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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 20 February 2020 / Jeudi 20 février 2020

Notice of reasoned amendment

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott) 7017

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020, Bill 156, Mr. Hardeman / Loi de 2020 sur la protection contre l'entrée sans autorisation et sur la protection de la salubrité des aliments, projet de loi 156, M. Hardeman

M. Guy Bourgouin 7017
Mrs. Nina Tangri 7019
Mr. John Vanthof 7020
Ms. Christine Hogarth 7020
Mr. John Vanthof 7020
Mr. Dave Smith 7020
Mr. John Vanthof 7021
Mr. Jim McDonell 7021
Mr. John Vanthof 7024
Ms. Andrea Khanjin 7024
Mr. John Vanthof 7024
Mr. Logan Kanapathi 7024
Mr. John Vanthof 7025
Mr. Aris Babikian 7025
Mr. Jeff Burch 7025
Second reading debate deemed adjourned 7026

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS

Employment services

Miss Monique Taylor 7026

Albert Kim

Mr. Stan Cho 7027

Road safety

Mr. John Vanthof 7027

Kids with Incarcerated Parents

Ms. Christine Hogarth 7027

Correctional facilities

Mr. Kevin Yarde 7027

Hockey 4 Youth

Mr. John Fraser 7028

Black History Month

Mr. Stephen Crawford 7028

Municipal development

Ms. Jill Andrew 7028

GO Transit

Ms. Lindsey Park 7029

Infrastructure funding

Mr. Toby Barrett 7029

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES ET VISITEURS

Mr. Jamie West 7029
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff 7029
Ms. Suze Morrison 7029
Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto 7029
Mr. Faisal Hassan 7029
Mr. Stan Cho 7029
Ms. Marit Stiles 7029
Hon. Victor Fedeli 7029
Miss Monique Taylor 7029
Ms. Lindsey Park 7030
Ms. Peggy Sattler 7030
Ms. Natalia Kusendova 7030
Ms. Jessica Bell 7030
Mlle Amanda Simard 7030
Mr. Vincent Ke 7030
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens 7030
Mr. Jeremy Roberts 7030
Ms. Jill Andrew 7030

QUESTION PERIOD / PÉRIODE DE QUESTIONS

Education funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath 7030
Hon. Doug Ford 7030

Education funding

Ms. Andrea Horwath 7031
Hon. Stephen Lecce 7031

Employment standards

Mr. Taras Natyshak 7032
Hon. Paul Calandra 7032
Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy 7032

Public transit / Transports en commun

Mr. Stan Cho 7032
Hon. Caroline Mulroney 7032

Licence plates

Ms. Jennifer K. French 7033
Hon. Lisa M. Thompson 7033

Education funding	
Mr. John Fraser	7034
Hon. Stephen Lecce	7034
Hon. Doug Ford	7034
Infrastructure funding	
Mr. Robert Bailey	7034
Hon. Laurie Scott	7035
Education funding	
Mr. Kevin Yarde	7035
Hon. Stephen Lecce	7035
Equal opportunity	
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	7036
Hon. Jill Dunlop	7036
Hon. Monte McNaughton	7036
Public transit	
Mr. Stephen Crawford.....	7036
Hon. Kinga Surma.....	7037
Tenant protection	
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens	7037
Hon. Doug Downey	7037
Human trafficking	
Mr. Daryl Kramp.....	7038
Hon. Sylvia Jones.....	7038
Education funding	
Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell	7038
Hon. Stephen Lecce	7038
Infrastructure funding	
Mr. Robert Bailey	7039
Hon. Laurie Scott	7039
Education funding	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	7040
Hon. Stephen Lecce	7040
Birth of member's nephew	
Mr. Roman Baber.....	7040

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEUSES
ET VISITEURS**

Mr. Tom Rakocevic	7040
Mr. Randy Hillier	7040
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	7041
Mr. Vincent Ke	7041
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	7041
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	7041

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DE COMITÉS**

Standing Committee on General Government	
Ms. Goldie Ghamari.....	7041
Report adopted	7041

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Human Trafficking Awareness Day / Journée de sensibilisation à la traite des personnes	
Hon. Jill Dunlop	7041
Hon. Sylvia Jones	7042
Ms. Jill Andrew	7042
Miss Monique Taylor	7043
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	7043
Mr. Mike Schreiner	7043

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Hon. Paul Calandra	7044
Motion agreed to	7044
Committee sittings	
Hon. Paul Calandra	7044
Motion agreed to	7044

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Automobile insurance	
Mr. Faisal Hassan.....	7044
Food safety	
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	7044
Education funding	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	7045
Food safety	
Mr. Parm Gill	7045
Affordable housing	
Ms. Peggy Sattler	7045
Fish and wildlife management	
Mr. Aris Babikian.....	7046
Veterans memorial	
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	7046
Taxation	
Ms. Christine Hogarth	7046
Long-term care	
Ms. Rima Berns-McGown	7046
Access to justice	
Mr. Dave Smith	7046

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT
DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS**

Public Accountability and Lobbyist Transparency Act, 2020, Bill 162, Mr. Hillier / Loi de 2020 sur la responsabilité envers le public et la transparence des lobbyistes, projet de loi 162, M. Hillier	
Mr. Randy Hillier	7047
Hon. Paul Calandra	7048

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	7049
Mr. Mike Schreiner.....	7050
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	7050
Mr. Randy Hillier.....	7051

**Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario)
Act, 2020, Bill 163, Mr. Ke / Loi de 2020 sur la
Journée des terroirs du Canada en Ontario, projet
de loi 163, M. Ke**

Mr. Vincent Ke.....	7051
Ms. Suze Morrison.....	7052
Hon. Lisa MacLeod.....	7053
Ms. Marit Stiles.....	7054
Mr. John Fraser.....	7054
Mr. Toby Barrett.....	7055
Ms. Doly Begum.....	7055
Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	7056
Mr. Vincent Ke.....	7056

**Public Accountability and Lobbyist Transparency
Act, 2020, Bill 162, Mr. Hillier / Loi de 2020 sur la
responsabilité envers le public et la transparence
des lobbyistes, projet de loi 162, M. Hillier**

Second reading agreed to.....	7057
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**Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario)
Act, 2020, Bill 163, Mr. Ke / Loi de 2020 sur la
Journée des terroirs du Canada en Ontario, projet
de loi 163, M. Ke**

Second reading agreed to.....	7057
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ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety
Act, 2020, Bill 156, Mr. Hardeman / Loi de 2020
sur la protection contre l'entrée sans autorisation
et sur la protection de la salubrité des aliments,
projet de loi 156, M. Hardeman**

Ms. Lindsey Park.....	7057
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	7059
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7060
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	7060
Ms. Christine Hogarth.....	7060
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	7061
Mrs. Nina Tangri.....	7061
Ms. Peggy Sattler.....	7061
Mr. Mike Harris.....	7062
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7062
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7062
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7063

Mr. Mike Harris.....	7063
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7063
Ms. Andrea Khanjin.....	7063
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7065
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7065
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7065
Mr. Logan Kanapathi.....	7065
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7065
Hon. Bill Walker.....	7066
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7066
Mr. Mike Harris.....	7066
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	7068
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7068
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	7068
Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	7068
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	7069
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	7069
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7069
Hon. Bill Walker.....	7069
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7071
Mr. Lorne Coe.....	7071
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7072
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7072
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7072
Mr. Deepak Anand.....	7073
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	7073
Mr. Aris Babikian.....	7074
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7074
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7075
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7075
Hon. Bill Walker.....	7075
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7075
Mr. Dave Smith.....	7075
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7077
Hon. Laurie Scott.....	7077
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7077
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria.....	7078
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7078
Hon. Laurie Scott.....	7078
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7080
Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria.....	7080
Mr. John Vanthof.....	7080
Mr. Logan Kanapathi.....	7081
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	7081
Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	7081
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	7083

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 February 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 février 2020

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers/Prières.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Before asking for orders of the day, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 74(c), the member for Timmins has filed with the Clerk a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts. The order for second reading of Bill 171 may therefore not be called today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FROM TRESPASS
AND PROTECTING FOOD SAFETY
ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA PROTECTION
CONTRE L'ENTRÉE SANS AUTORISATION
ET SUR LA PROTECTION
DE LA SALUBRITÉ DES ALIMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2020, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply /
Projet de loi 156, Loi visant à protéger les fermes et les animaux d'élevage en Ontario contre les entrées sans autorisation et d'autres actes susceptibles de les déranger et à prévenir la contamination de l'approvisionnement alimentaire en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Bon matin, monsieur le Président. Ça fait plaisir de me lever pour parler du projet de loi 156. Ce projet de loi met le monde contre le monde. C'est ça qui nous concerne.

For one, we all need to know that the food our families and friends and neighbours put on their table is safe to eat. But on the other hand, people have a constitutional right to express their views, and no government should ever, ever try to take that right away. Again, yes, we all want to ensure that the food that we feed our families is safe and safely grown.

Il y a quelques années, mon beau-frère du Québec était propriétaire d'une ferme porcine au Québec. Comme vous le savez, moi, je viens d'une communauté du Nord. Je peux vous dire que je n'ai jamais été élevé sur une ferme. Quand j'ai eu l'opportunité d'aller voir mon beau-frère—puis aussi, il faut comprendre qu'il élevait 1 600 porcs. C'est une somme assez grande. Puis moi qui étais vert dans ça, qui ne connaissais pas grand-chose, je prenais toutes les opportunités possibles pour essayer de comprendre c'était quoi être un éleveur de porc. À mesure qu'il m'expliquait comment ça fonctionnait, puis que j'apprenais—il m'expliquait, grosso modo, les mesures de sécurité qu'on doit suivre pour assurer la santé des porcs, parce que, vous le savez, chaque animal est sensible à certaines maladies ou à certaines situations qui peuvent arriver. Il m'expliquait que si j'arrêtais dans une autre ferme, j'aurais été obligé de faire certain que j'étais décontaminé ou j'aurais pu emmener des maladies dans sa ferme porcine, ce qui veut dire qu'il y a de gros impacts économiques pour lui.

Il m'expliquait qu'un vétérinaire qui vient—parce que les vétérinaires, vous le savez, se promènent d'une ferme à l'autre, ou d'une ferme porcine, s'il y avait plusieurs fermes porcines dans son rang, comme on dit en bon français, de sa communauté. Puis il me disait que les vétérinaires, « Guy, avant de rentrer, ils sont obligés de se décontaminer pour faire certain que les microbes d'une ferme »—on réalise tous qu'il y a certaines maladies dans des fermes porcines, mais ces fermes porcines-là sont immunisées à ça. Mais de ne pas transporter ça, même les vétérinaires sont obligés de faire certain avant de rentrer dans une ferme porcine, dans ce cas ici, ou n'importe quelle ferme, qu'ils se décontaminent pour ne pas emmener une autre maladie. Puis ils sont aussi sujets à, j'apprenais aussi—bien, il y a des fois que c'est viral, que c'est dans les airs, aussi; des fois, ils n'ont pas de contrôle là-dessus. Mais les animaux sont très sujets aux maladies.

Ça, ç'a été une éducation pour moi. Les microbes, les maladies : je trouvais que c'était fascinant. Puis que ce n'est pas juste une question d'élever des animaux, c'est une question que ces fermiers-là sont obligés de prendre en considération toutes sortes de maladies et toutes sortes de données qui sont envoyées pour garder les fermes saines ou pour faire certain que les animaux sont sains, parce que ça peut dire avoir des animaux que tu ne peux pas vendre. Pour eux autres, c'est un désastre économique qui les affecte gravement. Plus ou moins, j'essaye de dire qu'il faut faire attention quand tu vas à une porcherie.

C'est pour ça, même, quand on voyage, ils nous demandent : « Avez-vous été dans des fermes? »

Pourquoi? Si tu viens d'un autre pays et vous avez été autour d'une autre ferme, pour ne pas emmener les maladies qui existent dans d'autres pays, puis qu'on n'emmène pas ça dans notre pays, qui peut affecter toute une économie dans notre province.

J'ai écouté aussi mon collègue de Timiskaming—Cochrane, qui disait—il me contait, lui, que même pour les poulets, c'est la même situation. S'il y a quelqu'un qui rentre, puis qui s'ingère sans permission, les poulets ont tendance à aller tous se cacher dans un coin, puis ça cause une suffocation, puis ils perdent beaucoup de poulets. Ce sont des situations de même qu'il faut arrêter.

Je pense que c'est une situation qu'il faut prendre en considération pour protéger les fermiers. Je pense que les fermiers ont des droits. Je suis le premier à reconnaître ça. Il faut qu'on protège les fermiers dans des situations où il y a du monde qui s'ingère dans leur milieu de travail—pour eux autres, c'est un milieu de travail—sans autorisation, ou bien donc sont là pour pas les bonnes raisons, ou qui viennent et se présentent pour travailler sur une ferme, mais qui ont un agenda différent. Je pense que ces fermiers-là, ils ont des droits. Puis il faut comprendre la situation qui met le produit en danger.

This bill just leaves way too many questions unanswered and multiple issues are vaguely worded. For example, the bill defines its purpose as: to “eliminate or reduce the unique risks that are created when individuals trespass on those properties.” Nothing to add there.

Comme je disais, comme je mentionnais à M^{me} la Présidente, c'est une propriété privée. Il faut que ça soit traité comme ça. On n'acceptera pas personne qui viendrait chez nous ou dans notre domicile sans être accueilli ou sans raison d'être là. Je pense qu'il faut prendre ça en considération quand ça vient à la question des fermiers ou des personnes qui « trespass », comme on dit en anglais.

0910

But then the bill notes that no person may enter an animal protection zone, or interfere or interact with animals or carry out a prescribed activity within the zone, without the prior and explicit consent of the owner or occupier. “Interact” is not defined anywhere in the bill. It includes that no person may interfere with a transport truck carrying animals, or interfere or interact with the animals, without the prior and explicit consent of the driver.

Le projet de loi interdit l'interaction avec des animaux, mais on ne dit rien au sujet de ce qu'on veut dire par « interaction ». Il est important de définir « interaction ». Je crois que c'est important. Est-ce que ça veut dire, par exemple, que si j'arrête sur l'autoroute, moi, puis je décide que j'arrête avec ma famille puis qu'il y a des vaches ou des animaux dans un pâturage, que je ne peux pas arrêter puis faire l'interaction avec ça? Il n'y a pas de définition.

Même si un journaliste veut prendre des photos sur le bord du chemin, il n'aurait pas le droit, alors, de s'exprimer librement? Je pense que c'est pour ça que c'est important de définir « interaction ». C'est quoi que ça veut dire, « interaction »? Parce que ça peut mettre des situations assez précaires qui peuvent venir de ça.

What's most troublesome and what causes true concern about this bill is the citizen's arrest provision. Briefly, the bill would allow an owner or occupier or another authorized person to arrest the trespasser using reasonable force, and it is an offence to interfere with the arrest. Fair enough. The bill also acknowledges that the police must be called promptly after the arrest.

Let me say two things about the citizen's arrest provision, probablement trois. First, I simply cannot see how an owner can reasonably assess a situation as “interaction” and then promptly utilize reasonable force. Even worse, it leaves it up to an individual owner to determine what is reasonable and what isn't.

You may not have read it in a while, but the German sociologist Max Weber coined what's now the accepted definition of the modern state. In his *Politics as a Vocation* lecture in 1918, Weber observed that the modern state is a “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” In other words, the state alone has the right to use physical force and can legitimately authorize its use. What this bill does, contrary to what Max Weber rightly notes, is to allow the right of violence and police to individual citizens.

This bill, also, I believe, did not have consultation with First Nations. When I consulted with my First Nations community, a chief in one of the northern communities—le chef me disait, « Guy, ça, est-ce que ça veut dire que—nous, comme Premières Nations, on a nos territoires ancestraux. Est-ce que ça veut dire qu'on va pouvoir faire des “citizen's arrests”, nous aussi? » Comme c'est, là, dans plusieurs territoires ancestraux ou dans le Nord, il y a des prospecteurs qui vont prospecter sans consultation avec les Premières Nations. Ils voient des prospecteurs—le monde des communautés du Nord, les chasseurs, les Premières Nations qui sont dans les territoires—qui n'ont jamais consulté avec les Premières Nations. Ils sont sur le terrain et ils voient même des sites où il y a eu des terrains d'atterrissage pour les avions. Est-ce que ça veut dire qu'ils vont pouvoir—aussi, on va ouvrir, si je peux utiliser le terme, le « floodgate ». On va ouvrir la porte et eux aussi vont pouvoir faire des « citizen's arrests »? Que tout le monde qui va sur le territoire sans permission vont avoir le droit de faire la même chose? Pourquoi pas? Si on donne ce droit-là aux fermiers, je vois mal comment on peut dire non aux Premières Nations qui sont sur leurs territoires ancestraux, puis qu'on a des individus qui vont sans permission ou sans consultation avec les Premières Nations et font ce qu'ils veulent sur leurs territoires ancestraux. Je pense qu'on ne peut pas avoir deux poids, deux mesures quand on fait un projet de loi comme celui-ci. C'est pour ça qu'on est concerné. C'est pour ça qu'on dit : « faisons la bonne chose », parce qu'une fois que le projet de loi est mis en force, il est dur de reculer, puis il est dur de dire non à quelqu'un d'autre, madame la Présidente. On ne peut pas avoir deux poids, deux mesures dans une situation comme ça.

In other words, my second concern about the citizen's arrest is that access to police services is taken for granted. I come from a region where you can drive a long time

without seeing another person. We have to realize that. There are areas in my riding where there is simply no local police force. Imagine yourself in an isolated, northern rural farm and having to (1) determine whether an individual interacts with an animal of your ownership; (2) enforce reasonable violence to detain the individual or multiple individuals; and (3) call and wait for local authorities to come to your aid, if any enforcement authorities are available in your vicinity.

Dans ma région, là, des fois on est obligé d'attendre. On fait des appels—que ça soit le 911, que ça soit d'autre chose—et on est obligé d'attendre plus longtemps qu'ailleurs. Le 911, je peux vous dire—plusieurs fois on l'a dit dans la Chambre, ici, que des fois on n'a même pas des services francophones. Qu'est-ce qu'on fait avec quelqu'un qui ne parle pas en français si un francophone appelle le 911—ou qu'un fermier appelle le 911—et dit « J'ai besoin de quelque chose »? Parce que c'est une désignation francophone, puis on n'a même pas ce service-là. Qu'est-ce qu'on fait, là? Ça veut dire quoi?

Ou que des policiers—veut, veut pas, la police provinciale a un grand territoire. C'est vaste, le territoire de Mushkegowuk—Baie James. C'est grand. La police est obligée de couvrir beaucoup de terrain. Combien ça va prendre de temps avant que la situation arrive? Puis si la situation dégénère? Ça peut dégénérer très vite.

Je viens d'une région où, vous savez, il y a un gros monument. Ça s'appelle Reesor Siding. Vous allez voir, je vais essayer d'attacher ça avec ce dont je parle. C'est un conflit syndical qui a eu lieu dans ma région en 1963 où une coopérative—on parle qu'il y a eu trois morts et huit blessés. Ce qui est arrivé, ç'a été reconnu comme un des plus grands conflits syndicaux du Canada. Trois morts, huit blessés pour des cordes de bois. Ce qui est arrivé c'est qu'il y avait la coopérative, qui était les fermiers qui travaillaient dans l'industrie forestière pour subvenir à leurs besoins, puis il y avait des syndiqués, qui étaient des opérateurs forestiers. Mais si on prend la logique de ce point-là, mettons des fermiers—la coopérative—le bois devient des animaux, que ce soit des vaches ou que ce soit des poules. Puis tu as ceux qui protègent les animaux. Puis ça dégénère comme ça a dégénéré là. Personne ne s'attendait qu'il était pour avoir trois morts et huit blessés. Il n'y a personne qui s'en allait là pour dire qu'on va tirer du monde puis il va avoir une dégénération au point de ce que la communauté vit encore. C'est tellement un sujet qui est sensible dans ma région. Quand vous réalisez qu'il y a des cousins qui ont tiré sur des cousins, qu'il y a des personnes qui ont été obligées de vivre—des familles qui ont été déchirées. C'est juste qu'il ne faut pas mettre le monde dans une situation où ça peut dégénérer. Le point que j'essaye d'amener c'est de ne pas mettre le monde dans une situation où ça peut dégénérer et où il est trop tard pour faire de quoi. C'est pour ça que c'est important de traiter ce qu'on vous propose dans ce projet de loi et de considérer les recommandations qu'on vous fait, pour que ça ne dégénère pas au point que ça peut dégénérer.

0920

Je ne pense pas qu'il y a un fermier, et qu'il y a un activiste qui va dans quelque chose, que c'est ça son

intention. Mais on ne sait pas comment ça peut arriver. Puis, ça dégénère. Ça prend une étincelle dans des situations de conflit—ce qui est dangereux, très dangereux. C'est pour ça qu'on demande au gouvernement de reconsidérer les propositions qu'on vous fait, parce que dans ma région, je peux vous dire, c'est une situation qu'on a vécue et qu'il ne faut jamais répéter. Que ce soit pour une corde de bois, en passant, ou que ce soit une situation d'animaux, il ne faut pas se mettre dans des situations. C'est pour ça que la police est importante. Puis, prenant en considération les régions éloignées comme la nôtre, la personne qui a fait le « citizen's arrest » est mise dans une situation de maintenir ça pour une période d'une assez longue durée. C'est sujet à dégénérer assez vite.

The citizen's arrest provisions give immunity to individuals to determine what is right and what is wrong about other people's acts. It leaves it up to the good faith of the owner to determine what "reasonable violence" is, and takes it for granted that police forces are available in all corners of this good province.

Again, that's what I was trying to say. In our region the police officers do a great job, but unfortunately they have a big territory to cover. It's an hour between Hearst and Kapuskasing. We don't realize how vast my riding is or how far we have to travel. Three hours is normal driving for us, but for you it makes no sense. When we go for hockey tournaments, it's six hours, eight hours, nine hours. Families do that on a regular basis. For us, it's not far. It gives you some perspective of how vast the distance is in our riding.

Je vais finir en vous disant que nous voulons tous assurer la qualité de nos aliments. Nous voulons tous assurer le bien-être de nos fermiers et de nos transporteurs. Si vous voulez encourager l'industrie fermière, il faut alors investir dans le domaine. Ça fait trop longtemps que les revenus dans l'industrie sont en déclin, depuis des années, à cause des coûts de la machinerie et des intérêts. Si le gouvernement veut faire la bonne chose pour l'industrie, on devrait investir dans les fermes et donner aux propriétaires de fermes les moyens financiers pour qu'ils puissent avoir une meilleure vie sur leur ferme et aussi se protéger adéquatement. Si on veut faire cela, je crois que c'est là qu'il faut viser.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I'd like to thank the member opposite for his comments.

It's clear from Bill 156, Security from Trespass and the Protecting Food Safety Act, under the Trespass to Property Act, that there was never, ever a time that it was legal to trespass onto a farmer's property. I'd just like to get your comments on whether you believe that such laws shouldn't be enforced. It's very important to allow farmers, or whoever, to not allow people to trespass onto their properties. I'd just like to have your comments on that.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je remercie la collègue pour sa question. Écoute, je crois que la question du projet de loi—c'est important de réaliser que le gouvernement doit aussi

prendre en considération les Premières Nations. Quand j'ai parlé des Premières Nations, que si on fait ce projet de loi et on dit que c'est bon seulement pour les fermiers et non pour les Premières Nations, je pense qu'on ouvre la mauvaise canne de vers. Je ne pense pas que c'est la direction qu'on veut. Je pense qu'il y a des projets de lois qui existent comme c'est là. On doit vivre avec ça. Mais de là, d'aller dire qu'on met une personne contre l'autre, qu'on donne ce pouvoir—je pense que ça devrait rester aux autorités.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member from Mushkegowuk—James Bay. What he did very well was describe the difference between northern Ontario and southern Ontario. Some will think, “Well, there’s no agriculture in northern Ontario.” Actually, northern Ontario is the area where agriculture is growing the fastest. Also, northern Ontario is actually where we work mostly with First Nations, and he explained that as well.

I would like the member to just elaborate a bit on how serious an issue it is that the government did not consult with the First Nations in our area on that bill.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci à mon collègue de Timiskaming—Cochrane. Sur la question des Premières Nations, je peux vous dire que c'est très important. Je mets l'emphasis sur « très important ». J'ai fait le commentaire à la collègue qui m'a posé la première question. Il faut prendre le temps de consulter, parce qu'ils ont des droits ancestraux, puis il faut les respecter. Trop souvent, on a brimé les droits ancestraux des Premières Nations.

Quand j'ai dit que le chef, quand j'ai consulté avec les Premières Nations, il m'a dit : « Guy, est-ce que ça veut dire qu'on va avoir le droit dorénavant de faire, nous aussi, des “citizens' arrests” sur tous nos territoires ancestraux? » Parce que je peux vous dire, ils vont en faire, parce qu'il n'y a rien qui se fait, puis leurs droits ancestraux sont brimés. Il n'y a aucune consultation qui se fait pour des mineurs qui vont sur leurs territoires. Je pense que la consultation est primaire quand ça vient aux projets de loi qui affectent les droits ancestraux des Premières Nations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: We talked about the PAWS Act just before the break. If anyone out there suspects abuse is taking place on a farm, they have every opportunity to call the new PAWS line, 1-833-9-ANIMAL. It's not for you to go on someone's property. If you suspect abuse, that number is there to be called. I really do encourage people to call that line.

But does the member opposite still believe that unacceptable trespassing—should you still be able to access someone's property when you have this line to call?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Si vous avez entendu mon allocution, je ne pense pas que j'ai dit que c'est acceptable que quelqu'un passe ou « trespass » sur un terrain privé. Ce n'est pas ça qu'on dit, sûrement pas. Mais j'essayais de vous faire comprendre, puis avec les recommandations

qu'on fait de notre parti, qu'il y a bien des fois que dans les—puis, en passant, il y a bien des places où on n'a pas de service de cellulaire. On a bien des places où il y a encore des « party lines » dans notre région. On est d'un comté où l'accès à la police—ce n'est pas accessible. Les policiers n'ont pas le temps de s'y rendre dans un temps raisonnable. C'est pour ça qu'on dit de prendre des considérations que notre parti vous fait, puis d'essayer de comprendre la situation économique du Nord et aussi la grandeur de la région.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: Regarding the PAWS Act, that was passed unanimously, and we are fully in favour. What the member is describing about northern Ontario is—I hope someone in the next round can answer this for the government. If someone calls the PAWS line for an issue in Hallebourg, how long is it going to take before someone gets there? How long does it take, on average, for the police to get, right now, to an incident involving human interaction? Could the member elaborate on that, on the distances involved in northern Ontario?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Merci encore pour la question du membre de Timiskaming—Cochrane. Encore, on semble oublier, puis je comprends que les personnes du Sud ne comprennent pas ou ça n'a jamais été exposé—ou il y en a qui ne sont pas venues dans notre région. Mais la distance est tellement grande, puis le territoire est tellement grand que les personnes—les personnes officielles ou les policiers ou les personnes qui sont là pour nous aider, que ce soit un ambulancier ou que ce soit la police, dans ce cas-ci, ils ont tellement un grand territoire à couvrir qu'ils ne sont pas capables de réagir aussi vite que dans le Sud. Il faut réaliser qu'ils ont tellement un grand territoire, puis il faut prendre en considération nos routes—l'hiver, les routes hivernales. On en a parlé. Vous avez voté contre, mais on en a parlé.

0930

Ça nous met dans une situation—je vais vous donner un exemple. Des fois, les ambulanciers ne sont même pas capables de partir à cause de l'entretien des routes. Même chose pour les policiers. Ça nous met dans des situations précaires.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: This bill doesn't give farmers any more rights than someone else. Section 25 of the Canadian Criminal Code gives everyone the ability to make a citizen's arrest. You have suggested in your speech that farmers shouldn't be able to do this. Farmers are protecting their livestock. Farmers are protecting their livelihoods. Are you suggesting that a farmer in northern Ontario should have less rights and less abilities than someone who lives in southern Ontario who may not live on a farm—because everyone in Canada, as a private person, has the ability under section 25 of the Canadian Criminal Code.

M. Guy Bourgouin: Je pense que mon collègue a manqué mon point quand j'ai essayé d'expliquer la

situation. J'essayais de vous faire comprendre que les fermiers ont des droits. Je suis le premier à reconnaître qu'ils ont des droits. J'ai même mentionné dans mon allocution que c'est inacceptable parce qu'il y a du monde qui vont « trespasser » sur leur propriété. J'essayais de vous faire comprendre, aussi, que les Premières Nations ont des droits aussi, puis ils demandent la même chose. Si on est pour ouvrir cette porte-là, les Premières Nations devraient avoir le même droit de faire un « citizen's arrest », comme vous le mentionnez, le même droit que n'importe qui, de faire ça sur leurs territoires ancestraux.

Quand il y a du monde qui va sur leurs terrains sans permission, ce n'est pas différent de ce que tu dis s'il y a quelqu'un qui va sur une terre ou sur une ferme. Pas de différence. Prenez en considération ce qu'on essaye de vous dire puis les recommandations que notre parti vous fait pour essayer de trouver un terrain d'entente sur ce projet de loi.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for one quick question and one quick response.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member spoke quite a bit about citizen's arrest. We've never been opposed to the section that allows citizen's arrest. This bill focuses very much on citizen's arrest and says that reasonable force can be used. The question that has to be answered is, what is reasonable force, and who is responsible for training farmers in what is reasonable force?

M. Guy Bourgouin: Mon collègue a absolument raison. On n'est pas contre. Mais c'est quoi, puis comment est-ce que ce monde-là va être, comme on peut dire, éduqué ou entraîné pour être capable d'utiliser « reasonable force »? C'est juste que ça peut créer des situations qui peuvent causer beaucoup de problèmes. Merci, madame la Présidente.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It is my distinct honour to stand here today for second reading of our government's Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. This bill, if passed, would better protect our hard-working farmers, their families, their employees and their farm animals by addressing the unique risks associated with on-farm trespass.

The proposed legislation would also, if passed, establish new rules surrounding the interference of the transportation of livestock, as well as take steps to improve the security around food processing facilities to better protect our province's food supply.

I'm happy to stand behind the efforts of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ernie Hardeman, who, with the rest of the Ontario government, is committed 100% to the highest standards of animal welfare and food safety.

