8 each year as Thalassemia Awareness Day. I think of how vital it is, knowing how debilitating this disease is for so many people. The lack of awareness of this disease: I think it’s very important that we create awareness, starting on this day, recognizing World Sickle Cell Day. June 19 is recognized, in part, as that day. A

number of organizations, including the African Union, the World Health Organization and the United Nations also promote the day, and on November 22, 2017, the Canadian House of Commons passed Bill S-211, which designated June 19 in each and every year as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day. Similarly, May 8 is already recognized as part of World Thalassemia Day. But the point is, notwithstanding those efforts, there is more we can do. I think that is a multi-partisan reality: that we must do more to raise attention for the bill.

Part of it is humanizing the stories behind this disease, not as an abstraction but as a reality for many people, one of whom is an individual who I think many members in the Legislature, including the former Minister of Education and others, will know: Shernett Martin, who is the president of the Vaughan African Canadian Association, now ANCHOR, who herself was diagnosed at SickKids at age five. Shernett, beyond being a mother, an educator, a community leader and a champion for diversity in the country, is also a sickle cell survivor. When she was that young, her parents were told that she would not live past the age of 17.

These are the realities and the hardships that individuals face, the angst that comes with the day-to-day realities of living with this disease. Many people go through their lives advocating for support because there is very little known about the illness. When Shernett was diagnosed, there wasn't enough research, there wasn't testing, there weren't treatment options available to individuals and to her.

Since 2006, hospitals have provided newborn screening in Ontario, but we recognize that part of this, from a health equity perspective, is to make sure that they have access to the supports they deserve. Why I speak about this is because if we look at the lifespan of those individuals who have inherited this blood disorder, it can be reduced by as much as 30 years.

Speaker, it's estimated that about 5% of the world's population are healthy carriers of the genes of these two diseases, and that percentage can rise to as high as 25% in some regions of the world. While our province now offers universal newborn screening for these disorders, there is much more we can do to know what their exact prevalence is within our province. That's why it's important to raise awareness and to educate the province and the people of Ontario.

For this reason, I would like to take a moment to commend incredibly valuable organizations for the work they do. The first is the Sickle Cell Association of Ontario, founded in 1981 by Lillie Johnson, a nurse, a midwife, a teacher who went on to serve as the first Black director of public health in Ontario.

The second I want to note is the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada, which supports and funds thalassemia scientific research. My best friend in my formative years, growing up in Vaughan, was named Robert, who had thalassemia, among other challenges in his life. I remember the early impacts to his development, to his spirit, to his confidence and the angst it brought to his family and

really to the entire community at the time that was rallying behind him, given the life-saving work at SickKids that saved his life. He continues to stand strong today.

It's people like Shernett, like Robert and others who really need this support. They deserve our praise.

I want to just note, when you think about what this bill will help achieve, awareness sometimes can be trivialized. I think there were some undertones of that today. I'd argue that creating awareness of the impact of the disease and the supports that can be provided to these individuals is in itself a strength, recognizing fully that there needs to be a greater continuum of care provided to them.

But for the member from Barrie-Innisfil, as I mentioned to her just yesterday, recognizing in my community the fifth- and seventh-largest visible minority populations in King-Vaughan—the fifth being the Black community, the seventh being the Hispanic community—I am proud of that diversity that makes our country stronger. But I'm also proud that we have a member in this Legislature from Barrie-Innisfil who has taken it upon herself to champion in this Legislature, in this province. That alone will, I think, provide a great level of confidence to those who continue to have the disease that they have support, multi-partisan support, in this Legislature and across Ontario.

1740

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

Mr. Joel Harden: It's a pleasure to contribute to this debate. I also want to acknowledge, as the member from Ajax said, that Biba Tinga is watching this from home. She is the president and executive director of the Sickle Cell Disease Association of Canada. Her son's name is Ismaël—just a heads-up to my friend from Ajax. Change the name—important to him.

This is where I want to begin with the remarks that I have today, Speaker. I want us all to think for a moment, for those of us who have raised children, of what it would feel like to have your child screaming in unbridled pain for good amounts of the day, in perpetuity, as they develop. That will help most folks who are watching this who have never lived with someone in their family with sickle cell disease understand the pain and the anguish that begins simply with doing what you feel you must do as a mom or a dad to a child with sickle cell disease. As much as I've heard testimonies from Biba and others, the great Unita Louis from Ottawa who has spoken out for her son Brent who passed three years ago, I can't even begin to comprehend what it's like to walk a day in the life of someone who has lived that reality.

So we're raising awareness about it. That's fantastic. However, as colleagues have said, as the member from Ajax just said, in the United States we've had four new drugs approved for sickle cell disease. None of those drugs are on the formulary here in Ontario or anywhere in Canada.

I think it's incumbent upon us to make the acknowledgement that we are living in a pandemic right now. When we had needs to develop a vaccine to help keep our country safe, particularly marginalized people safe, immediately the brightest minds in this country and

around the world set to the task, and we have vaccines coming at a fraction of the time we thought they would come. But where have we been for sickle cell? Where have we been?