This bill will go a long way in requiring the government to protect the food supply chain and farm animals, the safety of farmers, their families and persons working in or on farms, the transportation of livestock—as well as animal biosecurity risks.

Furthermore, the people of Ontario should be assured that their food is produced in a safe and controlled environment. People have the right to participate in legal protests, but this does not include situations where they are trespassing on farms and interfering with livestock transportation. Unauthorized people who enter a farm are often unaware of the farm's biosecurity protocols, and they may unknowingly introduce risks, such as disease, for both the animals and themselves, as well as create undue stress to the animals that they seek to protect.

Not only do such risks have the potential to make our food less safe for consumption; farmers end up having to incur extra expenses to safeguard their properties and reduce any possible risk of contamination. Farmers and food processor owners have already spent many millions of dollars to ensure food, livestock and worker safety. They shouldn't have to spend even more time and energy to stop unwanted persons from trespassing on their private property.

Madam Speaker, now it is our turn. Our farmers and food processors have done their part to modernize their operations, so I am proud to support and stand by the many measures this government has already taken to support the agriculture sector. This includes reducing red tape and supporting farming innovations.

Failure to address the safety concerns that Bill 156 seeks to remedy would send the wrong message, particularly to those in rural Ontario who feel they did not have strong advocates for them over the last 15 years, when the Liberals were in power. They entrusted us with their votes to serve their best interests, and so it is our duty to do so. This legislation is our government's response to be proactive. We want to avoid an issue that could escalate, as we have seen worldwide.

Farmers and agri-food producers feel frustrated that not enough is being done to stop unauthorized trespassing and other interruptions. This government has received hundreds of letters that detail the problems caused by unwanted and unnecessary intrusions on farms, disruptions and obstruction of farm livestock transportation.

If I may, Speaker, I'd like to read into the record one of the letters from a concerned farmer from my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, sent to my office as well as to the Attorney General:

“As an Ontario farmer, I am very concerned about the well-being of my family and business because of an increase in the harassment of farmers and livestock transporters by activists.

“Activists are even stepping in front of moving transport trucks and physically harassing livestock truckers.

“Police seem reluctant to lay charges. The crown has withdrawn charges before trial. Farmers and their employees are frightened and frustrated.”

I would like to pause briefly and repeat the word “frightened.” They have turned to us not because they feel let down or because they are losing money; it's because they are frightened. As a person raised on an isolated, small farm, I can vouch for the real fear of unwanted trespassers who can harm animals and damage equipment. It's well founded.

Now, Madam Speaker, let me return to my constituent: “Attacks on livestock farms and processing plants that go unchallenged open the door to more on-farm attacks and disruption at food suppliers.

“As I (a) farmer, I struggle to understand how activists can enter into buildings illegally, even remove animals, without fear of prosecution.

“I am worried that this disregard for the law will escalate to the point of serious harm to farmers. My farm business is also” the “home of my family. I need to know the legal system will protect us from the risk of invasion.

“I am writing to you today on behalf of farmers, our farmers and agricultural workers across Ontario to ask for stronger action against activists.

“I’m asking you to work together with fellow MPPs and agricultural leaders to find a better way forward to ensure stronger enforcement of existing laws—or new legislation—to ensure the safety of Ontario’s farm families and employees.”

This letter is a call to action for this Legislature to do something to help our farmers across Ontario.

0940

Furthermore, if I may, Madame Speaker, let me state this message from Rob Dougans, president and CEO of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario: “Ontario chicken farmers follow high standards of animal care. Those standards of care include biosecurity protocols designed to protect animals from disease. Anyone entering barns or farms, handling animals or moving between barns without following proper biosecurity protocols puts the health of animals, the safety of food and the livelihood of farmers at risk.”

These pressing issues have been brought by farm operators to the attention of dozens of municipalities, looking for support to rectify these concerns. These municipalities are also directly impacted by illegal activities which drain resources, such as police officers who are required to respond to a complaint from land and plant owners. Municipalities, in turn, have passed or supported council resolutions that call on the government to strengthen protections for these targeted operations.

These municipalities represent all areas of the province, from the southwestern county of Lambton, to my hometown, the township of South Glengarry in eastern Ontario, to the town of Rainy River in the furthest part of northwestern Ontario. In fact, Speaker, over 60 municipalities across Ontario have passed resolutions asking our government to take serious action on what is a serious matter. This geographical fact is another measure of how important agriculture is to the well-being of farmers and their neighbours—fellow ratepayers—who are directly impacted.

Let me also share a message from Allan Thompson, chair of the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, ROMA. He says, “Biosecurity is critical to the success of rural communities and the protection of Ontario’s food supply. The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) is concerned about trespass activities on private farm properties that pose a safety risk to the public, farm

families and animals. We appreciate this effort to provide new tools to help keep our communities safe.”

Mr. Thompson points out that those would-be trespassers could be exposed to diseases that can be transmitted to humans from animals. A few years ago, there was the issue of the global outbreak of avian influenza, a virus that can be extremely contagious among birds, which can result in significant illness and even death in certain poultry species, including chickens, ducks and turkeys. More recently, there are stories about the African swine fever affecting hogs and wild boars in different parts of the world. Luckily for us, there have been no known cases of the African swine fever here on our shores.

It is important that our government takes the steps required to ensure that we are not faced with yet another outbreak that could potentially be fatal to our farm animals. For Ontario, taking the necessary steps to prevent such outbreaks started in the small township of Warwick, out in Lambton county, which passed a resolution that I will now remark upon.

First of all, it points out the importance the agricultural sector plays in Ontario, contributing more than \$47.7 billion annually to Ontario’s GDP, feeding millions, not just here for our citizens but also south of the border and around the world.

The fear expressed from this resolution makes the problem all too worrisome, spotlighting that trespassers who enter buildings without worrying about prosecution sometimes remove livestock, and afterwards share their crimes on social media.

Farmers and their families feel unprotected by the Ontario legal system, and they are afraid for their families’ welfare and that of their employees and the animals they care for. For the vast majority of our farmers, their place of work is also their home, and they deserve to feel safe at home. I support the efforts of the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and of our government, to respond vigorously to these concerns.

To better understand the need for more protection, we consulted widely throughout the fall of 2019. We held more than 20 round tables, meetings and conference calls with various key stakeholders on their experiences with trespass. The consultations included commodity groups; accredited farming organizations; enforcement bodies, including police and crown attorneys; municipalities; meat processors; livestock transporters; Indigenous groups; special interest groups with an interest in accessing land, such as trail groups and hunters; and animal rights groups.

The government has received more than 900 letters from stakeholders asking us to take concrete action. I would like to thank everyone involved in providing important input. I want to also applaud Minister Hardeman for taking the time and effort to engage with all of these stakeholders and individuals from across the province.

In fact, earlier this month, I joined Minister Hardeman in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to meet with livestock farmers and livestock truckers on this important legislation. We then went into the riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell to meet members of the

UCFO to hear directly from our strong francophone farming community.

Madam Speaker, we heard over and over again that this legislation is needed to protect and support our thriving agriculture industry. This is a great opportunity to come together as individual farmers, agri-food producers, trucking companies, agriculture sector representatives, municipalities and this government to protect and support Ontario farmers and the integrity of our food supply.

I would like to point out that the farm trespass and transportation disturbances have been condemned by all major parties nationally. At the national agriculture leaders' debate on September 24, 2019, four federal party representatives were asked to state their positions involving entry to a farm without permission as a form of protest. The unanimous answer was a resounding no.

From the Green Party: "People can express their views, but no one is allowed to damage property or trespass."

From the Liberal Party: "First, it's illegal. Second, we need to respect the work of our farmers, who are working tirelessly."

And from the New Democratic Party: "There are complex biosecurity requirements, and they have to understand that farmers often live where they work, and so invading their personal space causes a lot of stress and in fact it's probably causing a lot more harm to the animals that these protesters are purporting to protect."

In addition to the Progressive Conservative government, three provincial representatives of those parties have seats in this Legislature.

I implore that this legislation will also receive the same universal support from all parties in this Legislature as well. No less—it would be a big letdown to our hard-working farmers.

We need to do more than rely on the current federal Criminal Code of Canada or the provincial Trespass to Property Act. What we hear from our farmers is that we cannot rely on what we have at present. So, Madam Speaker, I strongly endorse this new legislation that, if passed, would provide additional enforcement tools and deterrents to trespassing and obstructing the transportation to livestock, including:

- increasing fines of up to \$15,000 for the first offence and \$25,000 for subsequent offences;

- allowing the court to consider aggravating factors when determining the appropriate fine;

- allowing the court to issue a restitution order requiring the trespasser to pay restitution for damages caused during the trespass;

- increasing protection for farmers, owners, occupiers or drivers against civil liability from people who are hurt while trespassing, provided there's no intent of doing harm to the trespasser;

- expanding the limitation period at which charges can be laid to two years from the day of the offence, or two years from the day when evidence of the offence was uncovered.

I'm glad to read into the record the positive reaction from Ed Benjamins, chair of Chicken Farmers of Ontario,

after Minister Hardeman tabled Bill 156 last week: "On behalf of the 1,300 family-run farms across the province, CFO thanks Minister Hardeman and the Ontario government for taking action to address trespassers on farms. The proposed legislation is a fair and balanced approach, and we appreciate the extensive consultation undertaken by Minister Hardeman, OMAFRA, and the Ontario government to find a path forward that is agreeable for everyone."

0950

Madam Speaker, it should be pointed out that, if passed, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act would make exceptions to allow persons with legal standing under other acts to continue to have access to these prescribed areas in the legislation. These include animal health and welfare officials working under the recently passed Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, or PAWS, police and provincial officers, anyone who is executing a civil matter, a municipal employee such as a bylaw officer, firefighters, ambulance attendants, paramedics or other emergency personnel.

This new legislation, if passed, would also expand jurisdictions by adding new provisions that are currently not covered under the Trespass to Property Act. These, I believe, are necessary if we are to resolve the negative ramifications that are caused by farm trespassing.

It recognizes that farmers, employees and animal welfare are key components of Bill 156. It takes into consideration the transportation of farm animals. Consent cannot be implied. Consent can be voided if obtained under false pretenses. It protects the owner-occupier from civil liability if a trespasser is injured. It provides farmers with a stronger chance of the recovery of monetary damages caused by the trespasser.

The government is also taking into account the activities of Indigenous communities, recreational hunters, anglers and trappers. Speaker, it is important to note these measures. If the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act were to pass, it would not have any impact on Aboriginal hunting and fishing rights, or any other implications to population groups with special consideration under the law.

The proposed legislation would narrowly apply to specially designated animal protection zones. These areas are around on-farm enclosures, food processing facilities and animal transport vehicles.

The provisions introduced in this bill last week show the government is trying to be as thorough as possible as it considers the many facets of this issue. In particular, it demonstrates the government has listened closely to the concerns of farmers, agribusiness and the transportation sector who are looking for regulations that answer specific topics.

This legislative process will continue to gather input from the public to formulate regulations into the future. I am confident that Bill 156 will, if passed, provide the necessary protections for our agriculture sector while allowing for freedom of speech and assembly.

Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to stand in this Legislature and represent my constituents, but to speak on

behalf of this important piece of legislation is truly an honour, and I know that it has the support of many hard-working farmers and their organizations, as well as municipalities. It is a privilege.

It is my belief that Bill 156 merits the support of all members of provincial Parliament in this Legislature, and I hope that members from all parties join our government in supporting Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened very intently to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. I’ve had many conversations with him regarding our shared agricultural roots and I believe in his sincerity.

Having said that, he said that he has constituents who are frightened in their homes. I share that too. So my question is, under this act, those constituents are allowed a citizen’s arrest using reasonable force. What is reasonable force, in the member’s opinion, for that constituent who is frightened in her home?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Of course, reasonable force will be judged by the courts. In my opinion, which carries no legal significance, it comes upon force up to, but not causing, any harm to the individual. I think that the courts would likely play favourably upon that.

All we’re asking for is a picture. You need to prove that the person was there. You don’t have to prove what the intent was. I think this is a big step forward. It can de-escalate a lot of these situations just by the fact that an activist knows that now, by being there, he’s breaking the law and can be charged and will likely be—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response?

Mr. Jim McDonell: The courts will be successful.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I want to thank the member for his remarks. I know he just mentioned, “Don’t commit the crime.” But he also mentioned in his speech how he was raised on an isolated farm and some of the experiences that came out of that. I was wondering if you can talk about the importance of those experiences you had mentioned in your speech and the importance it has to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Just a reminder to all members, as we’re getting used to this new process, to please direct your remarks to and through the Chair, so that I can hear but also so the folks at home can hear your questions and responses.

I return to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his response.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Of course, that was a letter from a constituent of mine, but I can tell you, from my life on a farm, we had a very long lane, and neighbours were half a kilometre away. This is very normal and certainly not very extreme. I remember my days on the school bus, seeing farm lanes that were almost a mile long, so of course, there’s that feeling of isolation. While we’re a well-policed area, the police are not minutes away, generally. They are generally some time to get there.

I think just the establishment of this law and actually giving some teeth to the law will now make people think twice before they show up and break the law, really. Now we’re giving it some teeth. In the past, we’ve seen how these regulations were not enforceable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: In my previous question, I asked what the member would think would be reasonable force. Again, this is going to be a highly charged situation between a farmer, or a farm family, and activists. He responded that it will likely be judged by the court. It could very well be the farmer being charged for using what the activists deem unreasonable force. So again, what does the government believe to be reasonable force? Farmers need to know.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I can tell you that I have a lot of experience, as I know the member opposite has, with farmers. I think that we have a society that believes in the law. The farmers are subject to the same provisions under section 25 of Canada’s Criminal Code as anyone else in Canada. Those provisions state that anyone who is required or authorized by law to do anything in the administration or enforcement of the law as a private person, or a peace officer, or public officer, in aid of a peace officer or public officer, or by virtue of his office—so there are regulations around it. They will be decided. But I think this de-escalates a lot because all the farmer needs now is a picture, and I think once the person realizes that, that should de-escalate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: I’m listening to the member and he’s very passionate about this bill. I’m proud to say that I’m also a farmer’s son. This bill is important for our farmers and farming industry.

My question is, what have you heard from farmers in your riding about this bill? I’d like to get more explanation from the member.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I recognize the deputy government House leader.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Madam Speaker, we wish for the debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

I return to the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his response.

1000

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was very privileged to attend a meeting we had in our riding. Of course, we’ve had many meetings over the years that have talked about this issue, and I’m sure that everybody has read about a lot of these issues in the media. We entertained something like over 30 different stakeholders on this bill in Bonville, at the

Lions Club, and the farmers, the producers, were very thankful for the legislation. They see this as a real threat.

We're seeing a major potential pandemic in China now. Those are real-life things today.

We have farms in my community where the animals had to be put down because of disease, and that disease is generally spread by unauthorized entry.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to go back to reasonable force. I think we're on the same side on this. We have security people here who are very well trained on how to de-escalate and what reasonable force is. I'm a farmer; that's not my thing. Again, in a very stressful situation, when animal activists are in your face, what is reasonable force? You need to tell farmers. You need to educate farmers. They don't have section 25 on the farm wall, and they don't understand section 25. What is reasonable force?

Mr. Jim McDonell: The same "reasonable force" applies to everybody in this country; if somebody enters your property without permission, it's the same rules. People have to interpret that as they see fit. The final judge will be the courts. That's an issue that comes up from time to time, not just on farms but on property and in people's homes. Farmers are just like everybody else. They're intelligent people. They'll interpret this law to the best of their knowledge, and the courts will decide if they've overstepped or not, and I think they'll also decide if the activists have overstepped. I think that's where we're going with this.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Aris Babikian: Madam Speaker, through you, my question is: What are some concerns rural communities in your riding have expressed to you about trespassing on farms?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you for that question.

As I said, in the past, in our area and right across the country and across the province, for sure, there have been herds put down because of disease. There has been damage done by activists who come in.

You have to realize that in the transportation of produce, if somebody has contact with that, if somebody for whatever reason walks up and is supposed to give something to one of the animals, they have to guarantee that they know that that food is still safe. They don't know what interactions are going on. They don't know what has been given to the person. When people enter barns, they don't know where they've been before.

Anybody who has come back from a foreign country knows that you have to swear that you haven't been on a farm in another country. It all goes to biosecurity and the fact that we don't want to endanger one of our major employers, if not the major employer, in our country and in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There's not enough time on the clock for further questions and responses.

Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this bill. I can see that I don't have much time left; I believe I have about 10 minutes. I just want to touch on some of the things that have been raised. We've been talking about the citizen's arrest provisions and some of our deep concerns with that.

A section of the bill that has generated a lot of debate is the consent portion. Previously, in this House, I've warned the government about the impacts of their legislation that they don't consider beforehand. It seems that what has really characterized this government over the first year and a half is that so much of their legislation either gets walked back or gets challenged in court. That really speaks to, I think, a lack of good planning when they consult and when they put together their legislation.

Back in May of last year—just an example of this—I warned the government about the potential consequences of the More Homes, More Choice Act. That legislation allowed a person to be expelled from their home because a family member, a visitor or even someone in the building engaged in illegal marijuana sale. It was an example of an unintended consequence of poorly worded legislation.

This government didn't heed my warning, and one month later, a gentleman named Jeffrey Brodie, a young man, was expelled from his home and his possessions were seized, because the police said the downstairs unit—Jeffrey rented the upstairs unit—was being used as an illegal dispensary. Jeffrey was a painter, and had no opportunity to access the things he used for his work and, as a result, he was forced to sleep on a park bench. It was in the newspaper. He's currently challenging that law as unconstitutional.

These are examples of unintended consequences of poorly thought-out, poorly worded legislation that is not properly consulted on.

It has been brought up a few times in this House, the difficulties that this legislation may have constitutionally, and the issue of freedom of expression. That is something that, as New Democrats, we feel very strongly about, particularly the section on false pretenses. The false pretenses provision could also capture a regular worker who discovers a problem at a facility but then is accused by the owner of being an activist who obtained consent under false pretenses.

The bill also prohibits interacting with animals, and "interacting" is not something that is really defined well.

The debate over the constitutionality of this bill isn't solely based on the results of other jurisdictions. As one of my colleagues has pointed out, there are 38 Canadian law professors and constitutional criminal law experts who wrote to the Attorney General and the Minister of Agriculture regarding Bill 156. It is unprecedented that 38 Canadian law professors from across this country, who are watching Ontario right now, have said that aspects of the bill would infringe on individual rights, freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In other jurisdictions, at the time that this was new, there was no pattern of unconstitutionality. The first attempts we've seen are as early as 1990, with a larger

push in 2012. Eight years later, we have all these experiences that we can reflect on to ensure that we get the legislation right on the first try.

Speaker, it seems this Conservative government has a history of putting forward legislation that leaves the province vulnerable to challenges and, therefore, vulnerable to spending even more taxpayer money on lawsuits and court costs.

Currently, this government is in court for a myriad of items. As I have mentioned, it seems they're either walking back legislation or being challenged in court. They're currently in court with the federal government on carbon pricing. Two of three Ontario Superior Court judges determined that this government acted illegally when it killed the cap-and-trade program in Ontario, and this is headed to the Supreme Court.

This government is presently in court with student unions on the issue of student union dues. Just this past November, an Ontario court unanimously struck down the so-called Student Choice Initiative, writing that the policy's directives "are not authorized by law and are inconsistent with the autonomy granted to universities."

It's not even the first time there have been concerns regarding free speech and freedom of expression. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is challenging this government that the Federal Carbon Tax Transparency Act—or as we like to call it, the sticker act—violates free speech provisions of the Constitution. We'll see how that court case plays out.

There are other examples. They're in court with teachers on Bill 124; with green energy companies, with businesses where contracts have been ripped up—and there are many others. It seems this government is either always in court defending poorly worded legislation, or apologizing or walking legislation back.

1010

One has to wonder: Is it fiscally responsible to consistently be using taxpayers' money to defend decisions in court and then appeal that legislation, and in more than one instance ask the Supreme Court to weigh in? Do we have clear numbers accessible to the people of the province who pay for all of this to understand why they're seeing cuts to their kids' education and to their health care, but spending is higher than ever?

It's kind of a hollow statement when this government talks about caring about farmers when we all know that they cut the agriculture ministry's budget by 25%. Actions speak louder than words, and this government isn't showing through its actions that it cares about farmers; it's showing that what they want to do is employ wedge issues to try and pit farmers against animal rights activists.

We all know the quote, "Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it." The history is this: Ag gag laws like the one we're discussing here today have been found unconstitutional in numerous jurisdictions for nearly a decade. Experts in the field are telling us there's a constitutional problem, and we know this government, as I've mentioned, has a sordid history of going to court to defend its actions and decisions.

Those three things together create a result we cannot ignore as responsible legislators. Why pass this bill, as drafted, only to be stuck in a costly legal battle later on?

We've heard from the government that this bill will protect farmers, protect biosecurity. We've already discussed the history of ag gag laws many times—many of my colleagues have discussed it—and of biosecurity, so I'd like to discuss farmers.

A 2016 study from the UBC found that when the public learns of so-called ag gag laws, it erodes the trust in farmers and increases support for animal welfare regulations. In 2013, Farm and Food Care Ontario and the egg farmers said that they opposed ag gag laws because, as they put it, "The Canadian agriculture sector is strongly committed to opening the barn door, not closing it"—transparency is important for farmers so that the public has trust—and "such laws risk inflaming determined animal rights activists, not deterring them." That's something that came from farmers, Speaker.

The experience in the United States supports these quotes. Ag gag laws attract opposition from a broad cross-section of the public and ultimately undermine trust in farming and the food system. We can support reasonable changes to improve biosecurity and the safety of farmers, animals and the food supply, but we cannot let this government send a harmful message to the public that the hard-working and responsible farmers in this province have something to hide.

We heard from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. He was a proud dairy farmer for 32 years. We understand the concerns of farmers. But we have to ensure that legislation that passes through this House is responsible, thoughtful and, at the very least, constitutional.

It's a democratic right to be able to protest for something that you believe in. It's common in all civil societies. Freedom of expression is a core value in Ontario and across this country. There are people who come to this place on a regular basis to view this House in all of its democracy, but they also come here to protest. Just this week, there were 1,000 people on the front lawn. This weekend we have protests down in my neck of the woods, in Niagara, which I'm fortunate to call home. Niagara is no stranger to protests. Just this past weekend there was a protest at the Rainbow Bridge. A few years back, there was a series of protests—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I'm sorry to interrupt the member. I thank the member, and his time will continue the next time this bill is called.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I want to talk about the Conservative government's misguided plans to privatize employment services.

It was recently announced that the Conservatives have started hiring private companies to provide employment services for those receiving ODSP and OW.

In my community of Hamilton, a private American company will provide these important services. Under the new private model, the company only gets paid when a job placement is made. That means that these companies have an incentive to connect ODSP and OW recipients to any job, and fast. We'll see more people in inappropriate jobs, and more people who aren't ready for jobs moved into them anyway.

When a community-based non-profit or municipality provides these employment services, they work with the individuals to meet their needs, and they have the local knowledge to best serve their communities. Now, instead, in Hamilton we'll have an American company trying to get paid.

This experiment in privatizing social assistance is just the beginning, and it's doomed to fail. It already did in the UK and in Australia. It must be stopped before it damages the lives of Ontarians. Our social services should not be a cash cow for American companies.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will remind all members to please come in quietly, so that we can enjoy members' statements.

ALBERT KIM

Mr. Stan Cho: I rise today to remember and pay tribute to a great Willowdale community leader and a friend who passed away suddenly at the age of 45. Albert Kim was an incredible human being: a caring father, a proud member of the Korean-Canadian community, a relentless friend and an unapologetic champion for Willowdale.

Albert loved politics and was a passionate member of the Liberal Party. While we didn't always agree—in fact, we almost never agreed—he approached politics with humour and humanity. He put the people around him above everything else, often volunteering for candidates of all political stripes, myself included, simply because he wanted to help, because he wanted to be heard. He was always kind.

Albert ran for Toronto city council in 2018 and was a long-serving member of the Willowdale Rotary Club and the Korean Canadian Cultural Association, a Salvation Army volunteer and a naval reservist. He led a life of service and dedicated his time to bettering our community, our province and our country. He was an inspiration to me and to many in Willowdale.

Albert, Willowdale will not be the same without your voice and the incredible energy you brought wherever you went. You will be sorely missed, my friend.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: My statement is for the Minister of Transportation, regarding École St-Michel in Temiskaming Shores. It's on Highway 11, and has over 400 students

plus a daycare, and the speed limit in front of École St-Michel is 80 kilometres an hour. This is a school. They have signed thousands of signatures on petitions. I've spoken to the minister several times, spoken to the ministry several times and warned them. In January, there was an accident there. A transport pushed a car off the road that was entering École St-Michel. Luckily, by the grace of God, no one was killed, but we've warned and warned.

But what is most galling is that in front of École St-Michel, it's 80 kilometres, but in the town just north, Englehart, Highway 11 is 70 kilometres. In the town just south of École St-Michel, Latchford, it's 60 kilometres. Go a bit further south and it's 50 kilometres. But what's most galling to me, Speaker, is when I drive from northern Ontario and I come down Avenue Road, for the schools there, it's 40 kilometres with flashing lights. They care about the schools here and about the children here.

It's time to lower that speed limit and put in a turning lane, but please, lower that speed limit now. What they did do was put a big, bright yellow line, brighter than the licence plates, but that doesn't stop anybody.

KIDS WITH INCARCERATED PARENTS

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I rise today to bring the attention of the House to an important charitable organization in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Today, I am joined by Derek Reid, who's in the gallery, from Kids with Incarcerated Parents. KIP Canada is dedicated to empowering and supporting children whose parents are incarcerated.

KIP Canada not only provides mentorship for the children that includes fun and educational excursions; they also help children across the GTA visit their parents who are incarcerated in both federal and provincial detention centres, providing them with free transportation along with healthy snacks, healthy conversations and entertainment for their journey.

1020

Recently, I was thrilled to announce that the Ontario government, through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, has granted KIP Canada funding for a new bus. This bus will allow families across the GTA to stay connected under very trying circumstances.

I would like to congratulate Derek; his daughter, Jessica; and the team at KIP Canada on the amazing work they do.

I would encourage all of you to check out the work that KIP Canada does in supporting children who face adversity.

Derek and team, thank you so very much for looking after our vulnerable youth.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Delays, delays, delays. Correctional officers have been calling for changes at the aging Thunder Bay jail. Many members had big smiles on their

faces when this government announced it would be building a new jail in Thunder Bay.

The ability to do anything inside the jail is so limited because it is 100 years old. It was built back in the 1920s for a capacity of 60 people at the time. We're now at 150 to 160 inmates at all times.

However, Infrastructure Ontario's latest market update reveals an indefinite delay to the Thunder Bay correctional complex, meaning the safety of Thunder Bay families, correctional workers and inmates is being kicked down the road again. The request for proposals for the Thunder Bay correctional complex was recently slated to be issued by spring of 2019. In an update from Infrastructure Ontario, the date was changed to "to be determined."

My colleague the local MPP from Thunder Bay–Atikokan stated, "The previous Liberal government neglected this problem for years, and now the Ford government is doing the same. It's not safe for our community, for the corrections staff, and for inmates to have the government to keep ignoring the issue of dangerously outdated corrections facilities."

The project in question would address long-standing safety and security problems by combining the Thunder Bay jail and the Thunder Bay Correctional Centre into a single complex and qualified update. It is time now to put the shovels in the ground.

HOCKEY 4 YOUTH

Mr. John Fraser: Last week in my riding of Ottawa South, Hockey 4 Youth hosted a first skate event. Hockey 4 Youth is an incredible non-profit organization that provides youth who are new to Canada with an opportunity to play hockey. The Ontario Trillium Foundation recently awarded Hockey 4 Youth a \$27,500 grant to help purchase hockey equipment and launch new programs in the Ottawa area.

Fifty-three girls new to Canada, between the ages of 14 and 18, from Gloucester and Ridgmont high schools, will be invited to learn to play hockey at no cost. Through the 10-week program, they will be provided with free ice time, where they will learn the fundamentals of the game and how to skate.

The program will help players with their English literacy, learn new life skills and develop more self-esteem, and understand the importance of physical activity. The goal is to remove social and economic barriers so that more youth can be included in sport.

Thank you to Hockey 4 Youth, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the city of Ottawa, and Gloucester and Ridgmont high schools for making this life-changing initiative possible.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Stephen Crawford: It's a pleasure to be speaking here, back in the Legislature.

In the spirit of Black History Month, it is important that we take time to learn about the contributions of Black

Canadians in our communities and society at large. To that, I would like to bring to the attention of my colleagues in the chamber today some unique history in Oakville and how our community commemorates this important month.

We should all be familiar with Canada's role in the Underground Railroad, that provided so many enslaved African Americans a chance at freedom. What some of my colleagues may not be aware of is that Oakville was, in fact, a terminus for the Underground Railroad, which saw hundreds of American slaves brought safely into Canada for freedom. At that time, Oakville was a very small town. Many of the individuals moved to more populous towns throughout Ontario.

From this time, there was one individual story that speaks to the kind of heroism that I think we should remember. That is of a gentleman by the name of James Wesley Hill, an escaped slave who crossed the border in a packing box in the late 1840s, settled on a farm in Oakville and went on to help an estimated 800 African Americans brought to Oakville, and generously gave them work on his farm. James Wesley Hill earned himself the respected title of "conductor" by those he aided. A house he built still remains to this day in Oakville.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just this kind of history that makes me proud to be from Oakville, especially during times like Black History Month, but it's how this history is preserved in our community. Organizations like Sheridan College, the Oakville Museum and the Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton bring this history to us every day.

MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Jill Andrew: Today I want to start by acknowledging the life of Evangeline Lauroza, which was tragically cut short by a cement truck at Erskine and Yonge just a few months ago. This speaks to the importance of responsible and safe development.

It's hardly a new discovery that midtown Toronto is suffering from irresponsible development. In fact, today we're joined by over a dozen residents of St. Paul's who have been fighting for more responsible development in our community for years. Out of their advocacy came a plan known as Midtown in Focus, which laid down some simple ground rules for how to get it right: lowering the height density limits and mandating that there be enough services in midtown to serve our communities—schools, infrastructure, community space, parks. It wasn't about NIMBYism; it was about responsible development.

They invited the minister to tour the neighbourhood with them to discuss the plan. He didn't do that. He toured without them, secretly, and brought the MPP from Eglinton–Lawrence on the tour, who isn't even their MPP—I am.

Following this tour, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing ripped the original plans to shreds. It is totally disrespectful of the residents of St. Paul's.

Today, we have a very simple request for this government: Reverse your changes to official plan amendment 405, listen to communities, get it right—and not just your developer pals.

Mr. Speaker, I have dozens of letters signed by residents of St. Paul's on my desk, letters that were delivered to Minister Clark, and there has been no response.

GO TRANSIT

Ms. Lindsey Park: I rise today to inform this House that on February 13, I was able to provide an important update to my constituents about the GO train to Bowmanville. This project has been the topic of discussion for decades in our community.

Speaker, Metrolinx has officially finished its updated initial business case. I'm pleased that the recommended option would include all-day service instead of the four-train peak-only service announced by the Liberal government. Based on the updated initial business case, Metrolinx staff have recommended proceeding with option two. The recommended alignment services all major population centres along the extension, keeps the Oshawa GO station open and utilizes existing rail infrastructure to cross Highway 401 to bring down the project costs.

Let me finish by saying that today the board of directors at Metrolinx will be reviewing the updated initial business case report. If it's approved by the board, Metrolinx will continue to work with our government to advance the recommended route option to the next stage of the planning process: developing the preliminary design business case.

I look forward to working with Metrolinx and our government to get this vital project funded and built.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I would ask the House to come to order. There are a number of conversations taking place in the House, and it makes it hard for the Speaker to hear the members' statements.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, this year Haldimand-Norfolk will receive close to \$5.2 million for community infrastructure. The county of Haldimand will receive over \$2.6 million, and the county of Norfolk will receive over \$2.5 million. This investment comes from the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund, also known to our municipal partners as OCIF. OCIF is a \$200-million fund that supports rural, small and northern communities across Ontario with populations under 100,000.

I'd like to thank Laurie Scott, our Minister of Infrastructure, and our Premier, Doug Ford, who made this announcement earlier this year, committing funding for the hard-working people in Haldimand-Norfolk.

This investment of over \$5.2 million is greatly appreciated in Haldimand-Norfolk. This investment for community infrastructure goes directly to our municipal partners, and they can spend it where they need it most. That means both the county of Norfolk and the county of Haldimand have infrastructure funding—over \$5.2 million this year alone—to fix our local roads, to repair our community

bridges or to address the needs of water and waste water projects.

1030

I look forward to the shovel-ready projects that both Norfolk and Haldimand will spend the almost \$5.2 million this year on for our community infrastructure, and I really look forward to attending the events with our municipal partners that show how our hard-earned tax dollars are being put to work fixing, repairing and—

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): It is now time for the introduction of visitors. I'll remind the members that five minutes are allocated under standing order 34 for this purpose, and that members may introduce visitors by stating only their name, title, organization and/or riding. This standing order will be enforced this morning.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to introduce two members from RNAO: Erika Toth, a Nipissing University student who I met with this morning, and also Dot Klein, who has over 40 years' experience in health care.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I have the privilege of welcoming to the Legislature today Nathan Kelly, from the town of Grimsby, with the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, as well as his colleagues Mahoganie and Holly; I believe they're here, as well.

Ms. Suze Morrison: I'd like to welcome two constituents from my riding of Toronto Centre: Ellen and Mike Hodnett, who are the grandparents of our page captain today, page Owen. Welcome.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: Today, I would like to welcome my new intern, Max Reinker, from Ryerson University.

Mr. Faisal Hassan: I would like to welcome Angela Cooper Brathwaite, president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario—welcome to Queen's Park—and also Matthew Kelway.

Mr. Stan Cho: It's my privilege to welcome students from Queen's University who are visiting the Legislature today: Philip, Sydney, Nicholas, Alexandra, Derek, Roberto and Cyrus. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome to the Legislature a co-op student from Ryerson who is working in our office, Zeinab Hamadi, as well as Kieran Lawlor, with the OLIP program, who is here on his last day with us, unfortunately; and Roz Geridis, an Elementary Teachers of Toronto executive member.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I would like to welcome Dreyden Chatelain and Lacey Bennett from École secondaire catholique Élisabeth-Bruyère in Mattawa.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome some guests who are with us today from the Ontario Autism Coalition: Stacy Kennedy, Amy Moledzki and her daughter Ava, and Michau van Speyk.

I'd also like to welcome Hamilton nurses who are visiting us today on RNAO day.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature, from the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Regina Elliott, Kathleen Pikaart, Alison Reavell-Roy, Melanie Kelly and Chajan Sathiyeswaran. A warm welcome to Queen's Park today.

I also see many in the gallery from the federation of law associations. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome two London West constituents who are members of RNAO and have joined us once again for the annual lobby day: Farnaz Macalski and Janet Hunt. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I'd like to welcome my friend and mentor, CEO of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Doris Grinspun, as well as all the members present today; and Alisha Arora, who is a grade 8 student from Mississauga Centre who is shadowing me today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jessica Bell: On behalf of the member for Spadina–Fort York, I'd like to introduce Michael Sims and Stephanie Hodnett from Spadina–Fort York. They're the parents of Owen Hodnett, who is the page captain for today. Welcome to the Legislature.

M^{lle} Amanda Simard: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue au Parlement jeunesse francophone de l'Ontario, tous les étudiants qui sont ici aujourd'hui. Bienvenue.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce my friends Dr. Anita Stewart, Dean Julia Christensen Hughes, Maggie McCormick and Jeff Stewart from the University of Guelph; Chris Cossitt and Stacey Ash from Ontario Pork; and Lynn Siegal, from Hilite Fine Foods.

I also want to introduce my assistants, Christina, Cathy and Yvonne. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'd like to welcome Caitlin Cybulski. She's a student from Ryerson. She will be joining the Stevens team from St. Catharines.

As well, Kenneth Gogo came today to his House, our House, from the riding of St. Catharines.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I'm pleased to introduce a long-time member of our riding association in Ottawa West–Nepean, David Young. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jill Andrew: I'm very proud to welcome the Republic Residents' Association, the Quantum residents association, the Eglinton Park Residents' Association, the Oriole Park Association, the South Eglinton Ratepayers' and Residents' Associations, Ashok Kittur, Lata Kittur, Maxine Haigh, Sasha Milenov, Seboua March, Andy Gort, Thomas Cohen, Lancelyn Rayman-Watters, Richard MacFarlane, Meraj Ahmed, Elizabeth Gordon, Miria Ioannou, Geraldine—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I apologize to the members who weren't able to introduce their guests. On their behalf, I would like to welcome all of the guests who are here today at the Ontario Legislature. The standing orders are clear: five minutes.

QUESTION PERIOD

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is to the Premier. Tomorrow, parents, teachers and students from every single corner of our province will be standing up for our children's future. The Premier continues to stick his head in the sand and pretend that parents are on his side, while every day they tell him to reverse his cuts to education. Why is he ignoring parents, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The question is addressed to the Premier.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I just want to remind the leader of the NDP that what she's calling cuts, we're actually increasing by \$1.2 billion. That's \$1.2 billion. They have a tough time with math.

We believe that parents want us to increase investment in the schools and in our children who go there. What they do not—and I've heard it right across this province—believe in is increasing compensation. They'd rather have that money—which we're doing—back into the classroom, Mr. Speaker. We don't put it in some vault in the back of Queen's Park. We're putting it back into the children. We're putting it back into the classrooms.

These strikes are impacting families. When you impact a family, just imagine how many people have to find child care or take a day from work. That's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's ironic that the Premier can't cite any parents who are in favour of his agenda of cuts, because we are sure that he's hearing from parents who oppose it, just as we are.

Selby Public School is in the riding of Hastings–Lennox and Addington, and their parent council wrote to the Premier an open letter stating, “Educators are some of the most important people in our children's lives. Members of our parent council, as well as our community at large, stand behind our educators. We will continue to support them now and into the future....”

Why does the Premier think he knows better than those parents, Speaker?

Hon. Doug Ford: I never know more than the parents. The only difference between myself and the leader of the NDP—I travel right across the province. There's probably no one in the chamber who travels to more towns, to more areas than I do. I speak to the parents.

But guess what, Mr. Speaker? I speak to our great teachers. I support our front-line teachers, who work hard day in and day out. They're just as frustrated. They want to get back in the classroom and do the job that they do best. That's teaching our kids. We want our kids back in the classroom.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I invite the Premier to come and speak to 25,000 or 30,000 of them around Queen's Park tomorrow. I invite him to do that.

The Premier and the Conservatives say that their plan to fire thousands of teachers is reasonable, but parents are telling us that the reasonable thing to do is absolutely the opposite of what this Premier is suggesting.

1040

Justin from Oshawa told us that he supports teachers. Why? Because, and I quote, “You can’t threaten to burn a house down and then threaten to only burn their garage down and say you are being reasonable in the negotiations.” That’s what Justin from Oshawa has to say.

Why does the Premier think he knows better than parents like Justin?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I find it so ironic listening to the Leader of the Opposition who voted to close, with their Liberal buddies, 600 schools. They didn’t burn them down; they just closed them and kicked the kids out. That’s the difference. We’re building new schools right across the province. That’s our priority.

We will continue to invest in more priorities that parents want. Parents want us to focus on math, on STEM and on mental health, and that’s exactly where the money is going: to the classrooms, to the students. That’s what they want.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I talk to numerous teachers, and I can assure you that not all the teachers want to be out there. They want to be in the classroom teaching the kids. They understand we have the parameters because we were left with a \$15-billion deficit and a \$346-billion debt. They appreciate just going back in the classroom and teaching the kids.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. But I would submit, then, that the Premier needs to take the cuts off the table so those teachers can get back into the classrooms across our province.

Look, Speaker, parents are very, very frustrated and they’re feeling ignored by this government. Hilary wrote to us to tell us about her child’s experience with e-learning. In her words, that experience has been a “disaster.” She says students with learning difficulties like her child need face time with their teachers, and they still struggle through these courses with that face time—except now, thanks to the Conservative cuts, students like Hilary’s child have even fewer teachers in their schools and will only fall further and further behind.

Parents like Hilary need teachers to teach their child. Why is the Premier forcing their children into e-learning programs that just don’t work for them?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: This government wants a deal that keeps kids in class. That is our commitment to two million young people in the province.

Parents are working harder. They give of themselves for their children. They pay significant amounts of their income to government, and they expect a better return on that investment. When 50% of students are not meeting the

provincial math standard, how is it that this government and this Legislature are not united to expect better for the next generation of our province?

We’re building and modernizing our education system with a focus on ensuring every student is technologically fluent, financially literate, emotionally intelligent and ready for the jobs of tomorrow. That’s our positive vision for the next generation, and it starts with keeping kids in class.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, everyone knows this minister thinks he can talk well, but he sure doesn’t listen to his own words. How is the math standard going to increase when you have fewer teachers in the classroom teaching our kids? It makes no sense whatsoever. Parents know it, and they’re calling this government on exactly that.

The Premier is pretending that his cuts are going to have no impact. I’d like him to hear from Jessica, a mom from Petrolia, in the riding of Sarnia. Jessica’s daughter has special needs and needs extra attention in the classroom. She writes, “Even before these cuts, our school was so understaffed ... meeting after meeting after meeting I attended begging for the help she needed.... We are barely hanging on....”

Why is the Premier ignoring the pleas from parents like Jessica?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, let me answer the question of how we’re going to improve math standards in this province. It’s by going back to basics and eliminating the discovery math approach under the former Liberal government.

This government has a four-year math strategy. I am proud to report to this House that we will have financial literacy for the first time codified in elementary schools in this province. I am proud that we have a new curriculum that will be unveiled in September 2020. We have numeracy, now foundational competencies. We are expecting new educators in the province to be able to meet a grade 9 math standard, raising the bar of our teachers and raising the bar of our students. We expect our students to be better in numeracy, in financial literacy and in math. That’s why we’re making investments in STEM education.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the official opposition New Democrats would agree that the Conservatives are dragging us backwards when it comes to their changes to education. We agree with that.

But do you know what? The Premier can’t get away from stories like the ones I’ve been sharing this morning. Conservative classroom cuts are making life worse for families all across our province. Jessica is blunt when she writes about her daughter, “I am sick to my stomach about what will happen if Doug Ford wins this fight with teachers. I’ve had nightmares about it.”

Parents, teachers and students all want a government that works with educators to improve our kids’ education.

Why is the Premier so determined to move in the opposite direction of where everyone else wants this province to go?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: If the aim of the Leader of the Opposition is to improve education, then I expect her to be the first leader of the New Democratic Party to suggest that she stand with the government to oppose regulation 274, which provides absolute seniority-based hiring when merit is not even a consideration, when qualification doesn't guide the hiring of new educators. Certainly the Leader of the Opposition would accept that we could do better for teachers in this province, that we could hire candidates of merit, of qualification and of diversity in our schools.

Mr. Speaker, this negotiation—yes, we want a deal that keeps them in class. We want a deal that is good for our students, a deal that sees more investment in our schools, not in higher compensation. That is a priority of parents, and we're going to stand up for that principle every day.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. If the Premier thought the invisible licence plates were bad, we're going to have to peel him off the ceiling after he hears this one because, as the Premier knows, the Minister of Labour investigates cases where employers fail to pay their workers.

One of those cases is from Oshawa in the 2018 election. The ministry found that the Treasury Board President's own PC constituency association failed to pay an employee properly. The PCs only paid some of the wages of an employee that the Treasury Board had employed during the election campaign. They were so delinquent, in fact, that the ministry had to call in a collections agency to get this woman her wages, which, as of yesterday, she had still not been paid.

Can the Premier tell us why his party officials are not paying PC staffers, as is the law in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm allowing the question. It's the enforcement of the Ministry of Labour.

Government House leader to respond.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Of course, this party will ensure that all Ministry of Labour standards are met. That's something we've continued to focus on after 15 years of neglect through the coalition of the NDP and the Liberal Party.

I think what is a sad spectacle today, Mr. Speaker, is to have, after the leadoff question, something like this when this province and this country are faced with economic struggles, when we have two million—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: —when we have students who are going to be out of the classroom tomorrow. The NDP chooses to focus on slinging mud. I think it's a sad spectacle of the NDP. It is a sad illusion of the party that they used to be. They used to be called the “conscience of

Parliament.” All they do right now is sling mud, and that is why they have never been given the privilege of sitting on this side of the House after the one time they did, and the people will never go back to that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize to the government House leader for having to interrupt him.

The official opposition asked a serious question. I would have assumed that they would have wanted to hear the answer.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The minister establishes a pattern. Not only do they not want to pay the teachers of the province; they don't want to pay their own staffers in their own party.

Speaker, I take no pleasure in this and I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but there's actually more. Two weeks ago, CTV News reported that the same minister broke the rules when his staff tried to get the same constituency association to pay for “likes” on Facebook. It's almost as if following the rules is difficult for this minister. On the minister's constituency association financial statement, no mention of this woman's salary can be found.

1050

Today, I've written to Elections Ontario to ask for a full investigation into the Pickering–Uxbridge PC association's financial returns as to why there appears to be such a glaring error in them.

Speaker, what will it take for this minister to simply follow the rules? Will he let Elections Ontario do their job and investigate why his financial statements are filed incomplete?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): President of the Treasury Board to reply.

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Through you to the member opposite: I have seen this correspondence that you're referring to. I will make sure that the CFO of the riding association complies fully with anything that the electoral office may do. I thank you for bringing it to our attention.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN

Mr. Stan Cho: My question this morning is for the Minister of Transportation. It has long been known that political gridlock between levels of government has prevented big projects from getting built. We understood this when we promised Ontarians that we would invest in key transit infrastructure. We knew it was possible.

Last week, the province took another step with the city of Toronto towards building our four priority subway lines. Speaker, could the minister tell us about the progress that has been made between the province and the city of Toronto?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: I'd like to thank the member from Willowdale for the question. I'm happy to bring everyone in this House up to speed on the progress that we've made to date with the city of Toronto.

Our partnership with the city of Toronto is a key milestone in our plan to build public transit in the GTA. It is truly historic. After years of discussion, we finally have one single unified plan for subway expansion in Toronto. Our four priority projects constitute one of the largest undertakings in North America.

Last week, the province and the city signed a preliminary agreement to deliver our unified transit plan. Today, I'm pleased to announce that the province of Ontario, Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and Enbridge signed memoranda of understanding to improve coordination of our four priority transit projects. Partnership and collaboration is the only way we continue to move forward for the progress that we have achieved to date.

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you to the minister for that answer.

Creating one single unified plan that all three levels of government can agree on is no easy feat, but our government has managed to accomplish this. Our shared goal of addressing congestion and building better transit infrastructure has brought us to where we are today.

We agree that building the Ontario Line, the three-stop subway extension, the Yonge North extension and the Eglinton West extension will provide the most relief for the most commuters.

Can the minister tell us why our partnership and collaboration with the city of Toronto is so important to getting these projects built?

Hon. Caroline Mulroney: Thank you again to the member for the question. I would like to acknowledge the Premier and Mayor Tory for their commitment to making this happen.

Toronto city council did not just endorse our subway plan with an overwhelming majority, but they also directed the city manager to work with us to “identify all opportunities to accelerate the delivery of the expansion projects.”

Il y a une urgence ici. Les automobilistes et les voyageurs sont pris dans la congestion dans la région. Les Ontariens ne peuvent simplement plus attendre pour un système de transport en commun qui est amélioré. Nous avons pleinement l'intention de travailler en étroite collaboration avec la ville de Toronto dans le cadre de la plus grande expansion du métro dans l'histoire du Canada.

Je voudrais également prendre cette occasion pour rappeler à nos partenaires fédéraux que nous attendons toujours leur engagement pour financer 40 % de notre plan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take the opportunity to remind our federal partners that we're still waiting on confirmation of their 40% commitment to our plan.

LICENCE PLATES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians still want to know what the plan is to deal with this absurd licence plate fiasco. Yesterday, the

Minister of Government and Consumer Services decided to dodge and ditch the media rather than answer questions about faulty licence plates. While the cameras were waiting and when the lights were bright, the minister disappeared—not unlike her licence plates.

This government is botching their exciting new Tory blue licence plates just like they are botching education, the Ontario Autism Program and everything else, quite frankly, that they touch.

Safety should always be a priority, even in the face of exciting new vanity plates. Ontarians deserve to know how this happened, what is being done about it and when it will be fixed. Minister, what is the plan?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I just have to say to the opposition member over there, in response to what we heard, that we are focused on getting the job done. That's our number one priority. I'm telling you that I can confirm with you, Speaker, that Premier Ford has spoken to the president of 3M Canada on three separate occasions, and we are seeking an immediate solution to the issues that have been identified with their product. We're extremely frustrated and, quite frankly, disappointed with 3M that we're all at this point. But we are working together to remedy the issue. The licence plates were designed and tested with key stakeholders in mind. We are not happy with the results, and we are continuing to work hand in hand with 3M.

Speaker, we have heard concerns, we are listening and we are making sure that we get this right. We are taking concerns very seriously. We're frustrated and we're disappointed—

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Again to the Premier: This faulty-licence-plate muck-up is a glowing example of this government not taking accountability for its mistakes. The only thing that we have heard from the government is about their partnership with 3M and their technology—technology which, only a few days ago, was being celebrated by this minister.

It is dizzying to watch this government flip through damage control strategies. What is the actual plan going to be? Plan B could have been to use the reportedly 16,000 new white licence plates that were still in stock. However, those plates got sent back and scrapped. They had been bought and paid for by taxpayers, and this government decided to destroy them to get their blue vanity plates out fast—seemingly faster than they could be exhaustively tested.

This is a question that needs an answer. This kind of absurd test does not reflect well on this government or on its leadership. So what is the plan to fix these plates and keep people safe?

Hon. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to share with the member opposite that we are continuing to work with 3M Canada. We're going to absolutely continue to listen to

concerns. We're going to be continuously working diligently to remedy this situation. We're as frustrated and disappointed as anyone, but we are going to work together on a path forward to make sure that we uphold the plates that have been designed and tested with key stakeholders in mind. But we're also going to be taking into consideration the concerns that we have heard. Again, we're moving quickly with 3M to remedy this situation.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Premier. If I could take a moment, I want to wish the Premier a speedy recovery. By my count, I think this is the fourth time you've hit the roof in the last year. Speaker, it's looking like he might get repetitive strain.

The licence plate fiasco is emblematic of the Premier's record in government: a misplaced priority, bad decision, hastily implemented, bad result. Autism: same thing; climate change: same thing; public health: same thing. Education is headed in that direction. So my question for the Premier is: Will he listen to Ontario families and keep class sizes small?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Education to reply on behalf of the government.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: In the last election the people of this province, in their wisdom, rendered a decision that they would not proceed with the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government that had doubled the debt, increased taxation—the highest child care spaces in the nation. We saw more schools closed under one party than any government in the history of Ontario since Confederation.

In their wisdom, they chose a government that's focused on investing in what matters most to people in this province: more money in health care, more money in education, more money into social services that are consequential to the lives of working people.

Speaker, under our plan, we envision a positive commitment to education that sees students succeeding, getting jobs and being more productive in the economy. That is our plan, and it starts with keeping kids in class. That's what we're fighting for at the negotiating table.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, the licence plate is a 12-by-6 piece of metal. They can't even get the word "Ontario" big enough for cameras to read it. So I get a little concerned when they start messing with things like education. They can't get a licence plate right.

1100

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Speaker, through you to the Premier: Parents are telling you, "We don't want larger class sizes." They're saying, "We want to make sure that every child in the classroom gets the support they need so they can all learn—that child and my child, as well."

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the NDP for a heckle too. I know she's supportive of education. Thank you very much to the Leader of the Opposition. Thank you for your support.

Parents don't want—

Interjections.

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

I apologize to the member who has the floor.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order. The government side will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The official opposition will come to order.

The clock will start. Member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I don't know why the official opposition is heckling a party that has six members and that's not in government. I haven't figured that out yet. Maybe they can explain after question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Order.

Mr. John Fraser: Sorry; I'm having too much fun here.

Parents don't want a half-baked plan for online learning.

My question to the Premier is this: Will you listen to parents and just keep classrooms safe, strong places for kids to learn?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you so much for the question.

I just want to remind the MPP that the reason you have six people in the House is because you destroyed this province; you absolutely destroyed it. You increased taxes more than any government in the history of Ontario. You ran up hydro bills more than any government—

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

I ask the Premier to recognize that I'm standing up, and I ask him to take his seat. I will ask the Premier to address his comments through the Chair.

Start the clock. I ask the Premier to conclude.

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: They put us in debt and put every person in this chamber and everyone in Ontario in more debt than any other jurisdiction in the world—\$346 billion of debt, a \$15-billion deficit. And they sit back and wonder why they have six members? They're lucky to have six members.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Infrastructure.

For years, I asked the Wynne Liberal government to listen to the concerns of our local municipal leaders and to provide funding to address the critical infrastructure needs of municipalities in Sarnia-Lambton. Instead, their concerns fell on deaf ears, with infrastructure in my riding left crumbling to a state of disrepair.

Minister, I know we have committed to investing a historic \$144 billion in things like transit, roads and

hospitals right across this great province over the next 10 years. I can say that this investment will have a strong, positive impact on the economic development of Sarnia–Lambton, improving our ability to attract investment.

Can the minister please tell this House what infrastructure investments the Ontario government is making in my riding and across this province?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his important question.

I am very proud to stand in this place today and tell this House that under Premier Ford's leadership and with this government, we have nominated more than 350 projects to the federal government under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program for final funding approval. This includes 144 road, bridge, air and marine infrastructure projects and over 200 public transit projects, for a total provincial investment of more than \$480 million, through the public transit and rural and northern streams of the Infrastructure Canada program.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous Liberal government that we just heard about, we are listening to the concerns of our municipal partners and are making significant investments in infrastructure, while working to maximize the federal funding dollars that are available. We're building and improving infrastructure projects that are important to all of us in Ontario.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Minister, for that response. It's reassuring to be able to tell my municipalities in Sarnia–Lambton that our government hears their calls for help loud and clear, and that we are actively delivering on long-awaited infrastructure investments in Sarnia–Lambton.

I was thrilled to announce recently that our government nominated 13 projects for final federal approval under the ICIP. Two of these projects were under the rural and northern stream, with over \$2 million worth of provincial investments. The other 11 projects were nominated under the public transit stream of the ICIP funding agreement. I know these projects will attract investment and get people moving again.

Minister, Sarnia–Lambton is getting tired of waiting. When will the long-awaited federal approval finally arrive, so that the city of Sarnia and Lambton county can finally get their shovels in the ground?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I thank the member again for his question.

I understand the frustration of waiting that the member has and that his constituents have, as to why less than a third of the more than 350 projects that have been nominated to the federal government for approval have been completed. I remain optimistic that when the federal minister looks at these projects—that we hope she already has—the approval has to be in the mail. I'm hoping the mail comes soon, Mr. Speaker. And the minute that I receive the formal written approval, I will personally ensure that the member and his constituents—for the \$7.7 million

that they have been awarded, from the provincial government anyway—can move forward and they can put shovels in the ground. They can build those projects.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, infrastructure is a marquee part of our mandate on this side of the House, and we understand how important it is to the municipalities—

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

The next question?

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Yarde: My question is to the Premier. I recently heard from the York Region District School Board, which is concerned that mandatory e-learning is going to be particularly hard on students who already face systemic and institutional barriers to learning, including Indigenous, Black and racialized youth.

Mr. Speaker, students are already suffering, thanks to Conservative cuts to education. Now, this reckless plan to force even more kids out of the classroom is going to make things even worse.

Why does this government continue to believe that they know better than the teachers, the students and the parents who are all calling for the same—that this government stop this ridiculous plan?

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

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Obviously, through the negotiations, the aim of the government, including on subject matter like online learning, is to get a deal. Right now we're negotiating with two of our partners. The aim is to get predictability and stability in the sector. Our kids should be in school.

When it comes to the vision and when it comes to the mission of our negotiating mandate, it is to continue to see more investments under this Progressive Conservative government in public education than any government in the history of Ontario. But we expect better; we expect greater levels of accountability for the tax dollars in the system.

Right now, we have seen over 80 cents on the dollar spent on compensation. We want to see a strong return. We want to see more than 50% of grade 6 kids passing their math standards.

When it comes to online learning, we believe one of the critical skill sets our young people need in the job market is greater influence on technological fluency. We're going to do that by providing online learning for students in this province.

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

Mr. Kevin Yarde: Again to the Premier: It's not just students and parents in York and Peel region who don't want mandatory e-learning. Parents right across the province are saying that this isn't just a bad idea; it's downright absurd. Two thirds of parents think mandatory e-learning will be bad for their kids, and we know that

these cuts will have a disproportionately negative effect on racialized students.

Parents of Black and racialized students need to be confident that their children will get the education that they rightfully deserve. If the minister is truly listening to parents and students who are concerned about systemic racism in our schools, he would not impose mandatory e-learning courses.

Will the minister admit that his misguided e-learning program is a bad idea, and stop trying to make life worse for Ontario families?

1110

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. If we want to champion the interests of equity and diversity in this province, then we will stand together in opposition to a regulation that gives no consideration for equity considerations of new teachers in this province. We should speak with one voice, demanding that in this negotiation, regulation 274 sees some reform.

Right now, the system gives preference to union seniority. If we speak with a commitment to advance equity in the classroom, to see educators reflecting the diverse needs of their communities, then we will stand together, oppose this regulation and put students first in this negotiation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier, on the eve of International Women's Day.

Our previous government made strides in supporting women and others who have traditionally been disadvantaged in the workplace. We raised the minimum wage. We enhanced employment protections, and we passed the Pay Transparency Act to promote women's full and equal participation in the workforce.

Unfortunately, this government has rolled back these improvements to the labour force and to the advancement of gender equality in Ontario. The minimum wage increase was cancelled, paid sick days have been slashed, and the Pay Transparency Act, which has received royal assent, has been suspended indefinitely and without explanation.

Speaker, can the Premier explain why he decided not to enact the Pay Transparency Act, and will he commit to setting the date for the act to come into force by International Women's Day, on March 8 this year?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues.

Hon. Jill Dunlop: Thank you to the member for your question. Our government is committed to empowering all women and girls across Ontario.

While we live in a province that values inclusion and equal opportunity, we know that women and girls in Ontario still face many barriers. Women remain under-represented in political and corporate leadership and in some key sectors of our economy.

We also know that racialized women, Indigenous women, immigrant women, and women living with disabilities tend to experience even greater barriers across our province.

We also know that women experience a disproportionate risk of violence as well, and one in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime, Indigenous women being especially at risk.

We also know that gender stereotypes and gender biases develop early and affect the choices of girls and women, and often these biases follow women into the workplace.

Addressing these kinds of systemic barriers and gender biases is imperative for achieving full gender equality in Ontario.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I appreciate the member's response and the awareness of the problem. My question is, what are you doing about it?

Women still earn 74 cents to every dollar a man earns in this province. Speaker, suspending this legislation fits in with a larger pattern that we have seen with this government. They have cancelled planned increases to rape crisis centres, cut funding to the Ontario College of Midwives, and slashed billions of dollars of funding from social services and children's services.

In fact, the word "beer" was mentioned three times more in the last budget than the word "women"—50% of Ontario's population.

Speaker, can the Premier name a single action that his government has taken to promote gender equality in our province, and will he and his Minister of Finance commit to putting the budget through a gender-based lens?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The minister to reply? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Monte McNaughton: Let me remind the member opposite that she was part of a government that was in power for 15 years. On the eve of the last election, in 2018, they decided to raise this issue. But for 15 years, do you know what this party did? Some 300,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in the province of Ontario. I come from southwestern Ontario, where hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost. Many women's jobs were impacted.

Our plan for everyone in Ontario is working. Some 300,000 jobs have been created in 18 months. For the first time in over 10 years, wages are going up in the province of Ontario for women and men, and for the first time in 30 years, we have the lowest unemployment rate in the province of—

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

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is to the Associate Minister of Transportation. Through you, Speaker: Transit is one of the biggest concerns of my constituents in the riding of Oakville. People have been clear to me that they want adequate access to public transit, so that they can get home and to work quickly and spend less time in traffic idling in their cars while they could be spending more time with their families.

I'm happy to hear that our government is making a commitment to build transit-focused communities which would add more homes and more jobs around transit stations.