We have been formulating nice thoughts. People like Unita and Biba have been standing up for their children, raising money on their own, reading medical texts. We have not been there for these families. So let's begin on an awareness note from that acknowledgement. We have functioned from a research perspective in a way that deprioritized Black, brown and racialized lives. Let's just acknowledge that, as my friend from Nickel Belt said, and then let's move forward.

I'm excited to see members of this government step forward, as the member from Ajax just said, with new health care demands upon this province. Lead the country. Insist with our friends at the federal government that the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board not forget what we are missing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): This concludes this portion of the debate, but the member from Barrie–Innisfil has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Again, I want to thank my co-sponsor for the bill, the member from Mississauga–Lakeshore, and all the members who stood up today and made a change in history, because today, thanks to my friend Lanre from the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario—if it wasn't for her, we would not be debating and introducing this today—and all the hard work that the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario has done.

To date, they have been working day in and day out with families all across Ontario, and they work one on one with these families. They've also worked to progress many life-saving drugs in this province, and we had the member from Ajax talk about how important it is to get these drug approvals. This is the first step. The member from Mississauga–Lakeshore did mention it is a small step but we do need to continue, and we recognize that.

But when members from the Sickle Cell Awareness Group of Ontario ask us to introduce an awareness day, we're doing it. This is what they've asked for, and we're working with them. I know Lanre was mentioning to me that she's working with the Ministry of Health on the handbook. In fact, right now, they're working on converting that handbook to make sure that all the doctors

across Ontario have it and it's in an easy format and posters that people can access. So we increased that.

While this may just be a day, it's much more than that to these families, to these lives that are on the line. Many of us in this Legislature talked about those lives today. We cannot look those people in the eye today and say, "We're not going to have a day for you." Yes, I will look Lanre in the eye and commemorate her brother and the fact that she lost him to sickle cell and tell those people, "We recognize your loss. We commemorate that loss and we are moving forward, because there's so much more to do."

We recognize other countries like England, who have made great steps towards recognizing thalassemia and, of course, sickle cell and the improvements that need to be made in health care. We're making strides that way as well, Speaker.

I wanted to continue to say not just that, but obviously the other comments we mentioned today in the Legislature and other groups that have been involved. I want to thank them for their support; of course, also working with Riyad, the president of the Thalassemia Foundation of Canada, and thank all those watching tonight, knowing that we are here, standing united for you, and I hope that we can get support from all the members of this House for the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Ms. Khanjin has moved second reading of Bill 255. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless the member has a preference for another committee. The member from Barrie–Innisfil?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I would like to refer the bill to the committee on regs and private bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Agreed? All right. That's where it's going to go. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee and Regulations and Private Bills.

All matters referring to private members' public business having been completed, the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1746.

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Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	Cambridge	
Karpoché, 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	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC)	Nepean	Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture
Mamakwa, Sol (NDP)	Kiiwetinoong	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martin, Robin (PC)	Eglinton—Lawrence	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	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	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	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	
Phillips, Rod (PC)	Ajax	
Piccini, David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

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

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna Skelly
Teresa J. Armstrong, Toby Barrett
Lorne Coe, Rudy Cuzzetto
Randy Hillier, Jane McKenna
Judith Monteith-Farrell, Michael Parsa
Randy Pettapiece, Donna Skelly
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

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

Chair / Président: Amarjot Sandhu
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeremy Roberts
Ian Arthur, Stan Cho
Catherine Fife, Mitzie Hunter
Logan Kanapathi, Sol Mamakwa
David Piccini, Jeremy Roberts
Amarjot Sandhu, Dave Smith
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Goldie Ghamari
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Mike Schreiner
Jill Andrew, Robert Bailey
Guy Bourgouin, Stephen Crawford
Goldie Ghamari, Chris Glover
Mike Harris, Sheref Sabawy
Amarjot Sandhu, Mike Schreiner
Daisy Wai
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Gilles Bisson
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Aris Babikian
Aris Babikian, Gilles Bisson
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Wayne Gates, Robin Martin
Norman Miller, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Julia Douglas

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Daryl Kramp
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lucille Collard
Will Bouma, Lucille Collard
Parm Gill, Daryl Kramp
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Thushitha Kobikrishna

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Michael Mantha, Jim McDonell
Christina Maria Mitas, Sam Oosterhoff
Kaleed Rasheed, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Taras Natyshak
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Jessica Bell, Stephen Blais
Stephen Crawford, Rudy Cuzzetto
France Gélinas, Christine Hogarth
Daryl Kramp, Taras Natyshak
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

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

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

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Bhutla Karpoche
Deepak Anand, Aris Babikian
Jeff Burch, Amy Fee
Michael Gravelle, Joel Harden
Mike Harris, Christine Hogarth
Belinda C. Karahalios, Bhutla Karpoche
Natalia Kusendova
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tanzima Khan

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

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