Can the minister please tell the House why it is so important to build transit-oriented communities in the GTA?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Through you, Mr. Speaker: The greatest opportunity before the people in the GTA is building fast, reliable public transit and more housing. Transit-oriented communities are about providing housing where people want it the most: near public transit.

On Tuesday, we took a big step forward. The Minister of Transportation tabled new legislation to build subway infrastructure faster. As we make preparations to get shovels in the ground and build subways, it's equally important that we seize this opportunity to build stations the right way.

On January 30, Toronto city council endorsed our memorandum of understanding for transit-oriented communities. Together, in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we will be providing more transit and more homes.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Thank you to the minister. I'm glad the minister and the government are committed to delivering transit-oriented communities and getting them built the right way. Building new transit stations with appropriate density and amenities for those who already live in a community isn't just good policy; it's common sense, especially for large municipalities like Toronto. It's good to see some leadership on this file, which will deliver more transit and more housing—two things that all of us in the House agree we need more of. There are many reasons as to why this approach should be taken.

Can the minister please inform the House of the great benefits that come when building transit-oriented communities around transit stations?

Hon. Kinga Surma: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Traditionally in the GTA, stations have been built in isolation—a lost opportunity. Through our transit-oriented communities program, we will not only be bringing fast, reliable transit to new communities, but we will also be building communities around future subway stations the right way: one thoughtful, integrated approach.

Transit-oriented communities will increase ridership, reduce congestion, create jobs and a mix of housing, and build complete communities based on good planning principles. By living near transit, Mr. Speaker, you're not forced to buy a car or pay high auto insurance rates. We are connecting people to places and making life easier and more affordable for the taxpayer.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier. Today, we are joined by Kenneth, who came all the way from St. Catharines. Kenneth is a 72-year-old

senior who lives by himself in a one-bedroom apartment in downtown St. Catharines. He has lived in the apartment for over a decade, but Kenneth's landlord is trying to evict him to undergo renovations. This is the second time Kenneth is faced with having to defend his home, after the same company dropped the first claim.

Throughout all of this, Kenneth has been dealing with terminal cancer. He just wants to spend the time he has left in his own home.

Premier, why does this government think creating anxiety and doing nothing to protect vulnerable seniors like Kenneth from losing their homes to renovations is okay?

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: I want to thank the member opposite for raising the concerns of constituents. We've heard concerns of the other constituents, Angela and Roland and Leonard and others, that they've brought up in the House.

We know that a house is more than a house; a house is a home. We know that's important to people. There is a process in place. There are rules in place. There are rules to be followed and decisions to be made.

So without knowing the very specifics of that situation, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: When somebody is renovating, there are rules around when somebody can let the property be upgraded. There are robust rules, and they've been in place for some time.

1120

I'm happy to chat with the member about the specific concern and see if there's anything we can do. Of course, if it's an active file, we can't intervene in that.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: I'm glad the minister will chat with me, but I'd like him to give answers to Kenneth.

Back to the Premier: Kenneth will not be able to afford another 500-square-foot bachelor apartment in his current building since new listings are double the price he is paying now.

Since taking office, this government has sided with developers time and time again. They have done nothing—nothing—to make life better for tenants like Kenneth. This government has scrapped rent control on new units. They have sat by and allowed rents to skyrocket, and they have created an environment that encourages landlords to pursue aggressive and illegal renovations, like the one that is happening to Kenneth and thousands of other people across this province.

Premier, what are you going to do to help people like Kenneth and the people all across this province who are suffering from illegal renovations, bullying and scare tactics?

Interjections.

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

The Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Part of this dynamic in Ontario is that we don't have enough rental housing. This is part of the challenge, and we're moving to fix that. We need more spaces for people to rent. We need to have places that people rent be up to standard. It's critical that we have properties up to standard, and sometimes you have to have a property renovated to bring it up to standard.

Again, I don't know the specifics of this situation, but we do know that, across Ontario, we are hearing from builders that they want to build rental-housing stock, but there are so many things in the way.

Interjection: Housing Supply Action Plan.

Hon. Doug Downey: That's why the Housing Supply Action Plan is so critical: 17,000 new units. It is incredible, what the Minister of Municipal Affairs and our team have done.

I look forward to creating more opportunity for more people to rent across Ontario.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Mr. Daryl Kramp: My question today is for the Solicitor General.

This Saturday, February 22, is Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Ontario. This offers an opportunity for all of us in this House, on all sides, to learn more and raise awareness about human trafficking.

Let's be clear: Human trafficking is a heinous crime that predominantly affects young women and girls from communities across this province—and around the world, actually. Indeed, about two thirds of all reported cases of human trafficking in Canada are right here in Ontario. We all have a role to play in combatting this issue, and it's a cause that I was proud to champion while serving as a member of Parliament in Ottawa and here in the Legislature with all of my colleagues who are so engaged with this issue.

Can the Solicitor General share how our government is working with community leaders and partners to bring awareness to this disgusting crime?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Thank you to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington. I know that you understand and appreciate how important this is. But it is also critical that we share that information with all citizens in Ontario.

Earlier today, my friend and colleague the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues and I attended a pop-up. It was hosted by Covenant House. Covenant House is raising awareness about human trafficking. This is not just going to be led and solved through government intervention. This is going to take multiple partners. When organizations, like Covenant House today, are stepping up and raising awareness about human trafficking, it helps all of us, because people need to understand how critically vile this crime is, when the average age is 13 years old—that's how old people are—when they start to engage in

and bring our young people into human trafficking. So a shout-out and congratulations to Covenant House. There are many other partners.

Our Premier and our government have made a commitment to tackle this heinous crime head-on. I am very much looking forward to working with all of our colleagues, hopefully on both sides of the House, to bring awareness to it, and ultimately shut down this crime.

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Well, I'd certainly like to thank the minister for her attention to this file, and I'm sure that all members in this House will agree that raising public awareness of human trafficking is an integral part of protecting vulnerable women and girls from exploitation.

However, awareness just isn't enough; action is necessary. That comes with a need to tackle the roots of the problem: intervening early, supporting survivors and holding offenders accountable.

That's no easy undertaking. It's a momentous task, and it requires very strong leadership. That's why I was pleased that the Solicitor General and the Associate Minister for Children and Women's Issues were named co-leads in the development of a provincial plan to finally help combat human trafficking. Can the Solicitor General update this House on her progress to date?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Our first priority: We committed \$20 million, each and every year, to services to support victims and hold offenders accountable. This funding is a suite of investments that we are making to combat human trafficking and child sexual exploitation, prevent and end violence against women, support victims of violence and exploitation, and end gun and gang activity.

Along with Premier Ford, Attorney General Doug Downey and Minister Dunlop, we recently convened a round table with key sectorial partners, including law enforcement and victim services, to share ideas and best practices on how we can develop this plan. I look forward to sharing more of those in the weeks and months ahead.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: My question is for the Premier. Students and parents in my riding are very concerned about this government's cuts to education. Pia Erkkila is one of the many parents that have contacted my office. She wrote to me and said, "The Ontario education system cannot continue to be cut and cut and cut ... as the years go on.

"We are not going to develop a future society and workforce, if ... not ensured that quality education is forefront in the province's decisions and actions."

When will the Premier stop the cuts, invest in education and invest in our children's future?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Question to be responded to by the Minister of Education.

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, how we achieve an

improved education system with better outcomes for the investments the taxpayers of this province are making, is by ensuring it is modern, by ensuring we are transforming and aligning it with the labour market needs of our economy. How we do that is by ensuring that when we select educators in this province, we choose the best teacher for the job. We ensure that qualification triumphs over union seniority.

This negotiation—how we maintain a good education system is by protecting, in writing, full-day kindergarten in this province, by ensuring that more money flows—as the Premier just said—in schools, in curriculum, in our kids, not in heightened compensation for the second-highest paid educators in the nation. How we improve education is by ensuring accountability for the student, delivering more investment for our schools and our kids. That's what we're trying to do. But first and foremost, it requires a good deal that we're fighting for, that keeps kids in class.

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

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: Back to the Premier: Pia, like many parents across the north, doesn't want to hear more talking points from this government. What they want is for the government to get back to the bargaining table, stop the cuts and start investing in our children's future.

Pia went on to say, "The recent announcement about class sizes and online learning course requirements for high school students is the worst possible thing to happen for ... students.

"Many teens do not have the necessary skills or discipline required to be successful in online courses.

"They require face-to-face encouragement and connections to succeed in learning," and I couldn't agree with Pia more. Will the Premier commit to helping students succeed and reverse this government's cuts?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: We're going to ensure our students succeed by continuing to invest more than ever before in public education. We're going to do that by announcing a four-year math strategy to lift math scores after a decade of stagnation by the former Liberal government. We're going to build new schools, after the largest school closure policy in the history of Ontario.

1130

Mr. Speaker, we're going to demand better for the taxpayer, for the parents and for the students of this province. We're going to fight hard for merit to be the guiding principle on hiring.

We're going to ensure that our kids do better, that they have access to high-wage, good-paying jobs. That's our vision, that's our mission, and the goal is to keep kids in class.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. As you know, Minister, there are more than

420 small, rural and northern communities across Ontario. Almost all of these communities face challenges in building, maintaining and repairing critical local infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water and waste water systems. Investing in community-based infrastructure projects helps these rural municipalities to continue to attract, support and sustain economic growth and job creation.

Ontario's economy is thriving and leading the country in jobs and economic growth. Every person in Sarnia–Lambton and every region in this province can share in this prosperity.

Can the minister please tell this House how our government is supporting small, rural and northern communities across Ontario through investments to build, maintain and repair local roads, bridges, water and waste water systems?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I would like to thank the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his question. As Minister of Infrastructure, I often hear from municipalities that they need sustainable funding to build roads, bridges and reliable transit in their communities. That is why, in November, our government advised eligible municipalities about their total formula funding for 2020 through the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund. This almost \$200 million in funding will allow communities to move forward with critical infrastructure projects while providing flexibility to address their unique needs.

On January 17, Premier Ford and I joined the MPP from Parry Sound–Muskoka up in Muskoka to announce the OCIF 2020 allocations for all 424 eligible communities. With this funding, we are working directly with our municipal partners, who can choose where to invest their 2020 community infrastructure program funding.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Minister, for that information. Minister, I was thrilled to learn that over \$6.1 million of OCIF formula funding was allocated to eight municipalities in my riding. Among those communities in Sarnia–Lambton receiving funding, the city of Sarnia will receive nearly \$3 million, the township of St. Clair will receive more than \$1.1 million, and the county of Lambton, almost \$1.1 million as well. In addition, the village of Oil Springs, the village of Point Edward, the township of Enniskillen, the town of Petrolia, and the town of Plympton-Wyoming will receive almost \$1 million in provincial infrastructure funding combined.

Can the minister please explain how this important funding can improve the current condition of the aging infrastructure in the communities of Sarnia–Lambton?

Hon. Laurie Scott: This is an important question to ask, from the member from Sarnia–Lambton. You know what? Predictability and stability in community infrastructure funding goes a long way for our small, rural and northern communities. We've all heard this from the Association of Municipalities convention, from the Rural Ontario Municipal Association delegations, at our local

agricultural fairs, and whenever we have an opportunity to meet with our municipal partners.

Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund was carefully designed to directly address the local priorities of our small, rural and northern communities, who face unique challenges in getting infrastructure built.

The Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund is an excellent example of how formula-based funding helps all 424 eligible communities to build and maintain their local roads and bridges, critical water and waste water systems.

By providing the municipalities with their allocations in a timely manner, we are helping them to budget—

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Education.

Parents and students in my community are overwhelmingly opposed to mandatory online learning. Lindsay, a London West parent, said, “Our young people are suffering from greater anxiety, depression and suicide rates than ever before. Why would we want them out of classes with supportive teachers and classmates?”

Brad, another London West parent, told me, “My children have the right to be taught by a human being, not a screen.”

George, a grade 10 student in my riding, wrote to me, “Teachers are required for our learning. I can’t count the amount of times I’ve looked to a teacher for help.”

Speaker, will the government listen to parents and students and withdraw its plan to fire teachers and force e-learning?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that our young people have access to the competencies required in the job market. We know, having spoken to for-profit and non-profit leaders in the economy, that they say to us that technological fluency is a critical competency required to get access to the jobs of the future. We agree, Mr. Speaker.

That’s why we’re offering a diversity of courses to students who, in London, perhaps wouldn’t otherwise have access to those courses in that region. We’re offering a gold standard of courses. We’re also ensuring that there are exceptions built in, so that not all kids have to take those courses. We’re ensuring that high-speed Internet is in every high school in the province at the start of this program in September 2020, and the courses we’re developing will not require Internet in order to use them.

Speaker, this is a program for every student. It’s a program to incent participation in the economy, and we believe it’s the right thing to do to get our young people job-ready for the economy of tomorrow.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, one of the many things that this minister fails to recognize about his ill-advised mandatory e-learning plan is that it is fundamentally unfair

to students whose families cannot afford high-speed Internet at home.

This is from an email from Luke Blank, a 29-year-old London West resident. He said, “Growing up poor meant I didn’t have Internet access and didn’t even have a home computer until I got a job to pay for it myself. If I were faced with mandatory e-learning ... [it’s] almost guaranteed I would have flunked.”

Why is this government plowing ahead with a plan that will marginalize and further disadvantage low-income students?

Hon. Stephen Lecce: Mr. Speaker, we are driving forward with a plan that ensures that the best educator is in the front of class. That is a common-sense principle which we believe parents want us to champion at the negotiating table. The best way to unleash the potential of students in London and every region of this province is to ensure that merit guides the hiring of our educators in this province in 2020. That is an expectation that parents have, and it’s one that we’re prepared to meet. In this negotiation, we want to make sure that merit drives decision-making and that ultimately the best educator is the one chosen to be at the front of the class.

BIRTH OF MEMBER’S NEPHEW

Mr. Roman Baber: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I hope it’s a point of order. Point of order?

Mr. Roman Baber: Speaker, I’d like to congratulate my sister, Dr. Marta Braun, and my brother-in-law, Jesse Braun, on the birth of their first child, my nephew, David Zev Braun, the first of the next generation of Babers and Brauns, who was born on February 13, 2020, at 7 pounds, 7 ounces, and had his bris and baby-naming ceremony early this morning. Mom and baby are doing great, and I couldn’t be happier.

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

This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1138 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I’ve got mixed feelings about this intro. This intro is to Vanessa Groves, my fabulous OLIP intern. This is her last day. She has done a great job. I’ve got mixed feelings because I’m sad to see her go. She has got an amazing, bright future ahead of her.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I apologize. I’m going to have to remind the members that introductions are names, organizations and ridings.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It’s my pleasure to introduce Manpreet Sindhar to the House today. Manpreet is with the Ryerson University constituency project and is an intern in my office.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Armand Anderson in the members' gallery. In addition, I also have a number of RNAO members who were present this morning. They are Betty Oldershaw, Katsiaryna Shehepanouskaya, James McGuigan, Jacob Zelina and Jessica Francis.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I would like to introduce the valuable guests who have come here to support my private member's bill. They are Dr. Anita Stewart, food laureate of the University of Guelph and founder of Food Day Canada; Dean Julia Christensen Hughes, Maggie McCormick and Jeff Stewart, University of Guelph; Kirsten Hanson, Metcalf Foundation; Cathy Lennon, Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Chris Cossitt and Stacey Ash, Ontario Pork; James Rilett and Roberto Sarjoo, Restaurants Canada; Ross Macfarlane, Good Food Innovation awards; Chef John Higgins, George Brown College; Robert Desautels, Rebecca Gordon, Katherine White and Fountain Santos, Neighbourhood Group of Restaurants; Lynn Siegal, HiLite Foods; Coby Schneider, CAMH; Laura Maxwell, Le Select; Chef John Morris, CN Tower; Chef Tonya Haverkamp, Egg Farmers of Ontario; Crystal Mackay, Loft32 Communication Consultants; and Anna Fischer, Food Day Canada.

I'd also like to introduce my staff: Christina Liu, Cathy Richards and Yvonne Guan. Welcome to Queen's Park

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I would like to introduce many of the people MPP Ke introduced. I will not go through all of their names, other than to say that many of them are from the great riding of Guelph, and I welcome you to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Some of them are from Wellington-Halton Hills as well, and we welcome you.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I think there are more from Perth-Wellington, Speaker. I just wanted to put that on the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Members are always right.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À LA TRAITE DES PERSONNES

Hon. Jill Dunlop: I rise to recognize Saturday, February 22 as Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, je prends la parole pour commémorer, le samedi 22 février, la Journée de sensibilisation à la traite des personnes.

Child and youth sexual exploitation is occurring in Ontario, and it is devastating young people, families and communities across our province and our country. While sex trafficking isn't limited to just females, victims are predominantly young women and girls, especially those from Indigenous communities and children in care, with over 70% under the age of 25. Even more shocking, the average age of recruitment is just 13 years old. This is simply unacceptable. Our government has zero tolerance for human trafficking.

Notre gouvernement a adopté une politique de tolérance zéro pour la traite des personnes.

No child or adult should live in fear that they might be sexually exploited, and no person who has been trafficked should feel that it is their fault or that they cannot get help. We cannot pretend it isn't happening in our province. We cannot pretend it isn't in our neighbourhoods. To make real progress, all Ontarians need to realize this crime is happening in every community.

This past summer, I was honoured to hold round table discussions across the province, with the help of our MPP colleagues from Mississauga Centre and Cambridge, to hear what those impacted by human trafficking had to say. We heard from survivors, Indigenous communities and organizations, law enforcement personnel and front-line service providers, among others. We heard of the tremendous obstacles women and girls face leaving their traffickers, establishing a healthy life and healing from their trauma. Everyone who participated in these discussions shared their insights, perspectives and suggestions with passion and purpose. We used this foundation as a starting point for developing a province-wide strategy to combat human trafficking.

I am proud to say that, last November, we stepped up the fight. We announced that our government is committing \$20 million per year for victim supports and anti-human-trafficking enforcement programs. This investment ensures survivor supports are available on an on-going basis, and that critical prevention and enforcement programs continue. More than half of this funding goes

towards prevention and direct supports to survivors, so they get the services they need to escape trafficking and rebuild their lives. This means funding for trauma-informed care, funding for shelters and those who help victims and survivors repair their lives. This is funding for mental health supports and culturally specific healing.

I'm honoured to be able to work on our new human trafficking strategy with the Solicitor General. Together we are building a stronger, cross-government strategy that balances awareness, care and enforcement. This means that while we are providing these vital supports to survivors and helping them rebuild their lives, we are also taking the fight to the traffickers to drive human trafficking from Ontario. And we are actively raising awareness and working with other provinces and the federal government, because trafficking does not know boundaries.

We need to work across the aisle, work across sectors and work across the country to take a meaningful stand against trafficking. Our children and youth deserve to live free from exploitation, and we owe it to them to step up and fight for them.

Les enfants et les jeunes méritent de vivre à l'abri de l'exploitation. Nous leur devons de nous mobiliser et de nous battre pour eux.

I look forward to what my colleague, the Solicitor General, has to say about this important day.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I'm grateful for this opportunity to join the Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues to reaffirm our government's commitment to aggressively fight human trafficking. Approximately two thirds of police-reported human trafficking violations in Canada occur here in Ontario. These crimes are happening in our communities, right before our eyes. This is completely unacceptable. There is no place in this province for a crime that robs women and young girls of their freedom, their dignity and their future. Ontario has an important role to play in confronting this crime.

As Associate Minister Dunlop said, our government is working on a new province-wide strategy to combat human trafficking. The new plan will build on existing initiatives already in place to fight human trafficking, including coordination and information-sharing between the OPP and municipal and First Nations police services through the Ontario Provincial Police anti-human-trafficking team; combatting human trafficking as a key revenue source for gangs through Ontario's Guns, Gangs and Violence Reduction Strategy; and addressing human trafficking on other priorities through provincial policing grants. Our new strategy will focus on raising awareness, supporting early intervention, increasing supports for survivors and holding criminals accountable.

1310

Ontario is experiencing an exceptional human tragedy, perpetrated by relentless criminal networks; our response must be just as relentless. I cannot state strongly enough our determination to bring an end to this heinous crime. Our government intends to deliver on our commitment to combat child sexual exploitation and human trafficking in our province and stop the criminals who are profiting from

this appalling crime. We will continue to give our police and justice partners the tools and resources they need to keep our communities safe and track down the criminals who prey on our children. It is in everyone's interest to uphold respect for human dignity and to defend the rights of women, children and all Ontarians. I am confident all members of this House will support our plan to escalate the fight against human trafficking in Ontario and bring criminals to justice.

I would like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure and member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, Laurie Scott, for her tireless work over many years to raise the profile of this terrible crime and ultimately work to end human trafficking.

Everyone deserves freedom from exploitation, fear and violence. Our government won't rest until these criminals are off the streets. We are committed to ending the crisis that is unfolding in communities across our province and making Ontario a leader in the fight against human trafficking in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

Ms. Jill Andrew: Human trafficking targets are often trapped in social, economic and physical circumstances that place them closest to the margins of despair.

Considering the government refuses to listen to rape crisis centre front-line staff, survivors, the homeless, immigrants and to the needs of disabled women and girls and those living with mental health challenges who are trafficked, it's really difficult to believe in their announcement. We are supposed to believe that a Conservative government that has no provincial plan to address poverty, homelessness, anti-Black racism, food insecurity or anti-Indigenous oppression now has a plan to address, fully and robustly, anti-human trafficking.

Are survivors of sex and labour trafficking at your decision-making tables, government?

Conservatives refer to human trafficking as Ontario's dirty little secret. But here's the thing: When this government's policies and procedures aren't helping the most vulnerable people in our society, that creates a lot of dirty little secrets. It also creates the social and economic conditions that can actually push women and children into the grips of sexual trafficking and labour trafficking: human trafficking.

So rather than just oppose, standing here as a survivor or as someone with a graduate degree in women and gender studies, I'm here to propose solutions.

Make violence against women a hate crime. While you're cracking down on the perpetrators, crack down on the social issues that you've created that are helping to prop up human trafficking.

Make the Pay Transparency Act law. Poor women and girls making under livable wages are more exposed and prone to violent situations—especially when you're giving yourself a raise as the government.

Stop the cuts against legal aid so people can actually access justice. If this government says they're the eyes and ears of the most vulnerable, then actually listen.

Create affordable housing.

Declare homelessness a crisis in this province so we can get those women away from monsters and into independent living.

And last, but certainly not least, fund survivors of historical child sexual abuse. Reinstate pain and suffering funds for survivors cut by this government.

Thank you very much, Speaker. When the government addresses these, then they're actually addressing the root causes of human trafficking.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Human Trafficking Awareness Day. I see my colleague and I are on the same line.

Ontario has the unfortunate distinction of being the place where two thirds of Canada's police-reported human trafficking cases happen. We also know that most of these cases involve women and girls. As Ontario legislators, we should be alarmed by this, and when we act to remedy it, we should go out of our way to support the victims. We should be generous with mental health, housing, legal and income supports. We should be generous in helping them rebuild their lives.

But we also need to approach the challenge of human trafficking, systemically. Human trafficking thrives when people, especially young people, are vulnerable. While we should go after perpetrators and traffickers, we also need to remember that part of the solution is to think carefully about the environment that we're creating for our youth. Is this what we do in the House to make young people safer, or more vulnerable? That's the question that we must ask ourselves. When there is a family breakdown, for example, are there supports in the community? Are there places that they can turn to? If a young person has mental health challenges, do they have access to counselling? If a child's home life is unbearable, do we have enough teachers or social workers in our schools to notice? If a young person is living in poverty, are we generous enough with social assistance to lift them up?

As legislators, it is our duty to help provide safe and stable communities for all Ontarians. We must recognize the social and economic factors at the root of trafficking and work to address them. While awareness days like these are good, prevention means also tackling human trafficking from a systemic approach, by giving vulnerable, at-risk Ontarians the support they need in their communities.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Today, as we observe the third annual Human Trafficking Awareness Day in Ontario, I'd like to highlight the valuable contributions some very important organizations in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood have made. East Metro Youth Services; Scarborough Women's Centre; Toronto police, 43 Division; YouthLink; and the Boys and Girls Club of East Scarborough have taken a stand in the fight against human trafficking, and their efforts have been instrumental in advancing safety and security in Scarborough-Guildwood. I'd like to thank these organizations for the work that they do to identify and support victims, survivors, family members and all those impacted by human trafficking.

It is imperative that the province continues to fund community supports to fight human trafficking. Community organizations are at the front line to transition survivors of trafficking to heal and to live healthy, independent lives. These programs, such as the Gender-Based Violence Program at East Metro Youth Services, are instrumental in providing peer support, therapy and community outreach to assist human trafficking survivors to attain a new lease on life.

I'd like to share Lisa's story, whose name has been changed to protect her identity. Lisa has worked as a peer mentor at East Metro Youth Services and coaches survivors of human trafficking to rebuild their self-esteem, confidence and independence. Lisa is an inspiration to those she mentors, but she had a difficult path. Lisa is a victim of domestic human trafficking who battled drug and alcohol addictions. She was referred to the Gender-Based Violence Program at East Metro Youth Services after attempting suicide as a result of her trauma.

In her words, "When I started in the Gender-Based Violence Program, I was broken, empty and felt worthless. Now, I feel the opposite. I don't rely on others to validate me. I trust my decisions today. I genuinely feel happy...."

Lisa is bringing this experience to other survivors so that they, too, can live healthy and fulfilling lives. While Lisa's story has a happy ending, many other victims of gender-based violence are still waiting for the resources that they need to heal. The current government is falling short of its responsibilities to prevent and support victims of sexual violence. The government has disbanded the round table on gender-based violence, which brought together experts to provide advice and solutions to the government. Also, the government has cancelled \$14 million in funding that had already been earmarked to 42 sexual assault centres in this province.

1320

Just this week, the Toronto Star reported that the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres has been left uncertain about \$1-million band-aid funding. They don't know if it's going to continue. The rape crisis centres are overwhelmed and they have limited resources. Victims of sexual violence are on wait-lists for months.

Speaker this, is wrong. On this day, when we are recognizing human trafficking and this heinous issue that is affecting people in our province, I want this government to stand up for women, children and vulnerable people in this province, who deserve better.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I rise to speak on a day of great importance, a day I wish that we did not have to speak about, but here we are. February 22 is Human Trafficking Awareness Day. I want to commend the many organizations in my riding and across this province that deliver services for survivors and remind us that we have to continue speaking out loud and clear about what a serious issue human trafficking is in our province.

We also must recognize that the sexual exploitation of persons through human trafficking is a crime that disproportionately affects women, girls and other socially marginalized groups. Indigenous women and girls are

especially vulnerable. Youth in care, the homeless, LGBTQ+ and those with limited status are highly at risk.

Speaker, if we are going to be serious about addressing this crime, we must adequately fund programs that prevent trafficking, provide adequate resources for organizations that support survivors, and fund social services that protect and support the most vulnerable people in our society.

I would urge the government to make the \$1-million band-aid that they put in for rape crisis centres last year permanent, long-term funding for organizations that support the survivors of human trafficking in our communities.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Paul Calandra: I am seeking unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding notice of private members' business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice with respect to private members' business. Agreed? Agreed.

Once again, government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that notice be waived for ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr. Hillier, on the order of precedence drawn on November 4, 2019.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that notice be waived for ballot item number 4, standing in the name of Mr. Hillier, on the order of precedence drawn on November 4, 2019.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Paul Calandra: Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

Again, the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: I move that the Standing Committee on Social Policy meet on Monday, February 24, 2020, during its regularly scheduled meeting time for public hearings on Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators; and

That witnesses be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis; and

That the deadline to file amendments with the Clerk of the Committee be 7 p.m. on Monday, February 24, 2020; and

That the committee meet on Tuesday, February 25, 2020, during its regularly scheduled meeting time for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 141.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Calandra has moved that the Standing Committee on Social Policy meet on Monday, February 24, 2020, during its regularly scheduled meeting time for public hearings on Bill 141, An Act respecting registration of and access to defibrillators; and

That witnesses be scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis; and

That the deadline to file amendments with the Clerk of the Committee be 7 p.m. on Monday, February 24, 2020; and

That the committee meet on Tuesday, February 25, 2020, during its regularly scheduled meeting time for clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 141.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Faisal Hassan: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas some neighbourhoods across the GTA have been unfairly targeted by discriminatory practices in the insurance industry;

"Whereas people in these neighbourhoods are penalized with crushing auto insurance rates because of their postal code;

"Whereas the failure to improve government oversight of the auto insurance industry has left everyday families feeling the squeeze and yearning for relief;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ban the practice of postal code discrimination in the GTA when it comes to auto insurance premiums."

I fully support this petition. I will be affixing my signature to it and providing it to page Finnegan to deliver to the table.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas people who are on a farm without consent may not be aware that they can actually spread diseases and contaminants which can cause stress and harm to the animals;

"Whereas many farmers across Ontario are worried about trespassers putting their animals and the farmers' families at risk. For many farmers their home and their work is the same place and everyone has a right to feel safe in their own home;

“Whereas despite the right of people to participate in legal protests, it does not include the right to trespass on private property, to make farmers feel unsafe in their homes or to risk introducing disease or contaminants to our animals or food supply;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to protect farmers, their animals, livestock transporters, and the integrity of Ontario’s food supply, while also ensuring that farmers feel safe in their homes and at the workplace by maintaining animal health and safety by immediately passing Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, so that:

“(1) Persons are prohibited from entering in or on the animal protection zones without the prior consent of the owner or occupier of the farm, facility or premises;

“(2) Persons are prohibited from interfering or interacting with farm animals in or on the animal protection zones or from carrying out prescribed activities in or on the animal protection zones without the prior consent of the owner or occupier of the farm, facility or premises;

“(3) Persons are prohibited from interfering with a motor vehicle that is transporting farm animals and from interfering or interacting with the farm animals in the motor vehicle without the prior consent of the driver of the motor vehicle.”

I fully support this petition and I give it to page Abbey.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “Whereas” the government’s “new education scheme seeks to dramatically increase class sizes starting in grade 4;

“Whereas the changes will mean thousands fewer teachers and education workers and less help for every student;

“Whereas secondary students will now be forced to take at least four of their classes online, with as many as 35 students in each course;

“Whereas” the government’s “changes will rip over \$1 billion out of Ontario’s education system by the end of” their “term; and

“Whereas kids in Ontario deserve more opportunities, not fewer;

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

“Demand that the government halt the cuts to classrooms and invest to strengthen public education in Ontario.”

Speaker, I fully agree. I’m going to sign it and give it to Finnegan to bring up to the front.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Parm Gill: Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas people who are on a farm without consent may not be aware that they can actually spread diseases

and contaminants which can cause stress and harm to the animals;

“Whereas many farmers across Ontario are worried about trespassers putting their animals and the farmers’ families at risk. For many farmers their home and their work is the same place and everyone has a right to feel safe in their own home;

“Whereas despite the right of people to participate in legal protests, it does not include the right to trespass on private property, to make farmers feel unsafe in their homes or to risk introducing disease or contaminants to our animals or food supply;

1330

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to protect farmers, their animals, livestock transporters, and the integrity of Ontario’s food supply, while also ensuring that farmers feel safe in their homes and at the workplace by maintaining animal health and safety by immediately passing Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act , so that:

“(1) Persons are prohibited from entering in or on the animal protection zones without the prior consent of the owner or occupier of the farm, facility or premises;

“(2) Persons are prohibited from interfering or interacting with farm animals in or on the animal protection zones or from carrying out prescribed activities in or on the animal protection zones without the prior consent of the owner or occupier of the farm, facility or premises;

“(3) Persons are prohibited from interfering with a motor vehicle that is transporting farm animals and from interfering or interacting with the farm animals in the motor vehicle without the prior consent of the driver of the motor vehicle.”

I will sign this, Mr. Speaker, and I will present it to page Daniel.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition signed by hundreds of residents of London West, and it is about affordable housing. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas for families throughout much of Ontario, owning a home they can afford remains a dream, while renting is painfully expensive;

“Whereas consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments have sat idle, while housing costs spiralled out of control, speculators made fortunes, and too many families had to put their hopes on hold;

“Whereas every Ontarian should have access to safe, affordable housing. Whether a family wants to rent or own, live in a house, an apartment, a condominium or a co-op, they should have affordable options;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately prioritize the repair of Ontario’s social housing stock, commit to building new affordable homes, crack down on housing speculators, and

make rentals more affordable through rent controls and updated legislation.”

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I affix my signature and will give it to page Rudra to take to the table.

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Aris Babikian: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the ban on hunting and trapping in sections of Ontario to protect the eastern hybrid wolf was put in place without regard for the overall ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban has adversely affected the ability of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), hunters and trappers to properly manage animal populations and Ontario's ecosystem;

“Whereas this ban is no longer needed and is in fact causing more damage to Ontario's ecosystem and increasing unnecessary encounters between wildlife and Ontarians;

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

“That the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry immediately lift the ban on hunting and trapping set in place to protect the eastern hybrid wolf.”

I will support this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Rachel.

VETERANS MEMORIAL

Mr. Percy Hatfield: This petition comes from Stacey Neveu.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas during the war in Afghanistan, Canada lost 159 military personnel;

“Whereas those brave souls were driven along the Highway of Heroes between CFB Trenton and the coroner's office in Toronto;

“Whereas since Confederation, 117,000 Canadian lives have been lost in military conflict;

“Whereas there is a recognized and celebrated plan to transform the Highway of Heroes into a living tribute that honours all of Canada's war dead;

“Whereas that plan calls for the planting of two million trees, including 117,000 beautiful commemorative trees adjacent to Highway 401 along the Highway of Heroes;

“Whereas this effort would provide an inspired drive along an otherwise pedestrian stretch of asphalt;

“Whereas the two million trees will recognize all Canadians who have served during times of war;

“Whereas there is a fundraising goal of \$10 million;

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

“That the current government of Ontario put its financial support behind this fundraising effort for the Highway of Heroes Tree campaign.”

I fully support it. I'm going to sign it and give it to Abbey to bring down to the table.

TAXATION

Ms. Christine Hogarth: My petition is called “Stop Justin Trudeau's Carbon Tax.”

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government for the people was elected on a mandate to make life more affordable for Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Made-in-Ontario Environment Plan is currently working to reduce targets by the previously agreed upon Paris accord targets without a carbon tax; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province that is meeting the goals of the 30% reduction rates agreed to in the Paris accord; and

“Whereas the seniors, workers, families and small businesses of Ontario cannot afford another tax burden on every purchase they make;

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

“Fight the federally imposed Justin Trudeau carbon tax with every tool at the government's disposal.”

I agree with this petition. I have already signed it and I'm happy to hand it to Catharine.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My petition is “Support Bill 153, the Till Death Do Us Part Act.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are 35,000 people on the wait-list for long-term care; and

“Whereas the median wait time for a long-term-care bed has risen from 99 days in 2011-12 to 152 days in 2018-19; and

“Whereas according to Home Care Ontario, the cost of a hospital bed is \$842 a day, while the cost of a long-term-care bed is \$126 a day; and

“Whereas couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

“Whereas Ontario seniors have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity in care; and

“Whereas Bill 153 amends the Residents' Bill of Rights in the Long-Term Care Homes Act to provide the resident with the right upon admission to continue to live with their spouse or partner;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Long-Term Care to pass Bill 153 and provide seniors with the right to live together as they age.”

I completely agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it and give it to Juliana to take to the Clerk.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Dave Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas after 15 years of neglect under successive Liberal governments the justice system grew outdated and unnecessarily complex;

“Whereas Ontario’s class action legislation has not been significantly updated in more than 25 years. The current system is outdated, slow and doesn’t always put people at the centre of class actions in Ontario;

“Whereas lives can be—and have been—destroyed by serious crimes like sharing intimate images without consent. Cyberbullies can communicate broadly and quickly, making targets feel like they have no escape and often enduring mental and emotional harm;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to stand up for victims and law-abiding citizens, provide better, more affordable justice for families and consumers, and simplify a complex and outdated justice system to better serve the people of Ontario by immediately passing Bill 161, An Act to enact the Legal Aid Services Act, 2019 and to make various amendments to other Acts dealing with the courts and other justice matters, so that:

“(1) A flexible, sustainable and accountable legal aid system is built...;

“(2) Ontario’s outdated class action legislation is updated...;

“(3) Criminals don’t profit from crimes...;

“(4) How a small estate is handled is simplified...;

“(5) Notary and commissioner services are modernized...;

“(6) It is made easier for cyberbullying victims to sue their offender...;

“(7) In the tragic death of a loved one families are given closure...;

1340

“(8) Who can perform marriage ceremonies is expanded...;

“(9) Lawyers and paralegals are held to the highest ethical standards...;

“(10) Juror privacy and security is protected...”

I fully endorse this petition, will sign my name to it and give it to page Rudra.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND LOBBYIST

TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2020

LOI DE 2020 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ ENVERS LE PUBLIC ET LA TRANSPARENCE DES LOBBYISTES

Mr. Hillier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 162, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, the Members’ Integrity Act, 1994 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 162, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l’Assemblée législative, la Loi de 1998 sur l’enregistrement des lobbyistes, la Loi de 1994 sur

l’intégrité des députés et la Loi de 2006 sur la fonction publique de l’Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I’m pleased to have the opportunity to offer my perspectives and reasons why I believe it is important—indeed, imperative—for this assembly to consider and examine the merits of this bill.

Ontario has long been an outlier, standing apart not only from other Westminster Parliaments but also other Canadian provinces and the House of Commons, with regard to the lack of oversight and accountability of elected members, members of the public service and the registration of lobbyists. I consider it a failure that this House has long neglected and failed to resolve these long-standing shortcomings. However, that is not a view just of myself. In the summer of 2016, at the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable David Wake, made a deputation to that committee. He spoke and explained these very shortcomings, and he also indicated to that committee his expectations that the government would one day take heed and reform. Unfortunately, neither the past nor current administrations have found the time to make accountability and transparency a priority. I trust all members in this House will agree that accountability and transparency ought to be a priority. So Bill 162 is an opportunity.

Let’s start with the proposed changes to lobbying in the bill—and they are much modelled along the lobbyist act that’s in place in the federal House of Commons. Presently, ministers are not required to disclose when they meet with a lobbyist or what they discuss. Additionally, Ontario law does not require the owners of lobbyist firms to disclose their meetings with ministers and their staff. Bear in mind, in Ontario, we also still allow lobbyists to make political contributions to the ministers that they are lobbying. Finally, in Ontario, violations under the Lobbyists Registration Act are non-existent. Currently, the greatest penalty a lobbyist can be subjected to for wrongdoing—the individual lobbyist—is that the individual would be prohibited from registering as a lobbyist for two years. That is the extent of the consequence. If you’re an unregistered lobbyist, the most penalty you can get is not to be allowed to be a registered lobbyist.

Next is the Public Service of Ontario Act. Currently, the only person who can bring a complaint of wrongdoing by a member of the public service is another member of the public service. That means if any member of this House sees actions that amount to wrongdoing, you are actually prevented by the law from initiating a complaint with the commissioner.

But it gets worse—and we saw this in evidence last June, when a member of the Premier’s office was engaged in unsavoury practices and the NDP requested an investigation. What was the Integrity Commissioner’s response to that request? He stated that even if he could, the only penalty he could levy was to inform the minister of the inappropriate conduct, and he’s not even permitted to make it public.

Laws without consequences, Speaker, are not laws; they're not even guidelines. Bill 162 deals with the Members' Integrity Act as well, which currently prevents the commissioner from initiating an investigation of an elected member.

During the summer of 2016 committee hearings, the Integrity Commissioner informed the members of all these facts and expressed a deep interest in seeing government bring forward reforms in all these categories.

Finally, Bill 162 provides a process, an open and transparent process, to investigate violations of the Legislative Assembly Act and identifies who will do the investigation.

In nearly 14 years in this House as an elected member, I can say without reservation that members conduct themselves with honesty and integrity, that the public service conducts themselves with honesty and integrity, and that lobbyists conduct themselves with honesty and integrity. But there are exceptions to every rule, Speaker. There are names that we remember in this House who are exceptions to those rules. Chris Mazza, the CEO of Ornge, got away with no penalties for all the damage that happened at Ornge air ambulance. And David Livingston and the deleted emails: Although he was found in a criminal fashion and although there was a violation of the Legislative Assembly Act, there was no penalty for deleting emails. That was a contempt of this House.

I could go on with other names, Mr. Speaker; there's many of them. Well, there's not many of them, but they have sullied all our reputations, those few people. They bring dishonour to this House. More often than not, they get away scot-free. Speaker, I expect better. I know my constituents expect better. I trust this House and all of its members expect better.

I would like to just share with the House a few quotes from that standing committee, a few quotes from the Integrity Commissioner, David Wake. These are direct quotes. You can look them up in Hansard.

The first one is: "This means that in the event that I find that a lobbyist has placed a public office-holder in a conflict of interest, I have the power to prohibit the lobbyist from lobbying" as a registered lobbyist for "two years." That's from the Integrity Commissioner.

He went on further to say, "I have no independent powers to examine the conduct of any MPP. It may be helpful for the committee to know that integrity commissioners in five other Canadian jurisdictions do have the power ... Saskatchewan, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut" and the federal House.

"As the ethics executive for ministers' staff, I can initiate an inquiry to determine if a minister's staff" is involved in activities that have "breached the rules." However, "if I find that there is a breach by a member of a minister's staff, I'm required to advise the minister—that is all I can do," David Wake informed the committee.

1350

He further went on to say, "In BC, my counterpart has the authority to initiate inquiries on his own. The legislative scheme of that province clearly allows the commissioner to consider whether a politician's activities created either an actual or apparent conflict of interest."

I could go on. The Hansard is complete. The Integrity Commissioner spoke at length with the committee—for hours—and entertained our questions. There was rigorous examination.

Here's one: When I asked David Wake if he became aware of a matter, he said, "The point is, unless another MPP brings the complaint to me, I cannot act. I cannot initiate an investigation. I can't even begin to ask questions about it.... That's the only power I have under the Public Service of Ontario Act: to report to the very minister whose staff member has committed a breach of the act...."

Can we imagine—I know David Wake said this at the committee. He said, as he was making his deputation—and the members were astonished. My colleague the member for Leeds and Grenville, now the Minister of Municipal Affairs, was there. The member from Kitchener-Waterloo was there. I believe the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry was on the committee. The Integrity Commissioner said that he could hear the penny drop with that statement. We were so astonished that our accountability and oversight was non-existent.

I want to end off with this. There was quite an exchange between the member for Kitchener-Waterloo and Guy Giorno as well—a highly respected lawyer and respected authority on ethics. This was from the member for Kitchener-Waterloo, who stated, "So, as a committee, we should look at closing the loophole" on these issues. Mr. Giorno responded, "Yes.... Except there's no loophole; there's just nothing there."

He went on to say, "It's great to have a piece of paper; it's great to have the rules. But unless there's enforcement, then people can ignore them. Certainly, my take-away from the Federal Accountability Act is that things need to be enforceable. There need to be consequences for doing what the law says you shouldn't do."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Paul Calandra: I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I just thank the honourable member across for bringing this forward.

I'm not going to speak very long on this bill, and I hope the honourable member won't take it in any way as a lack of proper preparation on it or insult that this is not a serious piece of legislation that he's brought forward. Although it's a short bill, there are a lot of changes in here which will have a number of impacts, not only on all members of this Legislature but outside of the Legislature as well.

At the outset, let me just say this: I have always believed that it is the members of this Legislature who have the ultimate authority over each other. I do believe that in my time in office, both here and federally, members have by and large always acted honourably in their dealings, not only with lobbyists but with each other. The same goes for the public service.

I do believe—I know the member opposite isn't suggesting this and I don't want to give the illusion that he is. I have found often that outside counsel, outside advice, has been an important part of helping me shape some of

the decisions that I have made, again, whether it's here or in Ottawa.

But as I said, Madam Speaker, because of the significant changes that the member is contemplating here, some of which have an impact on me as government House leader, I can tell the member that this caucus will be supporting this. I hope he will agree with me on this: There is much more consultation that needs to be done, much more research that I will need to do, as this piece of legislation makes its way forward.

With that, again, I thank the member for bringing it forward. We will be supporting it. I hope to work with the member to have a more fulsome understanding of the things that he's wanting to do, and also to be able to work with colleagues on both sides of the House to make sure that what it is that we are suggesting, and what we ultimately decide to do, is in the best interests of all colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation.

I wish to thank the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for bringing this motion forward. I just heard the government House leader say they will be supporting it, because it needs more work and more consultation. I think that's good. I sincerely hope that the government members will say at the end of the day that this idea has merit and they won't just stick another brick in the wall of silence and allow the status quo to prevail.

Obviously, the status quo hasn't been working. We saw that during the last Liberal administration when the scandal broke over what the media termed the “cash-for-access scandal,” that approach that former Liberal ministers took. They bought into it. They would attend a party fundraiser and allow ministry stakeholders to bend their ears and pad their pockets all in the name of “nudge, nudge, wink, wink,” until the stories broke in the media and the Premier of the day had to put a stop to it.

Speaker, I'd like to think that most of us come to this place with honourable intentions. I like to think that most of us believe in an open and transparent system of government. We've seen what happens sometimes when the people at the top of the legislative food chain get busted for rewarding their friends and relatives with cushy jobs and appointments. Of course, on the other hand, too often we've seen little or no action taken in other instances, where political patronage is seen as a just reward.

It doesn't have to be this way. We have an opportunity today to circumvent the practice of diminishing the currency of honest exchange. Let's shine the light on the questionable lobbying which ends in a friend, relative or party favourite reaping the rewards of a generous political benefactor.

Sometimes when a minister in this House stands to answer a question, I hear this old Paul Simon tune playing in my ear: “Slip slidin' away / Slip slidin' away ... the

nearer your destination ... you're slip slidin' away” from a truthful answer or from the spotlight as ministers go scurrying away into the darkness of obfuscation rather than admit to a mistake or an allegation that they know to have merit.

When the friends of a government get away with influencing public policy behind closed doors—over the objections, planning and policies of a bureaucracy sworn to neutrality—and these friends line their pockets with public dollars for inferior practices and policies contrary to the best interests of the public, we all lose. Collectively, our democracy suffers, our integrity suffers, our reputations are shattered and our supporters shake their heads and say, “You're all the same.”

But, Speaker, we're not all the same. However, this motion offers an opportunity for us all to get on the same page and declare our intentions to state publicly that we're not all the same and we want to do better. We want to be seen as promising to change the system for the better.

We want to shine the light in the backrooms and scare away the monsters, the political bagmen hiding in the closets and under the beds who say, “It's always been done this way.” It hasn't always been done this way, it should never have been done that way, and we should agree, all of us today, that it will never be done that way again here in Ontario in our provincial Parliament, the people's House. We have the chance today to lift the rug and get rid of the crap that's been swept under there in the past.

1400

Speaker, I well remember the former Premier standing in this chamber and saying on the record that she would never sell our public hydro system, but Liberal insiders saw nothing wrong with that. They convinced her otherwise. They lobbied—they may have benefited; the public certainly didn't—and the Liberal Party at the end of the day paid a price at the polls, and they're still paying it today.

This motion will help end such deceit. It's a lesson to the government members. It's a fair warning: Change the old ways, get rid of the bad actors and the bad apples, or get ready for the same results as the last Liberal government who thought they could get away with whatever they wanted. The public is watching. The public needs assurance that this is a just piece of legislation. This government should be aware that not only should justice be done, it must be seen to have been done.

There's no harm in admitting to a mistake. It's never too late to correct a legislative shortcoming. If it's good enough for the parliamentarians in Ottawa and those in Saskatchewan, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Nunavut, it should be good enough for those of us here who believe in openness, transparency and accountability in Ontario's provincial Parliament.

As the member stated earlier when he was speaking to this bill, laws without consequences are not good laws. Let's tighten the laws, let's tighten our integrity and let's unleash the powers of the Integrity Commissioner. The public is watching and the public needs assurance. As I said, this is a just piece of legislation, and I want to thank

the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston for bringing it forward.

I take the government House leader at his word when he says that there's a lot in there, but they're going to go away and work on it and improve what the member has brought up today. I think, at the end of the day, if that happens, we will all benefit in the eyes of the public.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to speak in support of Bill 162. I just want to take a moment—and I think all MPPs feel this way—but every day I walk into this House, I pinch myself and I think, “I can't believe I work in such a place,” and I'm honoured to hold this position, to not only represent my riding of Guelph but to be an MPP working in this House each and every day. I think about how essential it is for all of us to earn the public's trust every day that we come to work in this House by acting with honesty and integrity and ensuring that the rules and procedures of the House and the acts that govern this place uphold us to that integrity and ensure accountability.

So I'm not going to mince my words, Speaker: Backroom deals and unethical lobbying practices have no place in Ontario. Questionable or unethical conduct, whether it's by a member or by staff have no place in Ontario. That's why I was pleased when the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston brought forward and tabled this bill, because it's really a bill that's designed to protect the public, to protect all of us and to ensure trust in the integrity of our government. I'm not going to go into all the details of the four pieces of legislation the bill seeks to change, but I want to mention two experiences I've had in the last almost two years that I've been here.

First of all, I was surprised to learn, in the first fall that I was here, when I asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate questionable conduct by a political appointee—the Integrity Commissioner said that he would be willing and able to engage in that investigation, but I was surprised to learn that that investigation would not be made public. I felt that given the issues at stake, the public needed to know what the results of that investigation would be. There are times when the Integrity Commissioner, for privacy reasons, shouldn't make things public, but there are times when the results of investigations, at his discretion, should be made public. To have the member bring that forward, I think, is an important change.

The other one is that when there were questions about the appointments process, I put forward a five-point plan of ways in which we could reform the appointments process to, I think, restore public trust in that process. I was surprised to learn that only members can ask for an investigation if they think something inappropriate has been done. It's not always only members who are aware of the need for a potential investigation, so to have the member address that issue as well, I think, is vitally important.

I'm pleased to learn that it sounds as if all parties on all sides of the House today are going to support Bill 162. I look forward to seeing this bill debated at committee and

brought forward to third reading, because I think it's an important bill and I think the member has a lot of background and history of how this House operates and how this place operates. I'm encouraged that everyone is going to vote for that.

I'd also like to take a moment before my time is up, given the fact that I'm going to have to venture off for a little bit, just to say that I want to express my support for Bill 163 as well, to proclaim Food Day in Ontario, which I know we're debating next. I hope all members of this House support both Bill 162 and Bill 163.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today as the Ontario NDP critic for democratic reform to participate in the debate on Bill 162, the Public Accountability and Lobbyist Transparency Act.

I'm proud of my critic portfolio, because it really is at the core of everything we do in this place, but I think that during the context of this debate it is important to think about what is happening around us. We know that confidence in public institutions is absolutely fundamental to a healthy democracy and a strong social fabric, but that public confidence is eroding rapidly. We have seen a growing distrust of politicians, a growing distrust of government.

Just last June, 2019, Angus Reid reported a public opinion survey that showed almost two thirds of Canadian respondents believe that politicians cannot be trusted. One third believe that politicians are primarily motivated by personal gain, and I think that is distressing. That is greatly concerning to all of us in this place who entered political life, because we are genuinely motivated by serving our communities and by advancing the public interest.

When you have these kinds of attitudes, it is corrosive to democracy. It just feeds into voter cynicism and disengagement from political processes. That's why bills like Bill 162 are important: because they help restore some of that confidence that people are losing in us as politicians and in our democratic institutions.

1410

Within the debate about what is democracy, there is a view that lobbying can be seen as the disease of democracy, but we know that the reality is that private influence has become institutionalized in democratic processes. It has become a normal and legal part of our political system. So our best hope of building up that confidence in what we do is making sure that we have strong legislative mechanisms in place to rein in the influence of lobbyists and bring some transparency and accountability to what lobbyists do.

I want to thank the member for bringing this forward bill. It provides that transparency that is necessary. It would require cabinet ministers to report their meetings with lobbyists and would address some of the current gaps in the systems that we have in place.

I also wanted to echo some of the concerns that have been raised by really important organizations like Democracy Watch. Many of us are familiar with Democracy

Watch and the important role that it plays in shining a light on some of the concerns that have been raised about the influence of lobbyists on political decision-making. Last February, we saw a PC fundraising dinner where tickets were \$1,250 a plate, and registered lobbyists were enlisted to help sell tickets to that dinner. One wonders what those registered lobbyists expected to get in return by meeting their quota of ticket sales. Some of those people said they admitted that they felt under pressure to attend the event in order to maintain access to the government. Democracy Watch has released a list of 19 current complaints about this government's actions. Hopefully, the amendments proposed in this bill would help curtail some of that influence that we have seen.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? Further debate? Seeing none, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Kingston has two minutes for his reply.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the member for London West, the member for Guelph, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh and the government House leader for their support and their kind words and expressions of support.

Every government comes into office with a promise to clean up, but it's seldom that we see that happen. I think it's important that this bill gets to committee. I'll take the government House leader's comments in good faith that it will be referred to committee and will be examined, and that we will show people that it was not just talk, but that we'll walk the walk when it comes to integrity and honesty here at the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

With respect to the lack of consequences: Penalties are not for retribution. Penalties are a reflection of the value and the importance that we put on that concept of integrity and honesty and openness and transparency. If we don't have penalties, we don't have any honour. We will never be able to demonstrate with clarity our commitment to integrity.

Speaker, I want to thank everybody once again for their kind words and demonstration of support. I look forward to this bill being examined in greater detail. I look forward to working in good faith with the government House leader to make integrity and honesty a hallmark of the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

FOOD DAY ONTARIO
(FOOD DAY CANADA
IN ONTARIO) ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR LA JOURNÉE
DES TERROIRS DU CANADA
EN ONTARIO

Mr. Ke moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 163, An Act to proclaim Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) / Projet de loi 163, Loi proclamant la Journée des terroirs du Canada en Ontario (Journée des terroirs du Canada en Ontario).

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I am honoured to stand here today to discuss my first private member's bill, Bill 163, entitled the Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020. The idea of Food Day Canada begun with Dr. Anita Stewart. Dr. Stewart is food laureate at the University of Guelph and a member of the Order of Canada.

You may recall that in 2003, the US placed sanctions on the export of Canadian beef due to mad cow disease. With heroic efforts to support our agricultural community, Dr. Stewart responded by holding the world's longest barbecue. Her successful initiative evolved into Food Day Canada, a wonderful event that continues to take place every summer.

As a champion of local foods, she is a powerful ambassador for our meat, poultry, dairy, fruit and vegetable farmers, and our gardeners, food researchers and chefs. I am humbled to have had the privilege to work closely with Dr. Stewart during the entire process of this proposed legislation, which promotes the importance of local food and gives us the perfect platform to increase its profile in the province and beyond. I am thrilled that she is with us today.

Food is personal, it is powerful and it is necessary, not only to sustain life but to enrich its experience. In Ontario, we create an abundance of food and enjoy a multitude of food and dining options. Bill 163 seizes the day by raising awareness of Ontario's dynamic food presence in the world. With the colourful selection of foods on offer, Ontarians are never poor for choice. We can experience a taste of the world in cultural cuisine prepared with local food and ingredients.

Multiculturalism in Ontario is one of our greatest strengths. We can virtually visit with people and places from all over the globe, all without having to travel outside of the province. Bill 163 will allow us to take advantage of the rich tapestry of cultural influences that make up our beautiful province.

We also attract many food-loving tourists to Ontario from other provinces, the US, and, indeed, international travellers as well, all of whom are fascinated by what we have to offer in terms of excellent food choices and different dining experiences.

Bill 163 will help us all have a better understanding about Ontario's local food industries and how they enhance our lives, grow our economy and help the environment.

In a recent article published on the University of Waterloo website, Divjot Singh reports on the benefits of buying local foods. He writes: "One of the most crucial ways purchasing local food helps the environment is by reducing food miles.... The more food miles collected during food transportation, the more fossil fuels are burned, allowing more harmful greenhouse gas emissions to be released into the atmosphere."

1420

Mr. Singh adds, "This not only causes massive fuel consumption and pollution, but also involves the need for

facilities such as refrigeration that consumes vast amounts of energy.”

If we encourage Ontarians to rely more on local, homegrown and in-season foods, I am confident that together we will lower greenhouse gas emissions and associated costs to the economy and the natural environment.

Ontario owes a great debt of gratitude to farmers, growers and chefs. These men and women work hard daily, from dawn to dusk, to produce safe, healthful and high-quality food so that we can enjoy the fruits of their labour. They impress us daily with their achievements in food growth, presentation and promotion. Food Day Ontario will honour their vital contributions by giving them the recognition they so deeply deserve.

Bill 163 will motivate more Ontarians to choose to support their local food businesses. Let’s all decide to shop and buy local whenever we can.

According to Food and Beverage Ontario, “Ontario’s food and beverage processing ... sector is the largest in Canada—accounting for 37% of the industry’s revenue in the country. The sector has more than 4,000 establishments in the province, employing over 95,000 people,” many in rural communities.

Madam Speaker, when our government was elected, one of our five core commitments was to create and protect jobs. The agricultural food sector in Ontario generates more than \$47.7 billion in GDP to our own economy each year.

Bill 163 will help to advance Ontario’s economy and protect jobs in the agricultural industry and will inspire the creation of more jobs, all while uniting our communities by celebrating delicious and nutritious Ontario home-grown food.

With heightened awareness of Ontario’s food and agricultural sector, Food Day Ontario will highlight our credible claim of being the most progressive, interesting and inviting culinary destination in Canada.

Culinary sovereignty is an essential component of Food Day Ontario. It means being able to feed our own people with food from our own nation.

Ontario is home to some of the most talented and innovative chefs in the country, whose expertise speaks volumes on a menu in a language we all understand: great taste.

Large urban centres like Toronto and Ottawa often receive the most attention and applause when it comes to fine dining and food culture. With Food Day Ontario we have the opportunity to share the spotlight with many others in the agricultural and food service industries—those located in rural areas and smaller cities and towns all over Ontario. They are the backbone of our province and contribute so much to Ontarians’ economic success. We value their efforts. It is time to shine the light of recognition on them all. Bill 163 will help place them in the best possible light. And for those who choose a career path in food and agriculture and culinary arts, a future of fertile opportunity awaits.

When I began to work on my private member’s bill and met with stakeholders, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food

and Rural Affairs suggested that I meet with Rebecca Mackenzie, who is the president and CEO of the Culinary Tourism Alliance. Her work gives great insight into the importance of culinary culture. With stories behind each dish, we can see a reflection of the distinct culinary heritage behind each recipe. By combining travel with unique dining experiences, culinary tourism offers local residents and tourists an authentic “taste of place,” as described by Ms. Mackenzie.

Our culinary tourism is exceptional. As Tourism Toronto confirmed, “experiencing restaurants” is the top visitor activity sought by those who arrive by air. In addition, according to Destination Canada, in the first quarter of 2019, international visitors spent 38% of their travel budget on food and beverages in Canada, totalling \$1.6 billion. Promoting local food, agriculture and culinary tourism has the added effect of boosting our economy and protecting the environment while building on Ontario’s brand.

It is for all these reasons I propose that we officially proclaim the first Saturday immediately before the civic holiday each year as Food Day Ontario in Canada, so that families, friends and visitors can get together over the long weekend and unite as a community to share and enjoy the delicious foods that are grown and prepared right here at home. Therefore, we proclaim to the world that Ontario’s food, agriculture and culinary tourism sectors are open for business and ready to serve everyone. With Food Day Ontario, we declare that Ontario is the place to grow together.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Suze Morrison: It’s my absolute pleasure to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak about the importance of food in our communities and to celebrate all the ways that food brings us together.

In my riding of Toronto Centre, food is a central way for neighbours, families, and friends to convene and build a strong and connected community. Recognizing the importance of food security is a critical building block to alleviating poverty and, specifically, to breaking the cycle of generational poverty that persists in many communities.

I live in Regent Park, a neighbourhood in the heart of my riding that’s dense, growing and experiencing a lot of change. The constant that we’ve had in all of the change we’ve been experiencing is that food is always at the centre of all of the community-building work my neighbours are so committed to. My staff and I often joke that if you’re going to an event in Regent Park, you shouldn’t eat beforehand, because you certainly will be very, very well fed when you get there. There are also many organizations, formal and informal, that work to ensure that food security remains a priority and that food is always available to people in our community who need it the most.

In Regent Park, I want to highlight the incredible work of the CRC on Oak Street, a local community organization that leads local food programming. The CRC not only provides a daily, nutritious and culturally diverse meal

that's served with dignity, absolutely free of charge, to the folks in our community who need it most, but it also organizes the weekly summer festival Taste of Regent Park, which is a big hit in downtown Toronto. It's also home to the Regent Park Community Food Centre and its suite of high-impact programs that include food skills, gardening, culinary skills training, and peer advocacy.

Sole Support Mothers is another community group that has been providing food to low-income people in Regent Park for decades, going all the way back to the 1960s. It has deep roots in our community and has helped many moms and their children.

In more recent years, the Regent Park Catering Collective has supported a number of women chefs, many of whom are new immigrants, to hone their cooking craft and to start small businesses. The Regent Park Catering Collective is a powerful example of how cooking food can empower a community and also contribute to the growth of economic opportunities. My office has had the opportunity to order food for our local events from an alumna of the Regent Park Catering Collective, Malika. Malika's catering is always a big hit in our office.

In the south part of Toronto Centre, the Moss Park community is served by a wonderful organization called Building Roots, which is very active and vocal within the community. Starting in 2013 as a progressive grassroots social venture, Building Roots was initially founded in response to a lack of fresh food access and agricultural growing space across Toronto. It quickly grew to become a thriving charity and now hosts a monthly picnic called Karma Kitchen. They also sell affordable produce out of a repurposed shipping container in the Moss Park neighbourhood in my community.

1430

In St. James Town, the Community Corner is a neighbourhood agency that has its own catering collective, as well as a yearly festival that is centred around food. The Church-Wellesley Village is home to the 519 Church Street community centre, a hub for queer and trans folks, which is home to the Fabarnak café, a catering enterprise that hires folks who face barriers to employment.

In Toronto Centre, we are so incredibly blessed with volunteers and community leaders who take time out of their lives to serve and provide food for other members of our community. I'm thankful for our long-time volunteer and retired early childhood educator Kathy Le, who serves food to street-involved and homeless folks every week. I'm thankful for the Cabbagetown South Residents Association, which organizes a holiday Easter meal and party for residents of a Toronto Community Housing building in the neighbourhood. And I'm thankful for Hamza, the owner-operator of FreshCo grocery store in Regent Park, right beside my constituency office, who provides food for Muslim Welfare Centre meals in the community.

Again, Speaker, I'm so, so grateful to have had the opportunity to speak today in support of this motion and in support of celebrating food in our communities. I want to thank my colleague for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair.

I want to congratulate my parliamentary assistant and the wonderful member from Don Valley North for his excellent initiative here today, which I think will promote not only food in Ontario, but certainly it will support sport, which I'm the minister of. It's going to be on an Ontario Heritage Week, which I'm minister of, and obviously it is good for tourism.

I want to start off, Speaker, by saying: It is Ontario Heritage Week in the province of Ontario, and so I think that it's fitting that we debate this bill today for a day that will be held on Simcoe Day, or, in Ottawa, where I'm from, Colonel By Day. These are days when we celebrate two very historical figures in the province of Ontario, so I think that it's wonderful.

As Minister of Sport, I recently had the opportunity to visit the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario in Scarborough. What I thought was really interesting was that they were taking excellence in sport to a new level by training our world-class athletes, like Penny Oleksiak and Andre De Grasse, how to keep their bodies in top-functioning form by teaching them how to cook. I had the opportunity, with Christina Mitás, one of our members from Scarborough, to tour there and to actually participate in that culinary experience there.

I want to really talk a lot about tourism. Earlier today, I had the opportunity to be in Niagara Falls with the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario as we talked about tourism strategies for the next five years. One area in particular that I brought up that I thought was really important—of course, it was fitting that it was in Niagara—was culinary and craft tourism, where I believe we can grow the economy.

As you know, Speaker—I've said it many times in this House—the tourism industry is a \$34-billion-and-growing industry in the province of Ontario. Culinary tourism is so impressive at this point in time that we are training, in 23 of our colleges, over 10,000 students to have culinary skills each year. That's incredibly important to us as we move forward.

As the Culinary Tourism Alliance says, food tourism is “travel experiences where a person learns about or consumes food that reflects the history, heritage and culture of a place.”

Well, Speaker, I just did a little search of my own about some of the great places that we can visit across Ontario to have that true culinary tourism experience. It's the Niagara wines; Franco-Ontarian poutine; BeaverTails in my capital—our capital, but my hometown—of Ottawa; heritage apples of Blue Mountain; Leamington tomatoes; Lanark county maple syrup; and cheese curds and Celtic blue cheese in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

We often say that good things grow in Ontario, but we should also say that not only do good things grow in Ontario, but we also have an amazing amount of food in

the province, which we thank our farmers, our vintners and our chefs for promoting.

Speaker, as my colleague said, we are open for business and we're open for jobs. But we're also equally open for culinary tourism in the province of Ontario. I wholeheartedly support this legislation as the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, and I look forward to celebrating with all colleagues in the Legislature and every Ontarian on Food Day Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It gives me great pleasure to speak in favour, and on behalf of Ontario's official opposition, and to thank the member from Don Valley North for presenting this bill on Food Day Ontario.

It is not often that I, as a downtown Toronto MPP, get a chance to celebrate our farmers and our food producers. I wanted to talk a little bit about the connection to my community and why it matters so much.

I should tell you, I grew up on a farm in Newfoundland, and so I have a particular affinity and interest in some of these issues.

Local food producers and local food promoters have worked really hard to address food insecurity issues in our community, whether it's the Dufferin Grove Organic Farmers' Market, one of the oldest farmers' markets in Toronto, which began as a collaboration between three farmers and community members and park staff and has grown into a phenomenal weekly market; whether we're talking about the Stop Community Food Centre, which has been an incredible movement for over 30 years, addressing not only immediate emergency food needs in our community, but also food justice and security, and most importantly, connecting low-income people in this city to good food in a warm and dignified and respectful space—and I want to give a big shout-out right now to the Stop Community Food Centre for everything that they do. Also, organizations like Aangen community centre and Food-Share, which brings good, nutritious food produced by Ontario farmers into our schools, and the Depanneur, which is where the Newcomer Kitchen kick-started—very exciting work that's going on—and to celebrate that amazing work that happens across our city and our province.

I want to talk for a moment about some of the other issues related to food and food access. Food access is a poverty issue. Earlier today, as the education critic for the official opposition, I was reading the Ontario Student Trustees' Association's submission to the government and looking at what they wanted to see funded this year. One of the big calls in this document is for significant investment in healthy eating programs in schools. They point out that there is plenty of research about the structural barriers that are facing students, facing children, and the simple fact that you cannot learn when you're hungry.

I also want to mention our federal counterpart Don Davies, member of Parliament, who brought forward a bill asking for a national school food program. How important that would be when we know that one in six kids live in

homes in this country without proper food, when three million Canadians are food insecure, when food bank use is so greatly on the rise—for example, a 16% increase in Mississauga last year in food bank use—when we know that 1.1 million Canadian children, or one in six, live in homes that are struggling with food insecurity.

These things are all connected. They're connected to poverty. They're connected to housing insecurity, to the cuts to programs and the privatization of things like Ontario Works and ODSP. They are absolutely connected to rising rents and renovations. It is that growing poverty and instability that we also need to address.

Madam Speaker, people need action, not just gestures. I really do appreciate the opportunity to celebrate food in Ontario, but I must say, we had enough gestures for 15 years under the Liberal government. We need access to healthy, nutritious food. It's a poverty issue. It's an equity issue. It's a matter of human rights.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to say a few words about the Food Day Ontario act. I want to support the member from Don Valley North in his efforts.

My background, actually, before I came here, before I started working in politics—I was in the grocery business for about 22 years. It's a business that I love. I think I could go back to it sometimes because it's such a great business. It's so important in people's lives. Good, healthy, nutritious food is critical to all of us and critical to our health, but more importantly, there are so many people, so many people—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: That includes jujubes, as the member from Timmins just indicated to me. Nobody saw that.

1440

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): No.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker.

I do want to say that the NDP has been distracting me today. I don't know why it is, but it happened in the morning in question period and it hasn't ended since.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We can't help it.

Mr. John Fraser: I will get over it. I'll go home for the weekend.

What I do want to say is there are tens of thousands of people who work in the food industry, whether they work in a grocery store, whether they work in a restaurant, whether they work in a food processing plant, whether they're farmers, whether they're shippers. It's a big business for our province. Agribusiness is a big business for our province, and I think that the member's efforts to recognize the importance of food and the people who contribute to us having healthy, nutritious food need to be recognized.

I have a friend, another politician—shocking—and he said this to me once: “I get up in the morning and I turn on the light, and the light comes on. My house has been heated or cooled to the temperature, whatever the season. I go to the washroom, I turn on the water, and it's the

cleanest water in the world—guaranteed. I go to the kitchen table, and I have an incredible choice of food.” Access to food: That’s what this is about. He also says, “Then I also go outside, and it’s a safe place.”

All those things together, including food—you don’t find all those things everywhere in the world. Not everybody has access to good, healthy food. I would argue that, in this province, there are people who don’t have access to good, healthy food. So I hope that when we recognize the Food Day Ontario act, we think not just about those people involved in getting it to us, but those people who don’t have the access that they need to healthy, safe food.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Many will know the expression, “If you ate today, thank a farmer.” I think that’s on the back of one of my trucks. Just to expand on that expression: If you ate today, thank not only farmers, but chefs, fishermen, food researchers, home cooks, the people who turn our food into the meals that we enjoy on a daily basis. The member from Don Valley North, with Bill 163, has given us an opportunity to really offer up a hearty thank you to farmers and other food stakeholders that we’re talking about this afternoon.

We have a proposal to establish Food Day Ontario, to celebrate our growers, our producers, our food creators and the many epicurean delights that we’re blessed to encounter in this great province. We’ve heard MPP Ke state the facts in support of establishing and celebrating Ontario’s food production and Ontario’s food culture.

As one of the parliamentary assistants to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I stand behind the facts in favour of Food Day Ontario, and I will just reiterate a couple of things: Ontario’s agriculture sector generates more than \$47.7 billion in gross domestic product each year. Some 837,000 Ontario jobs are supported by the agriculture and food sector. It’s certainly a significant player down in my rich riding of Haldimand–Norfolk. Producing food and promoting foods in community restaurants and with consumers is a boon to our economy and our ever-important goal of creating jobs.

Culinary tourism has been mentioned as a growth opportunity. Local foods build relationships, they build reputations around the world for our province and, it can be argued, promote cultural understanding.

With respect to tourism, when we identify certain areas, certain cities with food—I think of Montreal smoked meat; Buenos Aires for steak, I can attest to; churrasco in Brazil—their steak is just as good as our steak. Many years ago, I had my very first pizza in Rome. It’s really part of our provincial and national identity. Think of fish and chips in England. I don’t know whether they still wrap them in newspapers or not, but we have a reputation for fish and chips down our way. In Port Dover, we cook pickerel, we cook perch, and that can compete with anything that you may find as far as ocean fish coming out of Britain.

So my point, Speaker: All across Ontario, we’re truly blessed with local epicurean delights, produced using locally sourced food. MPP Ke’s private member’s bill will help shine a light on this very happy fact.

I find that walking around Queen’s Park and downtown Toronto, I pass so many restaurants. It’s incredible, the diversity of restaurants. Years ago, I used to work on Spadina, and up and down Spadina, you could go out for lunch every day for a year and almost hit a different menu in a different restaurant. You can do all this without flying to Greece or going to Poland or the Caribbean. You can get all of that right here in Toronto.

I will mention one fairly newly established restaurant, Eataly, a world brand. It’s at Bay and Bloor. It’s about 50,000 square feet, three floors, Italian. Much of it is education-based, and much of it, although it’s international, uses local food. I can think of two establishments in my riding, Hewitt’s Dairy and VG Meats, that supply one of these world-class restaurants that happen to be in downtown Toronto. So there are big connections here.

All power to this bill, and I’ll certainly be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Doly Begum: Madam Speaker, first I’d like to thank the member from Don Valley North for bringing this bill forward. At times like this, I appreciate the gesture, and I think it’s also an opportunity for us to celebrate our local growers, farmers, producers. It’s also an opportunity for me to actually appreciate the folks who are doing amazing work to provide support that’s necessary in our community because of the issues that we face with food security.

So I want to take this opportunity to thank a special organization, the Bluffs Food Bank in Scarborough Southwest, that does amazing work providing food for the local community, despite the fact that they’re over capacity all the time. I should also mention that they’re collecting empty egg boxes right now so that they can better distribute the 75,000 eggs they give out every year. My constituency office helped them last year, and we hope to do the same thing this year as well.

Another organization that does amazing work is the Scarborough Food Security Initiative. Just last Christmas, they did a wonderful initiative to help families have a meal for Christmas.

Another initiative that we have is from the Daily Bread Food Bank, who help with summer produce markets in Toronto Community Housing complexes, where we have seniors, people with disabilities—all different groups of people who are able to benefit from these programs.

Finally, I also want to thank the Scarborough Youth Freedom Farm. That’s an exciting project led by Black Scarborough youth to empower local people to work against systemic oppression within the food system faced in Scarborough and, I would say, Ontario-wide.

While I thank these groups, I think to myself that I appreciate the gesture that the member brought forward and I appreciate all the work that different community groups are doing, but is this the solution? Is this really

what will help us with food security in this province and in this nation? Absolutely not.

1450

Are we doing enough when a child goes to sleep hungry? I think it's important to emphasize that one in six children goes to sleep hungry every single day. That's just not right. We need to do better, and we need to do better as a government. I think it's important to emphasize the fact that if a child goes to school hungry—is that child able to learn, and are we actually helping our future generation? No, we're not. That responsibility is on this government to do better.

When we talk about food security, when we talk about poverty—and Toronto is actually the capital in terms of child poverty in the nation. In my riding of Scarborough Southwest, we have one of those communities that's actually suffering from that. Child poverty is something we should be addressing. It should be a part of—all of the agenda. It should be something that this government is focusing on, and it's very unfortunate that we're not. That comes with housing, that comes with health care and that comes with every single issue that this government tackles.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We all have prepared notes to speak from, but there's something that's not on the sheet that I would like you to help me with, if you would, since I'm sure you have a lot better memory than I do. I was thinking about food, which is one of my favourite topics, and then I got thinking about my wife. As of February 3—remember this date, February 3—we were married 47 years. She has been preparing my nourishment for all those years, at least most of them, and a few years before that. So I must thank her for that, and also for our three boys. February 3: If you would help me out with that, I'd appreciate that, and then I won't forget that date.

I'd certainly like to thank my colleague from Don Valley North for putting this bill forward. He and his team put a lot of effort into drafting this bill, and I want to thank them for all their dedication and hard work.

Speaker, I'm sure you are aware, and everyone in this House knows, good things grow in Ontario. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and the MPP for Perth–Wellington, and as a former farmer and graduate of Ridgetown College, I'm passionate about Ontario's agriculture. In particular, I'm passionate about promoting the wide array of locally grown food and the work that those in the agri-food sector do. I know our government shares that same passion for Ontario agriculture. Since coming into office, our government has made advocating for Ontario farmers and our agricultural stakeholders a top priority.

I just recently spent time travelling through the province, listening to municipal and business leaders, rural residents and entrepreneurs sharing their perspectives on economic development, and one issue that kept coming up

everywhere was a lack of agricultural awareness. This lack of awareness is twofold: firstly, a lack of understanding of where food at the grocery store comes from, and also the role agriculture plays in Ontario's economy.

Ontario has been blessed with a rich, vibrant and diverse agriculture sector. Our province is home to almost 46,900 farms that grow over 200 agricultural commodities. In total, 835,000 people make up the agri-food industry in Ontario. To put that in perspective, that's a population larger than the city of Mississauga.

Ontario's agriculture sector is growing too. Twenty years ago, the agriculture industry in Ontario represented \$25 million in GDP annually. Today, that number has soared to \$47.7 billion. In 1998, it was Perth–Middlesex MPP Bert Johnson who established Ontario Agriculture Week, a week to reflect on the importance of the agriculture sector across Ontario.

In fact, to proclaim Food Day Ontario is the next step our government is taking to promote agriculture in Ontario. The act designates that the Saturday immediately before the civic holiday in each year is proclaimed as Food Day Ontario.

Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity. We are certainly in support of this member's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. The member for Don Valley North has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, Minister MacLeod, for your confidence in Bill 163, and for your support. Thank you, as well, to PA Barrett and PA Pettapiece for your help and guidance.

My thanks also extend to the member for Guelph, the member for Toronto Centre, the member for Davenport, the member for Ottawa South, and the member for Scarborough Southwest. Thank you for all your valuable input.

The facts in favour of Food Day Ontario are persuasive. Ontario's agricultural sector is a major contributor to our province's economic growth by generating more than \$47.7 billion in GDP annually, and is responsible for supporting 837,000 jobs in the province, many in rural communities. Producing local foods and marketing them to local restaurants and consumers creates jobs and stimulates local economies. It also helps the environment and results in fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

The time is ripe to celebrate and capitalize on our plentiful local food, agricultural and culinary assets. Dr. Stewart is a notable agri-food-culture pioneer in her field, whose work inspires us all to reinforce Ontario's good reputation as a great place to grow.

Please support Bill 163, the Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario) Act, 2020, for the benefit of the economy, the environment, the tourists who love to visit us, and especially the people of our great province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY
AND LOBBYIST
TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ
ENVERS LE PUBLIC ET
LA TRANSPARENCE DES LOBBYISTES

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We will deal first with ballot item number 97, standing in the name of Mr. Hillier.

Mr. Hillier has moved second reading of Bill 162, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998, the Members' Integrity Act, 1994 and the Public Service of Ontario Act, 2006. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole.

FOOD DAY ONTARIO
(FOOD DAY CANADA
IN ONTARIO) ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR LA JOURNÉE
DES TERROIRS DU CANADA
EN ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Mr. Ke has moved second reading of Bill 163, An Act to proclaim Food Day Ontario (Food Day Canada in Ontario). Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Pursuant to standing order 101(i), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House, unless indicated.

Mr. Vincent Ke: General government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to the Standing Committee on General Government? Okay.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FROM TRESPASS
AND PROTECTING FOOD SAFETY
ACT, 2020
LOI DE 2020 SUR LA PROTECTION
CONTRE L'ENTRÉE SANS AUTORISATION
ET SUR LA PROTECTION
DE LA SALUBRITÉ DES ALIMENTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 20, 2020 on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 156, An Act to protect Ontario's farms and farm animals from trespassers and other forms of interference

and to prevent contamination of Ontario's food supply /
Projet de loi 156, Loi visant à protéger les fermes et les animaux d'élevage en Ontario contre les entrées sans autorisation et d'autres actes susceptibles de les déranger et à prévenir la contamination de l'approvisionnement alimentaire en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019. In my riding, as you will know, the agriculture sector is absolutely key. Farmers are the backbone of our economy in Durham region and across Ontario. Across Ontario, the agriculture and agri-food sector supports more than 822,000 jobs and contributes \$39.5 billion in GDP to the province. I value, and I know our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs deeply values, the contributions of agriculture and of our farmers to our region and the province.

1500

I've hosted a number of agricultural round tables in my riding of Durham over the last few years, both before I was elected and since I was elected. However, the one I hosted in September 2019, this past year, was unique. Before being elected, the issues that were raised by our agriculture community at these round tables included the carbon tax, access to natural gas and the rising hydro rates, all of which are issues our government has been working on since being elected and continues to work on. This particular round table was unique because the one issue that almost every single farmer mentioned was their growing concern over the danger of trespassing on farms. Some of them shared very personal stories which I wouldn't even feel comfortable sharing in the Legislature. Even the farmers who did not raise this issue at that round table later said that they were very grateful that others had voiced their concern, because it was something that affects the whole agriculture community. They didn't feel safe.

Farmers in Durham and Ontario have been reporting increasing incidents of trespassing on farms. Sometimes livestock is even stolen or released by these trespassers. The rate and the seriousness of these trespassing incidents in Ontario appears to be growing.

Just like the feedback from the agricultural round table I hosted, farmers in other parts of the province, municipalities, meat processors and the transportation sector have all asked for more support from our government to prevent and address these risks.

In addition to the individual farmers in my riding raising this concern about trespassing on farms, the municipality of Clarington and the township of Scugog, two municipal-level governments in my riding, have also weighed in. Both municipalities have supported the township of Warwick's and the township of Brockton's well-known council resolutions calling for stronger enforcement of laws to protect our farm families, employees and their animals. There's a growing groundswell of support for this kind of clear legislative action by governments to better protect farmers and their businesses.

Before we jump into the substance of this bill—don't take my word for what this bill seeks to achieve. Let's start by looking right at the explanatory note provided by the legislative drafters. It says at the start, "The bill is intended to protect farm animals, the food supply, farmers and others from risks that are created when trespassers enter places where farm animals are kept or when persons engage in unauthorized interactions with farm animals. The risks include the risk of exposing farm animals to disease and stress, as well as the risk of introducing contaminants into the food supply."

If passed, the proposed bill would make it illegal for people to gain access to animal protection zones on private property without the owner's consent and under false pretenses—of course, with exceptions in place for law enforcement.

I'm pleased that we have a government here in Ontario that's being proactive by introducing this legislation to attempt to prevent further incidents that risk harm to food safety and the safety of our farmers and the people of Ontario. As a government, it's our duty and responsibility to protect public safety—it's one of the fundamental roles of government—including the safety of farmers, their businesses, their animals and our food supply from the risks of trespass activities. Farmers should feel safe in their homes and in their barns.

Speaker, of course I would hope that members of all parties understand that Ontario is committed to the highest standards of animal welfare and food safety. Ontario is a world leader in this area. There's no question on this point.

I remind everyone that all parties voted in favour of the recent PAWS Act, which created a new animal welfare system in Ontario with the toughest penalties in Canada.

I'm sure that everyone in this Legislature can agree there's absolutely zero tolerance for animal abuse of any kind in Ontario.

Our government cares about animals. That's a core reason why we proposed the PAWS Act, and why we're proposing this legislation here today. It will further protect farm animals' health, welfare and safety. At the same time, this legislation makes exceptions, allowing people such as those appointed by various acts relating to animal health and welfare, like the PAWS Act, to be on farm properties legally, because we all know animal abuse does happen, and we must be vigilant against it.

I encourage anyone who does suspect animal abuse to immediately report it to the authorities. There's a right way and there's a wrong way to deal with the concern you have about the welfare of an animal, and there are proper enforcement mechanisms in place to raise your concerns and have them investigated by professionals who are well trained and who understand: specifically, professionals who we've created appointments for under the PAWS Act, who are trained specifically in the area of animal agriculture.

I want to use this occasion, the occasion of the debate on this bill, to talk about the mental health and well-being of farmers. Our farmers are some of the most resilient and strong people in Ontario. They are tough, and to be

successful in the farming sector, most of them have to push through significant challenges, whether those be physical or environmental challenges, financial challenges, or emotional challenges, as they weather the different seasons of their business. The farmers I've met pour their hearts and souls into their business. It's more than just a business to them; it's their livelihood and their future.

The weight of the work and the pressure to produce can take a serious toll on a farmer's mental health and that of their family. The increasing worry and concern of trespassers coming on to their property, on top of the international trade issues we've already been experiencing over the last many months, can further exacerbate the mental stress. Just like many of us, farmers can also struggle in asking for the help they need.

We must continue, as a society, to tear down the stigma around mental health so that more people can get the help they need, including those in the agriculture community. That's why investing in mental health support has been one of the top priorities of our government since being elected. I know our Minister of Agriculture specifically set out to hold round tables with his parliamentary assistant across the province on this specific topic. Our government has made a number of substantial investments today in the area of mental health, hundreds of millions of dollars in on-the-ground front-line mental health support services, but the work has really only just begun and there are more investments to come.

This bill that we're discussing today helps address the preventable issue of anxiety, extreme stress and other mental health concerns that farmers experience as a result of trespass occurring on their farms. Let's not forget: Their farms are often also their homes. For farmers, work and home often are at the same address. This issue of trespassing is not just about protecting the operations of a farm; it's also about making sure that farmers feel safe at home.

The fact that a farmer's business is often his or her home is a fundamental aspect to this issue we're discussing today. If you break into a jewellery store and steal a piece of jewellery, that act will likely be caught on camera and reported to the authorities. The police take action and investigate, and hopefully the item is rightfully returned to the business owner and the thief is caught and reprimanded. We have laws in place to protect property owners and to reprimand criminals for their actions.

1510

Trespassing on farms should be no different. Bill 156 includes a number of protections for farmers, such as citizen's arrest provisions, where an arrest may be carried out by a person authorized by the owner of a farm, processing plant or transportation truck, to do so on their behalf if certain parts of this act are contravened. The act allows reasonable force to be applied as necessary, the boundaries of which, of course, are set out clearly in section 25 of Canada's Criminal Code: A person would not be justified "in using force that is intended or is likely to cause death or grievous bodily harm unless the person believes on reasonable grounds that it is necessary for the

self-preservation of the person or the preservation of any one under that person's protection from death or grievous bodily harm."

Civil liability protections are also included for farmers where they're not responsible for the injuries of the trespassers if the trespassers have contravened any provisions of this act. Further, the bill includes a restitution provision to recover damages suffered by farmers and transport drivers, allowing them to recover civil damages without incurring the costs of civil legal proceedings.

The legislation helps establish measures to prevent trespassing incidents and to prevent the physical, emotional and mental damage farmers and their families can suffer due to an incident. I believe this legislation is a fair and balanced piece of legislation that balances public safety and the safety and security of farmers, their families and our food supply, while at the same time protecting the right for people to participate in legal protests.

Farming is a respected and admired yet difficult profession. Our farmers provide us with local, high-quality food each and every day to feed Ontario and other parts of the world.

As I mentioned before, as a government we also recognize the right of people to participate in legal protests in a democratic society. I appreciate the passion that those who are concerned about the welfare of animals and livestock have, and the role they play to ensure that proper care is being used. Again, this government is absolutely committed to the highest standards of animal welfare and food safety.

However, those who come onto a farm without authorization are unlikely to be aware of the safety protocols of the farm and may unknowingly introduce risks to that farm: risks to the safety of farmers, employees and their families; risks to animal welfare, such as stress or trauma to animals; risks to public health—trespassers contracting and spreading diseases that can be transmitted from humans to animals; risks to biosecurity—again, the risks of transmitting diseases to animals; and risk to our food supply, as trespassers can introduce contaminants in food processing plants or from interacting with animals.

We know how hard our farmers work to maintain the highest standards of animal welfare and biosecurity. It can be difficult to control the possible spread of disease when you're not aware of who's entering your barn, especially if they don't have the proper protective gear. When I've visited farms in my own riding, I have worn head-to-toe covering. Often, if you're trespassing, you're not wearing that. That proper protective gear, clothing or equipment is important, and without it you create the risk of spreading diseases or introducing contaminants. This is part of the reason why there are penalties included in this bill. The proposed act would provide additional enforcement tools and deterrents—deterrents being the fines—to trespassing and obstructing the transportation of livestock, including fines of \$15,000 for a first offence and \$25,000 for subsequent offences, compared to the \$10,000 under the Trespass to Property Act.

If someone does truly believe that there is abuse of any kind going on, we have a system to report that, that

everyone in this House voted in favour of. Our government introduced the PAWS Act to replace the powers granted previously to the OSPCA. I remind everyone in this chamber that our PAWS Act includes the strongest penalties in Canada for those who are found to be in violation of animal welfare laws. Instead of trespassing on private properties of farmers and processing plants, and interfering with transport trucks, individuals can take their concerns to the provincial animal welfare services, where specialized inspectors, in coordination with veterinarians, if needed, work together to investigate and address these concerns in a legal and professional manner. These experts include professionals in the agriculture industry who understand the difference in health concerns for each unique commodity group and who know the difference between health concerns in pets and health concerns in livestock of all sizes. Agriculture-specific standards of care will be developed with consideration to the national codes of practice and in consultation with the agriculture sector.

Inspectors have the authority to enforce those penalties we talked about: the strictest penalties in Canada. For less serious offences, such as failing to comply with an order, first-time individual offenders can be subject up to \$75,000, and \$130,000 for first-time offences for more serious crimes, such as contravening standards of animal care.

Leaving the investigations in the hands of certified experts and professionals keeps our farmers, our agriculture industry workers and the public safe, while ensuring that appropriate standards of care are being followed for each and every commodity group. This protects the biosecurity of the food chain, the health of livestock and the mental, physical and emotional stability and security of those in the agriculture industry. We want cases of abuse to be reported, and we want them to be investigated, but instances of animal abuse must be reported to the right places and to the right people. People have the right to be concerned and to participate in legal protests, but this does not include creating safety risks on farms and breaking the law.

I hope, with that, my colleagues on all sides of the House will seriously consider—I think it's important that we're consistent in the messages we send from this chamber. You voted in favour of the PAWS Act. You said that that was a big success when it came to setting animal welfare standards in our province. I put to you that voting against this piece of legislation in front of you would be saying the complete opposite. I know from talking to many of you that we're all well-thought-out in the positions we take. I hope not only will you vote in favour of this bill to protect farmers, but also to uphold the credibility of this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I was listening intently to the member from Durham. She started off talking about the round tables and discussions she and her colleagues have held in preparing this bill. On Tuesday, when I was in the

chair, I heard the member from Kiiwetinoong ask repeatedly: How many round tables or consultations did you and your colleagues hold with Ontario's First Nations people in preparing this bill?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I appreciate the important question. We respect the opinions expressed by some of the Indigenous leaders, and I know we've received specific communications around this issue. But I put to this House that the communications we received really misunderstand the proposed legislation. We work in this bill to balance the right to participate in lawful protests and the importance of protecting our farmers and our food supply.

The proposed legislation does not affect any Indigenous treaty rights, including fishing and hunting rights. The proposed legislation is narrowly scoped to the animal protection zones, typically focused around on-farm enclosures, food processing facilities and animal transport vehicles. This law does not apply to individuals engaged in lawful hunting, fishing or trapping activities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Dave Smith: Currently, there are a number of offences in the federal Criminal Code and in the provincial Trespass to Property Act that could be applied if somebody came on to a farm.

1520

You talked a little bit about some of the challenges that the farmers face and some of the challenges that we have with our food security. Could you explain and expand upon that and say specifically why we do need to have something that is specific to farmers, that is specific to protect farms and, most importantly, to protect our food supply?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I appreciate the question from the member for Peterborough-Kawartha. As I said in my remarks, I see my job as a member to respond to concerns we're hearing in our community. When we see the incidence of rising crime in any particular area, it's important for us to make sure that the proper deterrents are in place, the proper penalties, so we've crafted a bill that's in front of you that I think is balanced. Again, it balances the rights of peaceful protests but puts in the penalties that are necessary and specific to the type of trespassing you experience when someone is trespassing on a farm and the unique situation you're dealing with.

This is actually a relatively short bill—really narrow, really specific—to deal with a specific type of trespass that is becoming more and more common in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: To my friend from Durham: In your first reply to my question, you said that perhaps there's a misunderstanding with the First Nations people about what's in the bill. I put to you that, had they been consulted, the Chiefs, the leaders of Ontario's First Nations people, would have brought to your attention their questions over what restrictions this bill could possibly lead to in the future over their hunting and fishing rights, for example. But since your government refused to meet

with them and refused to assuage those concerns that you may have heard, there may be some misunderstanding. So I put to you now: Why didn't your government feel the need to consult with the First Nations people, and what are you going to do about it?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I think it's a bit rich any time in this chamber we assume who someone has communicated with and who someone has met with, without proper evidence in front of us. We are supposed to assume the best in fellow members, and I like to do that every time I rise to speak in this chamber.

It's my understanding that, in fact, the ministry did speak with the Union of Ontario Indians and the Chiefs of Ontario before introducing this bill, and Minister Hardeman is set to speak with the Anishinaabe Nation on this topic.

As I said earlier, I think it is clear that this bill does not contravene any treaty rights, and of course we respect the rights of the Indigenous peoples all across the province and our beautiful country in this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member from Durham for her very thoughtful presentation. Over our time outside of the chamber, I did some homework on my own in talking with farmers. I went up to Innisfil with the MPP from Barrie-Innisfil to meet with local farmers just see the process of going through a chicken farm and how you protect yourself when you go into those farms to make sure that our food supply is safe. We also went to see a dairy farm as well. I learned a lot straight from those farmers, and I thank them all for allowing us to tour.

When we consulted about the PAWS Act, this issue about trespassing on private property came up time and time again. As an urban MPP—we don't have farms in Etobicoke, so it is good that we consult all across this province and make sure that in the north, the south, east and west, it's covered.

I'd like to know a little more from you: In your riding and your farmers, what more have you heard about this bill from farmers?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I thank the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for the question. It has actually been quite astounding, not only the level of response as far as volume that my office has received in personal phone calls when we brought forward this bill—partly, I think, it's because of the specifics—but the emotional level of the response, because this is deeply personal for many farmers, for many in the agriculture industry in my riding. Again, this is not only people's business but often their homes as well, or their spouse may have a business on that very same property that's affected by this kind of illegal trespassing.

The response has been quite amazing—for the substance of the bill but also because the agriculture community feels like they finally have a government that's listening and responding to their concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I thank my friend from Durham, whom I have the highest respect for. She just talked about the government's commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare. I'm curious to know, when she talks about the homes of farmers, for example, when is this government going to demonstrate some form of commitment to the highest living standards for people living in our First Nations communities when it comes to clean water and mould in their homes? When are we going to see a commitment from this government to move beyond the rhetoric and put some money into some of the needs of our First Nations communities?

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'm not going to venture into things that fall within federal jurisdiction and seem completely unrelated to this bill, in fact. But I'm proud to be here today to support this bill, a thoughtful, balanced bill that's been put forward by the Minister of Agriculture to support our farmers, to support our hard-working agriculture community. This is a government that will stand behind them as long as we're in power.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mrs. Nina Tangri: I really want to thank the member from Durham for her comments and insight into this bill. I have a very short question. I'd just like to know about stakeholders in your riding. I also come from an urban riding where there's not much in the way of agricultural farming, but you've been listening and talking to many, many stakeholders in your riding, so I'd like you to let us know what conversations you've been having. I'm really glad that Indigenous communities have been consulted. I think that's extremely important, and I think this bill goes a long way toward making sure that we get it right. So if you could please just let us know a little bit about the stakeholders in your riding that have given us some insight.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for a quick response from the member from Durham.

Ms. Lindsey Park: I'll just say briefly, as I said that I was a bit taken aback at the round table I held in September 2019, where every single farmer, without any direction—they weren't given a specific topic to talk about when the Minister of Agriculture visited, but I think there were 20 people sitting at the table and 18 of them raised this as their top concern in our agriculture industry in Durham region. And those others, as I said, quietly said to me afterward that they were thankful this issue was raised.

I'm proud to stand here today to be a government that's responding to the top concerns of our agriculture industry.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise today as the member for London West to participate in debate on Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

I want to begin with a shout-out. I want to recognize Crispin Colvin, who is a director of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. He's a beef and cash-crop farmer in

Middlesex county, which is just north of my community of London. I have over the years since I've been elected really appreciated the relationship that I have established with Crispin. His expertise and knowledge about the agricultural sector have been very helpful to me as I fulfill my responsibility as a representative of a community in which food processing is one of the key economic drivers of our local economy. London is situated in the heartland of southwestern Ontario, surrounded by 33,000 farms. There are 7,000 people who are employed in food processing across 90 and more companies. Just last year, we saw Maple Leaf Foods announce the single largest investment in food processing ever in Canada, with a \$660-million investment to open a new Maple Leaf Foods processing facility.

1530

Speaker, I recognize the absolute importance of the biosafety and biosecurity of our food system. The food processing companies that are in London and the London area—McCormick, Dr. Oetker, the Original Cakerie, Natra, Billy Bee etc.—recognize the absolute utmost importance of the biosecurity and biosafety of our food system. Certainly other businesses around London that I have had the opportunity to tour as part of the agribusiness tours that have been organized by the London Chamber of Commerce and the local workforce planning board have been very helpful, again, in understanding how the agricultural sector works and the relationship between farmers and the food processing firms in our community.

But Speaker, as our critic for the Ontario NDP, the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, has pointed out over and over again in his leadoff speech on this bill, there are provisions in Bill 156 that have nothing to do with biosecurity. Those are the provisions that are highly problematic and troubling for those of us on this side of the Legislature.

I heard the member previously talk about the number of experts that had been consulted in developing this bill, and I wonder how many MPPs on the government side have read the letter that was sent on February 6 to the Attorney General and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It was a letter that was signed by 42 legal experts, 42 constitutional scholars, 42 people who understand the law. When they reviewed this legislation, they highlighted aspects of this bill that they see as violating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They see certain provisions of this bill as direct infringements on individuals' rights to freedom of expression and peaceable assembly.

We know, Speaker, that in the United States, where similar provisions have been attempted to be put in place, they have been struck down by the courts, so it's hard for us to understand why this government wants to set up this scenario where they're going to pass a bill—if they don't amend these provisions in committee, they're willing to pass a bill that they are virtually guaranteed is going to go straight to court and will be very, very likely ruled unconstitutional.

Section 2(b) of the charter is there in order to promote and safeguard the open debate and discussion that is

essential to a free and democratic assembly. This includes, of course, expression that gives the public, including consumers, access to information to enable them to make informed food purchasing choices. The big concern that these constitutional scholars have raised, that our critic the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane has raised, is that what you’re doing may be entirely counterproductive. What you are doing may actually erode public confidence in the safety and security of the food system. It raises the question: What do farmers have to hide?

There’s the saying that it’s important to open the barn door, not to close it. We want people to understand how food is produced, how chicken ends up on our plate, the processes that take chicken from the farm to the table. That is important for people to know, but this bill introduces measures that really are anti-democratic and violate people’s constitutional rights.

For example, Speaker, there is a provision of the bill that basically allows retroactive charges of infringements of biosecurity after a two-year period. I listened to our critic in the Legislature the other day, who asked very pointed questions of the government member across the way. How is biosecurity compromised if the charges are only raised two years later? That provision has nothing to do with biosecurity. And there is, as I said, the very real possibility that this would be challenged as an infringement of freedom of speech.

There are also real concerns, Speaker, about the provisions of the bill that invalidate consent if it is obtained under false circumstances. We have seen right here in Toronto the benefit of exposés of the bad actors, of the 1% of companies that are not supporting their employees, that are not protecting their employees. We saw the Toronto Star reporter who took a job at Fiera Foods, a place where five temp workers have lost their lives because of inadequate safety measures that have been put in place by that employer. So it is important to allow investigative journalists to do their work when there are things going on that the public has a right to know and that should be exposed. I respect what our agriculture critic said during the debate: 99.9% of farmers and of food processing facilities in this province aren’t interested in covering up their activities. But we do need to allow whistle-blowers to expose when harmful practices are being conducted. So that is a real concern, Speaker.

But I want to get back to the point I made earlier, and that is about trust. I think that the danger of passing this bill in its current form, with these very problematic provisions, could really undermine people’s trust in the biosecurity and the biosafety of our food system. And that is not, I think, in anybody’s benefit. It’s not in the government’s benefit. It’s not in the benefit of consumers if they don’t feel confident in the safety of the food that they are eating.

So with that, Speaker, I will end my remarks.

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

Mr. Mike Harris: I think the member from London West is missing a very key part of this bill. I don’t know if

she read the title of it, but I’m going to read it for you now. It says, “Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.” I’d like to know if the member from London West would like me coming over to her house, opening up the door, maybe breaking the door down, coming in, making a sandwich, sitting down in her living room and watching TV for a little while. I want to know if that would that be okay with her, because that’s what’s happening on farms. People are coming in without the permission of the farmer or the farm owner. They’re stealing livestock. They’re ruining barns. I’ve had multiple, multiple people in my riding come to me, and this is a huge problem with them. I’d like to know why she thinks it’s okay for something like that to happen, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Certainly, we do not support trespassing on private property. That is not something we would condone. There are trespass laws in place. What we have highlighted, in speaking to this bill, are the concerns about the limitations on people’s constitutional rights. That is what these 42 legal experts have pointed out: There are sections of the bill that appear targeted at investigative journalists and at protected speech that have no connection to maintaining the safety of our food system. Those are the provisions that we will be focusing on during the debate on amendments to the bill at the committee stage.

1540

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member’s remarks. She made it very clear that trespassing that could impact biosecurity negatively is just not on. We made that very clear. The issue is that 4(6) has nothing to do with biosecurity. Charging someone retroactively, two years after—you know what? The biosecurity has already been changed. That is the issue. She brought up public confidence; I would like the member to explain how the appearance of trying to hide something that doesn’t need to be hidden could impact public confidence.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank my colleague, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. I think he hits the nail on the head, really. When you bring in the heavy hand of legislation that is very likely unconstitutional, it really raises questions about what this government thinks that farmers and food processing facilities have to hide. People who wouldn’t even have gone there before, to whom it never would have entered their mind that there was something to hide, will now start to ask those questions. Because why is this government bringing in this section of the bill that allows retroactive charges two years later? That has nothing to do with biosecurity.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: You talked about protesters and their ability to protest; nowhere in the bill do we restrict anyone’s ability to protest on public land. The bill strengthens trespassing laws. I’m not sure why you’re suggesting that people should be able to go on to a farm, someone’s personal property, to protest. Should farmers not be afforded the same charter right, number 7, that says,

“Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person”? Should farmers not have security of person on their property?”

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m not a constitutional expert. I am going by the opinion of 42 legal scholars who have written that, “If Bill 156 is passed as drafted, it would effectively cut off an important source of public information and a driver of policy change. It would silence journalists and those who advocate for animal protection by exposing the abuse of animals at agricultural facilities and violate their charter rights to freedom of expression. We urge the government of Ontario to amend Bill 156 and respect the basic constitutional rights of its citizens.”

We need to have a balance, Speaker. We need to have measures that protect the biosecurity of our food supply, and also respect the basic constitutional rights of citizens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: Some of the members from the government side are putting up a bit of a straw man argument. We are not opposed to the trespassing part of the act that is aimed at protecting biosecurity and protecting farm families or workers in plants—not opposed. The issue is that there are parts of this act, specifically the retroactive trespassing and the anti-whistleblower parts, that have nothing to do with biosecurity, and they could very well infringe on people’s rights and impact public confidence.

Again, could the member please explain how her views will be impacted if this is challenged in court and loses?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: When government brings down the heavy hand of legislation, and particularly when they have been warned in advance that the legislation is very likely unconstitutional, if they insist on proceeding with these likely unconstitutional provisions of the bill, it really does raise the question of why. Why do they want to use unconstitutional legal language to prevent citizens from learning about our food system? We should be engaged in a dialogue about our food system, about animal use practices, about good food safety policy. This is in the public interest; to proceed with legislation that is very likely unconstitutional is not.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Question?

Mr. Mike Harris: When we talk about whistle-blowers and we hear how this could potentially be unconstitutional etc., there seems to be a lot of concern with these six-month to two-year retroactive charges being laid. If someone was so concerned about animal welfare, wouldn’t they go ahead and expose something that was egregious that was happening on a farm well before the six months?

We’ve seen this happen time and time again where someone will break into a farm, they’ll take pictures, they’ll wait the six months, and then all of a sudden the exposé comes out. How is that, in the member’s estimation, in the best welfare of those animals?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m going to quote from my colleague the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. He made a very good point. He said, during his lead, “If I am an employee and I see something that I don’t like at a food

processor, something I believe to be animal cruelty, and I go to the foreman and say that I’m going to call PAWS, the answer could be, ‘Oh, yeah? Well, you know what? You are here under false pretenses and we’re going to try and charge you under the act.’” This person is making 15 bucks an hour, has a wife and two kids at home, and is going to think twice about whether to take that concern forward.

Speaker, I want to be very clear. There are provisions in this bill that are very supportable and very worthwhile. But the problematic sections that have been flagged by constitutional experts—we are looking forward to those being amended when this bill goes to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): We have time for a quick question and a quick response.

Mr. John Vanthof: I guess the issue here is that the government seems to be willing to take the risk to put forward subsection 4(6). That will be challenged constitutionally, as is the right. This has been beaten in several other jurisdictions, and if it’s beaten, or even if it’s taken to court, it will impact consumer confidence. Could the member explain how that could hurt processing facilities in her riding?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think that is an excellent question. I know that food processing facilities in my riding and in other parts of the province want their employees and they encourage their employees to come forward if there are any concerns whatsoever, because their economic viability, their livelihood depends on people feeling safe when they purchase those products.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I’m delighted to rise in support today of Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

Madam Speaker, supporting farmers is a priority for me and for many in my riding of Barrie–Innisfil. As of 2016, there are 157 farms in Innisfil, which translates to over 49,000 acres of actively used farmland. In Innisfil, there are over 10 beef farmers, which equates to 578 beef cows; six dairy farms, which translates to 354 dairy cows; 16 vegetable farms; 67 grain and oilseed farms; and three egg and poultry farms. In fact, there are three times as many chickens as there are people in Innisfil. Now try to crack that one.

As a part of my commitment to hearing from many of my constituents in the agricultural community, I went on a journey to learn more about their day-to-day workings and learn more about what they do in our community. In fact, I toured several farms over the past few weeks, including Stone Horse Farm, Dickey Bee Honey—where I was joined by the MPP from Willowdale, MPP Cho—as well as Hewitt Creek Farms and the Eisses Farm Fresh Eggs with the MPP from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

1550

I also visited Boris Horodinsky’s onion farm—where he has grave concerns about the carbon tax—with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, the MPP for Perth–Wellington.

When I did tour Eisses Farm Fresh Eggs and Hewitt Creek Farms with the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, we really were able to see first-hand and enjoy the opportunity to see what these individuals do in our communities, individuals like Jeff and Harry, who take care of their chickens and show how they really appreciate not only the livelihood and the care of their chickens, but how they produce fresh local eggs that are loved by everyone in the community. In fact, many passersby on their way to cottage country go out of their way to stop at their farm to pick up some fresh eggs.

The same was true when we went on a tour of Hewitt Creek Farms with Andrew and Kevin. They shared with the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore and I how much they take pride and really care about their beautiful dairy cows. It is really important for their family, who has been running the farm for many, many decades. For them to have the Minister of Agriculture join for a round table with myself and Minister Downey from Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte, they were really thrilled to finally see a government that's really listening not only to the concerns of rural Ontarians but to the people who feed many of our communities and many of our cities.

When we hosted a round table on Bill 156 in my community of Belle Ewart, we heard from many local individuals. We heard from the agricultural industry. We heard from dairy farmers. We heard from egg farmers, producers of cash crops, bee farmers and veterinarians. Each of these hard-working members of our community expressed concerns about the risks that trespassers pose to the safety of their animals, their business, their families and their homes.

There was resounding support all across the round table. In fact, a big takeaway was from one of the veterinarians, Dr. Henshaw, who said, "You should go whole hog to see the completion and implementation of this bill." Well, Madam Speaker, I'm proud to support this bill, and I do want to go whole hog with this legislation.

But what else did we hear around the round table? Well, that farmers are frustrated that not enough has been done in the past to address unauthorized trespassing on their farms. But there was hope once again, because our government listens and we're introducing a bill that will protect farmer safety.

Everyone, according to our government, has the right to a safe workplace. This is especially true for farmers whose home and place of work are often the same place as they live. It is obviously a very emotional and stressful experience to have your home or workplace invaded by strangers. Farmers should feel safe, just like all of us feel safe. This Legislature, for instance, has taken important steps to address these concerns so all of us are safe when we go to work. When unauthorized people interfere with the trucks and transportation of animals, they should also have the right protections put in place, as the unauthorized individuals, if they do interfere with trucks and transportation, create unsafe situations, not only for the individuals transporting the animals but the animals themselves.

In addition, to protect farmers and their families, this bill will also protect the workers who are working at the

farm processing facilities, not just the drivers of animals as they're transporting them from one area to the next. These people currently face the safety risks and the emotional stresses of facing trespassers at the workplace, both if they're on the farm and also if they're transporting the animals. However, as I mentioned, our government is listening and we want to protect what really matters most to Ontarians. That includes our farmers and protecting our mental health here in Ontario.

Our government set out an ambitious agenda when it comes to mental health funds all across the province, and that includes our farmers. For instance, at the round table I talked about at Belle Ewart, we heard first-hand from a farmer who said, "We want people to come tour the farm, but we want to protect the safety of our chickens. For farmers, it is an emotional issue when people come to our farm. It is our home and can be very stressful."

It is clear that our government takes this very seriously, and when we did have the round table in Belle Ewart, we heard about the uncertainty and risks the trespassers take and the toll it has on the mental health of Ontario farmers. Mental health challenges and anxiety are significantly a challenge to farming communities all across the province, and the threat of trespassers at farmers' homes and places of work causes a great deal of very damaging stress.

When we're at work, we should not have to worry about our safety. We know this first-hand because, in our own Legislature, the security is increasing. But again, we know on this side of the House that farmers do deserve peace of mind, and they should not have to worry about unexpected and potentially violent trespassers at their workplace and at their home. That is why we've introduced Bill 156 in terms of protecting farmers, the people who transport farm animals, and, of course, biosecurity.

Biosecurity is a priority for farmers, for Ontario and for our government. I recently had my first experience with biosecurity protocols. When MPP Hogarth, the MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, and I toured Eisses Farm Fresh Eggs, we were coming in with our regular street clothes, as many of you may know who have also toured farms. We were told that not only did we have to sign in and follow proper protocols, but we also had to be covered from head to toe, with plastic shoes on our feet, for instance, hairnets and the proper wardrobe to cover up our street clothes.

After completing all the paperwork, we were welcomed into the facility, now that we had the proper protocols put in place. But after this experience, I felt very confident that in the detailed protocols that are in place and designed to keep us safe, not only are they designed to keep our food safe, but they're also designed to keep those who work in the facilities safe. We can also see, from the strong actions and the strong records of our food security protocols, that these are obviously working all across the province, not just in Barrie–Innisfil.

But why is it so important to pass Bill 156? Well, it's these protocols that are put in place to protect all of us, both the ones that enjoy the food and those that produce the food, but oftentimes are not followed by others. That

is why it's very important to protect biosecurity, and trespassers on farms who do not follow the same biosecurity protocols. Unauthorized people who enter our farms are often unaware of farm biosecurity protocols, and they may unknowingly introduce risks such as disease for both animals and themselves and create undue stress to animals they seek to protect.

By walking straight into barns, trespassers threaten not just the safety of farmers but they also put the health and welfare of livestock at risk by introducing cross-contamination from other farms they may have visited—from outside pathogens. So that is why it's very important to follow biosecurity laws, and that is why our government is listening.

To my constituent's point, we want to go full hog with this legislation, so I hope everyone will support Bill 156.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened very intently to the member from Barrie–Innisfil, and I enjoyed her speech. She describes the issues that farmers face in biosecurity very accurately.

I'd just like her opinion. In the bill, in subsection 7(1), it says, in response to someone who invades a farm, that the first thing a farmer should do is request that the person provide his or her name and address. The second thing, if the person is doing anything in contravention, is to request the person cease doing so. The third is to request the person leave the premises, and the fourth is to arrest the person without a warrant. Does the member agree with the order of precedence of those, as listed in the bill?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: As you see, in section 7(4) of the bill, the bill does not give farmers the right to use unreasonable force. But farmers are subject to the same provisions under section 25 of Canada's Criminal Code as everyone in Canada is subject to. I can certainly lay out the provisions if there are further questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: In your speech, you talked about the round tables that you had. Can you elaborate a little bit more on some of the fears and concerns that the farmers brought forward as part of those round tables?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Well, there's one story that I heard from the round table that I wasn't allowed to elaborate on due to time. But one of the local dairy farmers in my riding at the round table said, "The public should also understand that many people check up on animals on farms. There are vets, validators and workers. All of these people are watching out for the livestock, and so are we as farmers."

1600

One of the things we heard first-hand at this round table is not just the day-to-day things that farmers go through, but they actually care about their livestock too. If something happens, they will obviously contact the vet and take the proper precautions. Thank you for your question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Another question?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, I don't believe that the member directly answered the question I asked. In the bill, it lists the steps that a farmer should take if there are protesters on the farm:

The first is "(a) request that the person provide his or her name and address." That seems reasonable.

The second—I'm reading right from the middle—" (b) if the person is doing anything in contravention of subsection 4(4) or (7), request that the person cease doing so"—very reasonable.

"(c) request that the person leave the premises"—very reasonable—"or;"

"(d) arrest the person without a warrant."

Does the member agree that is how it should be done?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: All that is laid out in the bill is all lawful, for starters. I would elaborate to say the bill would not give farmers any more rights than they already have to deal with trespassers on the property. The bill does clearly affirm that farmers cannot use unreasonable force nor create an environment which is intended to cause injury or harm to potential trespassers. Certainly, we have the full force of the law, so if people do not want to be fined, then just don't commit the crime.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you to my colleague the member from Barrie–Innisfil. Thank you for your passion and engagement with the community in regard to this bill.

My question would be: What are some concerns that the rural communities in your riding have expressed to you about trespassing into the farm? Could you expand on that, please?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for that question. I know that the honourable member across is the son of a farmer, so you too understand first-hand the many grievances that people in the farming community may have and the fact that we are listening. The reason we introduced this bill is because we were listening to farmers all across Ontario, and the fact is that you see many municipalities also in favour of this.

When this came to light, many people in my community said, "We've been asking for this for quite some time. We like to see that a government is actually taking final action." Even those who did not ask for this bill to be introduced and who are learning about it want us to go even further with measures. Of course, now that they see the government is taking action, they want to see a little bit more, but certainly we're going to be holding onto our balance and fully supporting Bill 156.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to try this one more time. Again, I'm looking at the bill: (a), (b), (c), and then (d) is "arrest the person without a warrant." What surprises me is not in here, which is in the protocol of most animal organizations and commodity organizations, is "call the police." In the bill, it's "arrest the person without a warrant" with reasonable force, and after you arrest the person without a warrant, then you call the police. I would

suggest that many commodity organizations would have a different protocol than what is in this bill. A lot of people are going to use this bill as gospel, because the government is saying so. So do you agree that actually it should be, “before you arrest the person without a warrant, call the police”?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: Thank you for that question. Again, I reiterate that the courts do determine the extent of the force that is reasonable, and farmers certainly aren't getting more rights than anyone else.

I will elaborate on my answer when it comes to section 25 of Canada's Criminal Code. I will read what is in section 25 of the Criminal Code: “Every one who is required or authorized by law to do anything in the administration or enforcement of the law

- (a) as a private person,
- (b) as a peace officer or public officer,
- (c) in aid of a peace officer or public officer, or
- (d) by virtue of his office....”

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Hon. Bill Walker: I want to direct my questions a little bit to my honourable colleague across the aisle who has been a big part of this debate, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, a former dairy farmer, who I know has stood in this House and talked about the welfare of his animals. He didn't really want people like John Yakabuski singing music to his animals at night.

But what I want to talk about here, Madam Speaker—and I want to congratulate the member from Barrie–Innisfil and the Minister of Agriculture for doing a great job. I think at the end of the day, this whole bill was designed to ensure food safety; it was designed to ensure family safety; it was designed to ensure worker safety, and to protect the livelihoods of farmers like those great dairy farmers and all of the farmers out there. So at the end of the day, I would like to ask the ministry if this legislation will protect from vexatious protests and ensure that due notice is given so they understand they're breaking the law prior to coming on—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I thank the Associate Minister of Energy. Response.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: That's an excellent question and, as I mentioned before, if you don't want to pay the fine, don't do the crime. It's going to be pretty transparent. I think it's up to all of us, as members of provincial Parliament, obviously, to go into our communities and raise awareness about all the different legislation that we pass in this House; it is upon us to do so. Certainly, the Minister of Agriculture and the parliamentary assistant for agriculture have been raising a lot of awareness about this bill and the impacts all across the province. They have been going from one end to the other end, to the top, to the bottom, every part of Ontario to raise awareness about this bill and the consequences of those who break the law.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to try this one more time. So someone comes on the farm, and I don't want

people on my farm threatening the biosecurity of my farm. Here is what the government says you should do.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Kitchener–Conestoga, come to order.

Mr. John Vanthof: In 7(1), “request that the person provide his or her name and address.” Understandable. In (b), “if the person is doing anything in contravention of subsection 4(4) or (7), request that the person cease doing so.” Again, understandable. “Request that the person leave the premises.” Okay. But at that point, why doesn't it say, “Dial 911”? But it says, “Arrest the person without a warrant.” A friendly amendment: Put in “Dial 911.” Don't call the police after you've made the citizen's arrest, because you could be in trouble by then.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): A short response?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: You don't have to arrest someone. If they wanted to call 911—by the virtue that we're all free citizens—it's there to do so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): There is not enough time for further questions and responses.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Harris: It's always a pleasure to rise in the House, and today I get to do that in support of Bill 156, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. As many of you know, agriculture is a huge part of the fabric of my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga. I often mention how lucky I am to represent such a diverse riding that is a mix of urban and rural in Waterloo region. While we are one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada and a centre for tech and innovation, there are nearly 1,400 farms in Waterloo region, most of which are located in my riding.

I've had the opportunity to speak with some of these farmers. From the crack of dawn until well into the evening, farmers work hard to not only put food on their own table, Madam Speaker, but on mine, yours and everyone else's across the province. I'm sure at one time or another we've all been told, if you eat today, thank a farmer. But when I was meeting farmers and touring farms, I was struck by how often farmers would voice concerns about their safety on the farm. This is even more concerning when you consider how many farmers also live on their farm. Unwanted visitors are a significant risk to the safety of farmers and their families, as we have heard from both sides of this House.

But I want to touch on a risk they can pose to our food supply. What we have before us in this piece of legislation, if passed, would support not only farmers but the entire agri-food sector. I am sure that many of my colleagues who have visited farms recently know about the biosecurity processes that are in place on farms across the province to prevent anyone visiting or working on the farm from spreading contaminants that put livestock at risk. The procedures and the stringent standards that have been put in place give us confidence that the food we eat in our families is safe.

Not too long ago, I visited Mountainoak Cheese in Wilmot township, a dairy farm and cheese producer in my

riding. I had a chance to see how their milking system works, and all of the technology they use on a regular basis—technology that I think most people would be very surprised to see on a dairy farm, Madam Speaker.

1610

I've had meetings with poultry farmers who have shown me apps on their phones that control the temperature in the barn and monitor the chickens even when the farmer is away. These animals are well cared for, monitored, and their well-being is a top priority for these farmers who treat their livestock humanely and care deeply about animal welfare. I won't deny there are some bad actors out there, Madam Speaker, but our government has been unequivocally clear that we have a zero tolerance for animal abuse or mistreatment of any kind.

The PAWS Act, the strongest piece of animal welfare legislation in the country, also covers livestock animals. Farming associations, particularly the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, have been very supportive of the PAWS Act. These associations want to see the best practices taking place in their industry. Our government, again, has absolutely zero tolerance for animal abuse and neglect. Nothing about our position has changed. We still believe that anyone who commits animal abuses should be held to account. The agri-food processing sector also relies on the high standards of care that farmers provide in order to ensure a safe supply chain. Safety is at the centre of this bill.

Along with several farms, I've also had the chance to visit agri-food processors in my riding like Conestoga Meats in Breslau. They are a proud member of Ontario Pork, whose president, Eric Schwindt from Elmira, is also one of my constituents. Conestoga Meats has rigorous health and safety standards, and these high standards have earned them the trust of customers not only across the province but worldwide. If someone enters their facility and unknowingly contaminates their products, this would affect not only their facility but all of their distributors and partners. I think it goes without saying what the impact of that could be when we're talking about a worldwide supply chain.

We have a chance here with this legislation to really take action and mitigate the risk of contamination and the spread of disease. Just a few weeks ago, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs came to my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga to hear from 15 local farmers. When I was first getting to know farmers across Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich, I kept hearing over and over again how they felt abandoned by the previous government—a government for 15 years that ignored their concerns over trespassing and workplace harassment and allowed a situation to grow where legislation is now more than necessary. I know they appreciated having a chance to speak directly to the minister and give their input. The minister shows his dedication every day to our hard-working farmers and the wider agricultural sector, and I want to thank him for coming to Legend Dairy Farm in Wilmot township.

At this meeting, we heard overwhelming support for this bill from a real cross-section of the region's livestock

producers including turkey, pork, poultry, beef and dairy farmers. While they had questions and provided productive suggestions, we heard solid confidence in this government's defence of Ontario's agriculture and plan to curb illegal trespassing. Speaker, these are all good, hard-working Ontarians who take pride in their industry. They take the task of producing high-quality, safe and nutritious food very seriously.

I've also received letters from constituents detailing their support for this legislation. I heard from a farmer in Wilmot township who has operated and lived on their livestock farm for many years. They struggle to understand how individuals can enter buildings on farms and private property without consequence. I heard from another family, who lives and works on their farm, who told me when their dog barks in the middle of the night, they worry they will look out the window and see trespassers trying to get into their barn.

If someone were to come into your kitchen without you inviting them in, there is no question that legal action would be taken. If someone were to force their way into your office, damaging property, there is no question that is unlawful. So why is it that for so long our farmers have not been able to rely on the legal system to keep their families and workplaces safe? As it stands now, whenever someone unlawfully enters a farm property they may be charged under the Trespass to Property Act and the Criminal Code of Canada. Under these pieces of legislation, however, the burden of proof to secure convictions requires evidence that trespassers had "intention to commit an indictable offence." With the burden of proof being set at this level, crown attorneys have withdrawn charges against farm trespassers due to lack of evidence and the unlikelihood that they would secure a conviction.

Even more frustrating is that the argument that consent is implied or that a farm is public property is used to defend the actions of trespassers and is "good enough" to imply that they had permission to be there. Well, "good enough" is not acceptable, Madam Speaker, especially when our food system is in question.

This bill is absolutely clear: Anyone who does not have the express consent of the owner or occupier of a farm, facility or premise is prohibited from entering the animal protection zone or interacting with said animals. When it comes to protecting families, animals and our food supply, the bar for holding those who trespass accountable needs to be set higher. We are proposing changes that send a message that putting our food supply and agricultural producers at risk is taken seriously.

This act also proposes to increase the fines for trespassers from \$10,000 under the Trespass to Property Act to \$15,000 for a first offence and \$25,000 for subsequent offences.

Another important part of this act is that it proposes provisions to provide a stronger recovery mechanism for harms caused by trespassers, including property damage. Currently, the Trespass to Property Act allows for only \$1,000 in compensation for property damage. This sum comes nowhere near covering the cost of the damage that

some farmers have encountered. Courts would be allowed to issue restitution orders for any damages that are caused by these trespassers.

Farmers are the backbone of Ontario. Minister Hardeman has been working hard to support local food producers by removing red tape and barriers for their industry. I was pleased to join the minister in my riding at RJM Cattle and Poultry to announce an additional \$1 million in funding under the Market Access Initiative. This initiative made funds available to the ag industry to help connect Ontario producers with markets around the world.

The minister also conducted a very successful trade mission to South Korea and Japan to promote agribusiness and create new opportunities for farmers in international markets.

Ontario's agriculture industry is open for business, and they deserve a government that is going to stand up for them, a government that will support them. We are on their side, Madam Speaker. The Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act is part of our commitment to supporting farmers and the great work that they do every day.

I am proud to stand here in support of farmers across Ontario—and especially those in Kitchener–Conestoga—and support this bill. I urge members on the opposite side of the House to vote with us in support of our farmers. We are making progress for them and addressing the needs of farmers and food processors all across Ontario. Let's not leave them behind anymore.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is the following: I, along with other members from ridings across Ontario, have been contacted by First Nations. There is an understanding or a fear or a concern—whatever way you want to put it—on the part of First Nations that this will impede their ability to hunt. Currently you need to get permission to go on farmers' land. If you get the permission, you get to go hunt deer or whatever it is that you're doing. There is a belief that this legislation will infringe on that. Will it or will it not infringe on the rights of individuals within the First Nations communities to hunt?

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member for Timmins. Obviously, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, I am pretty intimately involved with a lot of the discussions that we're having in regard to hunting and fishing treaty rights.

When this bill was first brought about, we did speak with the Union of Ontario Indians and the Chiefs of Ontario before we introduced this bill. I know that my colleague the member from Durham also did mention that the minister is set to speak with the Anishinaabek Nation, I believe, very shortly on this topic.

As it stands right now and into the future, this bill will not impact treaty rights and it will not infringe upon hunting and fishing rights going forward with Indigenous communities.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: You talked a fair bit about lawlessness and the repercussions for it. Ronald Reagan, in the 1980s, said, "We must reject the idea that every time a law is broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker."

Can you elaborate a little bit on how this actually adds extra protections for farmers and will help prevent some of that lawbreaking that we're seeing now?

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member for the question. When we look at how this is laid out, there are a few different things that are involved. Obviously, when we look at increasing penalties to deter people from going onto farms and, realistically, from committing these crimes—when we look at penalties under section 25 of the Canadian Criminal Code, it is illegal to trespass on somebody's property. But given some of the parameters with how this all works out, it's often very difficult to get a conviction. I know one of the things that was talked about earlier is how we're extending the six-month—sorry, I'm forgetting the proper term—to two years.

1620

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Statute of limitations.

Mr. Mike Harris: Statute of limitations—thank you very much. That will also help deter people, because they are going to realize now that if they go onto somebody's farm, they do damage, they take pictures and potentially steal an animal, and they go and post those pictures online six months later, now they will be able to be prosecuted within two years—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, the parliamentary assistant to natural resources said that there has been previous consultations with the Chiefs of Ontario and other First Nations organizations. It's a bit strange, because the Chiefs of Ontario is one of the organizations that have contacted us to say they haven't been consulted. So which is it? Do you know for sure that they have been consulted? Because both people in the administration side of the Chiefs of Ontario and the political leadership were not contacted, is what they told me directly. So yes or no: Do you know for sure they have been contacted?

Mr. Mike Harris: The ministry has reached out to them. They have definitely been part of the consultation process as we've moved forward on this. I'm sure we'll continue to meet and we'll continue to consult with our Indigenous leaders.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions? The member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, hang on, I think he was—well, it's up to you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop the clock. Is it always rotational?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Yes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I beg your pardon, to the member.

The member from Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I was interested in the member's comments about the round tables that he had with the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I had one

about two weeks ago in Stratford and heard passionate stories of people that are afraid to leave their farms. One chap was telling me his wife called him one day and had noticed a strange car on the road where they live. Out in the country, you kind of know who's driving what, because there aren't a lot of people out there, so you know these things. She called him and said, "What should I do?" Now, that car probably had nobody in it that was intending to harm them, but she was frightened. It still frightened her, because it was a strange car and all this stuff has been going on. She called her husband: "Would you please come home and help me here?"

I would like to know from the member what you have heard from farmers in your area about these types of things and about this bill.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to my neighbour from Perth–Wellington. I know that we have a lot of farms that will actually overlap into both of our ridings. I've heard a lot of the same concerns that you have. People are really, legitimately concerned with these on-farm protests, with people coming in potentially doing damage to their buildings, their homes—in the middle of the night sometimes, Madam Speaker. This isn't just something that happens over the day. I couldn't imagine living with my family on a farm and constantly living in fear that somebody could potentially break into your house, maybe not knowing that people are home. The ramifications that can come from that could be pretty bad in some circumstances.

I did have a chance, obviously, to meet with a lot of our farmers within the region of Waterloo, not just in my riding. They all have the same concerns that we've heard from many of the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, my question is to the parliamentary assistant to MNR. What's clear is that the government is saying, on the one hand, that this will not impact on First Nations' right to be able to hunt, because that is a constitutionally protected right. If that is the case, is the government prepared, once this bill goes to committee, to accept a non-derogation clause that says that this in no way will impede on the constitutional rights of First Nations when it comes to the ability to hunt and fish?

Mr. Mike Harris: You know, absolutely, when we're going through the committee process, as you know, we're always looking to try and make a bill better, whenever it's possible, and there are certainly things that can be looked at in that respect. But I will remind the member that all throughout 2019 we did indeed consult with Indigenous communities. I will bring up again the Union of Ontario Indians and the Chiefs of Ontario and also the Anishinabek First Nation, which the minister is planning to meet with in very short order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions? Okay. I recognize the member from Timmins.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, "planning to meet" is what I'm hearing here from the parliamentary assistant to MNR.

The whole idea of being able to not have these problems is consulting ahead of time. It would seem to me that it's not just up to the ministry to do consultation with stakeholders when it comes to the bill, but it's also up to the political side, which is the cabinet along with parliamentary assistants, and possibly a legislative committee.

So my question is a real simple one: Has there been any contact from the part of the minister or any parliamentary assistant in order to consult with First Nations vis-à-vis their constitutional rights to hunt and fish?

Mr. Mike Harris: I don't know how to say it any more clearly. The answer is yes. We did meet with the Union of Ontario Indians. We did meet with the Chiefs of Ontario. All these consultations happened in 2019, and honestly, I don't know how to answer it any better than that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. We have time for one more quick question and answer.

Mr. Dave Smith: You talked a little bit about some of the round tables that you did. Can you expand a little bit, in the 30 seconds or so that you will have, to give us an idea of some of the other concerns that perhaps we should be talking about?

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to the member for Peterborough–Kawartha for that question. Not only were they having concerns about, obviously, trespassing, people coming onto their farms, but biosecurity is a huge component of that. I know that's a big part of this bill, and it's something that's been highlighted many times already today. I've had the chance to get out and tour many farms and food processing facilities—again, as the member from Durham had pointed out and also the member from Barrie–Innisfil—where you're going head to toe in covering. You've got the hairnet—and the beard net in my case, even though it's pretty short—the full lab coat, trousers, booties and everything. Biosecurity is something that's taken very seriously. Ontario has a reputation for having some of the safest food in the world, and we want to keep it that that way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Walker: It's truly a pleasure to speak to Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. I want to applaud the minister and parliamentary assistant Pettapiece for all the work that they've done. They've toured the province, they've spoken to all kinds of groups across our great province. I think this piece of legislation has really, really hit the mark.

I want to just start off by quoting Keith Currie, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, who, I believe, sums it up very well. I am going to quote: "We have been very vocal in our call for swift, strong action against trespassers and activists who are jeopardizing the safety of our farms and food supply, and we are very pleased to support the new legislation introduced at Queen's Park...."

I think it's fabulous that an organization that, again, has been here for hundreds of years is out in the community, supporting the community—a membership organization that is coming out saying, "We need this, we value this and

we want this.” They also, I believe, were very appreciative of the consultation done by the minister and the parliamentary assistant and other members of our caucus who have been out across the province speaking to all user groups out there and ensuring that we had good legislation to be able to pass forward here.

I want to make sure that we understand at the end of the day that this is about food safety, first and foremost. This is ensuring that your food supply, my food supply, all the people listening at home, that that food supply is safe. We have the highest standards across the world for food safety, and this is only going to ensure and enhance that that is there.

Secondarily, and equal, at the same time, is family safety. We heard from numerous people. I certainly heard in my backyard of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, the great riding, from people saying that they were starting to be very fearful for themselves, for their family, when people were coming onto their land without permission and causing havoc, causing them safety concerns, causing them stress, and in many cases, frankly, financial negative impact as well—that they were disrupting their operation, they were making it unsafe, they were prohibiting them from making their living in an effective manner. That was a big, big part of it as well.

1630

Certainly, worker safety, and especially the workers on the farm and/or in the transport sector who, again, were being held up, who were having vexatious protests that were starting to make them fearful, that were prohibiting them from doing their jobs, and their livelihoods were then at stake, which put stress on their families—that was a big, big concern.

The working conditions, with them being able to drive to a processing plant and having challenges with those protesters—I’m not characterizing all of them with one brush, but there were many who went very aggressive and made them feel very unsafe in their job capacity.

Not to be missed to be missed in this, Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I’m sorry to interrupt, but I’m finding it distracting. To be able to focus on the words of the Associate Minister, could I ask that the sidebar conversations be a little less distracting, so I can maintain my focus, please? Thank you.

I return to the Associate Minister.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’ll maybe talk a little faster, so I can get a little more energy into this room and let people be engaged with me. I’ve been working on that for eight years, to talk a little faster and become a bit more engaging.

I want to speak as well about animal welfare. Every farmer I have had the privilege to know—and many of my family members are farmers—take the greatest pride. Their animals are like their children. They actually care. They know most of the cattle in the field by name and can call them, and they come in. At the end of the day, they don’t want someone who doesn’t understand the realities

of farming and agricultural practice to come onto their land and do a disservice, or to do, perhaps—whether intended or unintended—damage and issues with their animals.

This, I think, again, sends a very strong message: If you’re not here at my request, with my permission, then you truly aren’t able to be here. People who are knowingly going on to disrupt are not there for the benefit of anything that I’ve already talked about. This, I think, puts a very good stake in the land, to say, “This is my land. This is about my family. It’s about the welfare of my animals and food safety and supply. You should not be here unless I’ve invited you to be here, to be part of my home, to be part of my business.”

It is a family business in many cases. The bulk of our agricultural sector is still small family farms. This is the livelihood, many times over generations—four or five generations—of families who have carried on pride and stewardship of the land, of the animals, of our food supply. They, I think, deserve to be the priority. They need to have the priority of the government, to say they have the ability to farm unrestricted by these vexatious protesters who, again, many times are coming on for needs of their own and not looking at the bigger picture, not looking, as we have to do as legislators, at the greater good for the greater majority of people.

My colleague from Peterborough shared a quote here, and I’m going to use it again, as I believe he quoted former President Ronald Reagan: “We must reject the idea that every time a law is broken, society is guilty rather than the lawbreaker.”

Madam Speaker, I couldn’t agree with this more. The rule of law has to be paramount in a democratic civilization. We need to ensure that the people who are actually law-abiding have the priority, and not give priority to the people that are coming on, knowingly creating a problem, creating a crime, disrupting family life, as I have said here a number of times already.

I think it’s very good, in our legislation, that we put in very severe penalties—\$25,000—to send the message to people that if you’re going to knowingly break the law, there is a price to pay. I believe my colleague from Barrie–Innisfil said it well: If you’re going to do the crime, you’re going to pay the time. Maybe I paraphrased that a little differently, but I think the same context is there: If you knowingly break the law, there are repercussions, there are penalties, and there should be.

I know some of the members of the opposition were asking questions, and challenging. Again, if you have put up the signage, if you have told someone up front, “You are not allowed to come on this property without my permission, and if you do, you are breaking the law,” then I believe any law-abiding citizen, if they’re not there for a vexatious reason, will turn around, so we wouldn’t have to call the police immediately. But we’ve put it in there to say that the law is on the side of the person who is law-abiding and doing the right thing. They’re actually running a business, protecting their family, protecting our food supply. So I think it is appropriate, how we’ve done this.

We're putting the line in the sand very clearly: If you want to break the law, there is going to be a punishment.

We have to respect that the negativity from these people doing those protests, whether it's at the processing plant or it's on a farm—the impact not only to the jobs and to the economy, but to that person who, frankly, could lose their livelihood. Look at the repercussions to that family because someone comes onto a piece of property with no respect for what's happening to that family and that family's source down the stream. They may be providing employment for a number of people on that small family farm that are going to have ripple effects that are negative to them. I think, at the end of the day, we want to ensure we have given you due notice. If you come onto my property without permission, you are guilty as charged. We will stand firm on that because we have to always stand firm and we have to do what is important for the people of Ontario and that is, as I said earlier, protecting our food supply. Food safety is paramount.

This piece of legislation—by the minister and all of the people who helped with this piece of legislation to draft it, to go and consult and to ensure that we went to all of the stakeholders—I believe is very balanced. The minister was in my riding about a week and a half ago. We had about 30 different organizations represented from the farm sector, the ag sector—across sectors, frankly—that all said, “We applaud what you're doing. We actually think that it's about time. It should have happened long ago.”

We are putting the balance back to the people who actually are law-abiding. I think that's a tenet of our society, it's a tenet of our democracy that we have to always stand firm on. Otherwise, we see what's happening around us in some situations at the federal level that, again, are causing significant challenges to our province.

We need to ensure that people who are law-abiding, who own their land, who own their businesses, who are doing the thing for the betterment of their community, their province and their country have the ability to do that with the knowledge that the government stands with them and will support them.

As I said—I'm just going to reiterate a little bit—food safety is absolutely paramount. Family safety: Every single farmer I know cares and wants to ensure their family is in a safe environment, that they feel safe to be in their home, which is also, in many cases, a business as well, that they can do as they so choose and do that productively without fear of reprisal from people who, again, are there for vexatious, negative reasons.

We want to ensure that worker safety is paramount, that people can come to work no differently than we can here, knowing that we can have a very safe workplace, the best, safest workplace possible. I think this piece of legislation gives those people back the ability to feel that they have that right.

Again, it can't be overlooked, the animal welfare. As I've stated in here, for every single farmer I know, part of their source of pride are the animals they are the stewards of. They are like family. I know my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, as a former dairy farmer, can

agree with me that that is a part of his life. It's no different than anything else—a pet. Most of his animals, I'm sure, had names, and he could reference them from 50 metres away, for sure.

At the end of the day, we want to ensure that there are repercussions. We have to, again, protect those people for whom it's their livelihood, it's their family farm, it's their tradition, it's their heritage for many. Many of those are family farms that have been in the families for generations and generations, and they have only done that because they love what they do, they've been a good farmer, a good steward of the land and the animal, to be able to continue to earn a living, and I think we want that.

If we stop and we let food safety become paramount—for somebody to be able to come on and protest in an illegal manner, then we have a very slippery slope that we're going down. I stand firmly behind this piece of legislation. I am proud of our government, I'm proud of the minister and I believe we have done the right things to protect the farmer and the agricultural industry.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the presentation from the Associate Minister of Energy. I actually enjoyed his remarks. I agreed with the vast majority of them. One question: I agree that many farmers, myself included, view our farm as someone else would view their home. If someone broke into or entered your home, what is the first thing that you would do to protect your family?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and I'm glad you enjoyed my speech. It's always a pleasure to be able to come in here and debate. That's what we both got elected to do.

I think what this piece of legislation does is give that opportunity. We've actually set out the rules. If you come into my home or on my farm without my permission, you have broken the law. So first and foremost, right upfront, you can read it. You are not able to be here without me giving you permission. So that's the first thing.

I would then, I think, in this legislation, be able to tell them, “You are trespassing and you should leave.” If you are not being vexatious, if you're not here for the wrong reasons, you will turn around and I won't have to do another thing. I would probably still go to the extent of calling the police or calling 911 or calling someone in that area. But this actually allows us to do those things.

I think it's the one thing that maybe you are alluding to, that there could be that opportunity. But if that person is not there for vexatious—we're not talking about the person who just wanders on to your property. We're talking about someone who is very determined to disrupt your livelihood, to disrupt your family, to disrupt our food supply. I think we have built in—

1640

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thanks to the Associate Minister of Energy. What a great speech—a throwback to our days in opposition.

What does this bill do that's not covered under the Trespass to Property Act?

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much to our member from Whitby, our very diligent whip. I want you to know that I worked for hours on this speech, so thank you very much. I'm glad you enjoyed it.

What this does is, again, it puts the rule of law back on the side of the landowner, of the farmer, of the agricultural community, to be able to say, "We are doing the lawful things that we have always been able to do, and we're making sure that those vexatious criminals, who are coming along with those vexatious reasons and intent, are told upfront, 'You will be guilty, and you will have to bear the repercussions of that.'"

So I believe this piece of legislation has done what we all should be doing. We're putting clear laws in place. We're making sure it's communicated to people, and they understand, before they commit a crime, that they know they have. They can then make that choice. If you go past, you pay the time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to try this again. Again, the farm is the equivalent to the house. People who have never been on a farm: The feeling a farmer has is the same as the house. It's very near and dear. Someone comes into your house to break in or to do—what is the first thing that you teach your kids, that you teach everyone to do if someone is doing something untoward to you?

Hon. Bill Walker: I'll explain back to you one more time, because eventually, we'll get there. I think we can do this. We're collaborative across the aisle to be able to find common ground.

I think, like you, I would actually say to the person, "You are not able to be here, and if you turn around and walk away, we don't have to do anything more. But at the end of the day, if you continue to move forward, if you continue to not break ground and turn around and leave my property, which I have not given you permission to be on, then I think I can take some challenges."

Depending on someone's home—if it was my home—then you actually have options at your disposal. You can have the conversation. You can suggest you're going to call the police. You can suggest and reiterate it again: "There are going to be criminal implications if you do not leave right now." I believe, for 90% of the people out there, that should be enough for them to turn around and go away. If they're not and I feel fearful for my family, then I'm going to do what I need to do to be able to ensure that that person is restrained, if we have to. You're never going to want to encourage people to go overboard—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: There has been a little bit of confusion on this, and some of the opposition have made some suggestions that add to that confusion. In my riding, I have a number of farms that are more than 1,000 acres. They're livestock farms because they are growing the feed on the farm. Is it that whole 1,000-acre farm that is designated, or

does this legislation define where, actually, those animal zones are and what is an animal zone?

Hon. Bill Walker: My understanding—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Stop. Sorry. Response? Then I will recognize someone if they stand to do their response.

I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm just keen to get to work here and try to help my friend from Timiskaming get to that point where we can be crystal clear on this.

As I was starting to say before—I should have said that the next stage is regulation. So we're actually going to do more consultation for those exact situations. In my case, we have a livestock barn that many people come to. Again, the zones in there will be actually done in consultation with the stakeholders that are truly going to be most impacted. So in the case of a 1,000-acre farm, I think you can have designated zones. I trust you will be able to have the right, if you so choose.

We agree, as the legislators, that that whole farm could be considered a zone. That will be up to you, because again, whether it's 1,000 acres or one acre or half an acre, if people are coming in and vexatiously trying to inhibit food safety, your family's safety, your workers' safety, then I believe we have the right and the responsibility, frankly, to protect them with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm going to try this one. It shouldn't be that hard because I'm not trying to be tricky here.

A farm is also a business, as is a hardware store. If someone breaks into a hardware store, what's the first thing you do? You dial 911. Why, in this legislation, doesn't it suggest—it lays out four things you can do. Farmers are going to read this as what you should do. At no point—it says to call the police after you perform a citizen's arrest. Perhaps you should call the police before things get ugly. You can always take the next step, but why isn't "phone the police before you decide to take the citizen's arrest step"—why isn't this in the legislation?

Hon. Bill Walker: I'll throw it back to you. If I'm coming at you with a knife, are you going to call the police or are you going to try to defend yourself and your family and ensure that that happens? That's maybe an extreme, but what is the difference in principle?

You are on my land illegally. I'm asking you to leave or you're going to be charged with trespassing. If you will not and you come one step further, then I have the ability to use reasonable grounds to apprehend you. I may not have time. I don't always have a cellphone on me, so I'm not certain how I'd get to that phone. What can you do on my property while I go and find that phone to make the phone call to the police, who might be another half an hour away? I think that in Timiskaming—Cochrane this might be even more challenging than in some of the other areas.

I think, at the end of the day, this allows you to ask an appropriate thing: "Leave my property or you will be

charged with trespassing. If you don't, I'm going to actually apprehend you, and yes, I will call the police to make sure you're properly charged."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Okay. I am excited to recognize the member from Mississauga–Malton.

Mr. Deepak Anand: Thank you. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: Your analogy is great. Whenever I go to rural communities, I always see a big sign, "Farmers feed cities." I absolutely agree with you that we need to protect farmers. My question would be more within your riding: Have you heard from the farmers in your riding about this bill? What is their feedback?

Hon. Bill Walker: Great question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Just a moment, please.

Response. I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a little new at this. I am kind of the energy guy, if you're seeing that, Madam Speaker.

I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Malton. "Farmers feed cities" is a slogan that has been around. I still see those all over the place. Not only do we feed cities, but we feed rural areas, we feed the Far North and, frankly, we feed the world because we are the greatest nation for food safety in the world.

Maybe you weren't in the House a few minutes ago when I said that we had the minister up to my riding about a week and a half ago. We had over 30 different organizations represented in a room. Every single one of them was supportive of this legislation. They actually said, "Thank you for listening. Thank you for implementing something that actually puts the law back on our side. We have always been the law-abiding providers of this"—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: By this point, I think it has been clear where my colleagues and I stand on the bill. I think we've made that clear. There's no argument that the rights of farmers, producers and food chain supply workers need to be protected. Strengthening biosecurity and food safety are top of mind for all of us here in this chamber. Farms are not just a workplace. For many farmers, it's also their home, and they should feel safe and secure. They should not have to worry about their children and livestock coming into harm's way. They should feel respected for the hard work they do in producing the food that we all enjoy eating.

I recognize that people also have a democratic right in society to make their views known, but that doesn't trump the biosecurity of the food supply. We really need to make that clear. It's important that farmers feel no risk to their lives and their livelihoods, but those protections should not come at the expense of people's basic rights. People have

a charter right to express their views, and no government should ever try to take that right away.

1650

Biosecurity was a major focus of our critic on this particular act. It needs to be a focus. It needs to be ensured that biosafety and biosecurity are a major factor going forward. But we also have to find that balance with the rights of citizens to express themselves about what is happening in processing facilities and on farms. That's what our critic said when he did his one-hour lead, which is very true.

At its heart, this is anti-whistle-blower legislation. Trespassing is already illegal, and that's a fact. It is unclear, however, that this policy will deter those who are determined to trespass in the first place. It is also unclear how outlawing whistle-blowing and what amounts to undercover investigations will help farmers feel safe at home and in the workplace and strengthen biosecurity. What is clear is the ag gag legislation threatens the essential tenets of journalism and democracy.

The provisions laid out in Bill 156 invalidate consent if given under false pretenses and prohibit undefined interactions with animals. Those things need to be questioned, defined and clear. What happens is, it's not defining the words "false pretense" nor "interactions."

We know of many cases of investigative journalism exposing injustice while taking jobs and positions under false pretenses. These reports can change laws and make our society safer and more equitable. Would they and the important work they do be penalized under this legislation? That's a question I think we need to ask, because there have been investigative reports that have uncovered illegal activities.

These provisions could also capture a regular worker who discovered a problem at a facility but is accused by the owner of obtaining consent under false pretenses when the problem is brought to light. The potential ramifications are huge because the language, again, is so vague. Similarly, the word "interaction" is too broad and not specific enough. It could mean anything from feeding to petting to making eye contact with an animal. So why? What could be the meaning of the word and why is it so vague?

Another troubling example is the use of reasonable force. According to the provision, farmers may arrest individuals who trespass using reasonable force, but it does not define what reasonable force is. It is concerning that this government's response thus far in these debates has been that the courts will decide what constitutes reasonable force. This vagueness puts all parties—property owners and trespassers—in potentially dangerous and disastrous situations. Again, my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane said this morning, "We have security people here who are very well trained on how to de-escalate and what reasonable force is. I'm a farmer; that's not my thing. So again, in a very stressful situation, when animal activists are in your face, what is reasonable force? You need to tell farmers. You need to educate farmers. They don't have section 25 on the farm wall, and

they don't understand section 25. What is reasonable force?"

On Wednesday, the member from Sarnia–Lambton spoke of the Egg Farmers of Ontario and their support of the bill. However, in 2013, Better Farming, Farm and Food Care Ontario and the egg farmers said they opposed ag gag laws for two reasons. At the time they said that the Canadian agricultural sector is strongly committed to opening the barn door, not closing it. I think most farmers are good stewards of the land and good stewards of our livestock, and they want to make sure that they do the right thing so we all have a safe food source.

In fact, a study from the University of British Columbia found that ag gag laws undermine public trust in farmers and increase the support for animal welfare regulations. Jesse Robbins, the researcher who conducted the study, concluded the following: "People who had read about the ag gag laws were much more likely to believe that we need more laws and greater laws governing how farm animals are raised. That should be an eye-opener to farmers and their representatives." That's what he said, according to his report. Robbins also pointed out that in 2012, the prominent cattle industry publication *Beef Magazine* found that 60% of 500 readers surveyed did not think ag gag laws were a good idea for the livestock industry to pursue.

Speaker, I think, like I said, that we have made it clear that we understand the principle of where this is going, but we also need to address those two issues, when it comes to workers or whistle-blowers or journalists investigating issues and the retroactive aspect of that, as well as when someone goes onto a property, and the piece about restraining someone. I can tell you that the discussions here are very valid when we ask about restraint. I don't know—I'm not a farmer—but if someone would come onto a property, my first instinct would not be to question them; it would be, of course, to find safety for myself and my family and call 911. Putting farmers in positions of making those decisions, I think, can lead to a lot of complications.

To have these things be challenged in court—I think that's where this legislation will probably end up, like many other pieces of legislation this government has hurried through. We've had green energy contracts being challenged. We've got cap-and-trade. We have education workers challenging the government. There are a lot of challenges. This government, as such, of course, has the power to move this into second reading and committee, but I think that's when those amendments, those changes, need to happen. They need to really, really take the time to get it right, because this legislation can affect so many people's lives, and we don't want to see it go the wrong way. We have a lot of authority in this Legislature, and sometimes we can't put ourselves in the position of the people who we are legislating laws to. That's why it's really important, when we're in that committee process, to listen to those people who are going to be affected by the legislation that we have.

Workers who are working in places where they want to do the right thing, or investigative journalism that

uncovers situations, serve a very important purpose. Like I say, those kinds of actions have changed laws and have made society safer, so if we're going to not look at the purpose of that, and that it can be used in good ways when whistle-blowers are protected, then I think this legislation—again, we have to look at those kinds of serious amendments to get it right.

I don't have much time left, Speaker, so I just want to thank everyone for their contributions and the lively debate and the respectful debate around this bill. I look forward to the questions that are presented.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions?

Mr. Aris Babikian: My question is related to the member opposite. Does she believe that farmers should have to face trespassing on their property? Do they also believe that someone should be able to trespass into someone's home anywhere else?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think the reality is that trespassing happens whether you believe in it or not. It occurs, whether it's in the city, whether it's in the north or whether it's in rural communities. What the issue at hand here is, though, is that this legislation is giving parties the right to use restraint, and we don't know what that definition looks like. Farmers aren't trained to do those kinds of things. Nobody has the education, or maybe even the physical ability, to do that. As has been pointed out, that kind of open-ended definition is problematic, and it can actually hurt rather than help.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member from London–Fanshawe. She made it very clear we are in favour of the majority of the bill which tries to prevent trespassing on farm businesses.

She described very aptly one of the questions we have—and I think to try and make the bill better—which is, how are farmers going to be trained to make an effective citizen's arrest and not go too far? Considering that they're adding weight to this, would the government consider providing training for farmers to understand what actually is a reasonable action?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The member makes a good point. It's twofold. I think we absolutely need to educate and provide awareness and education and training around what we ask people to do in legislation. I also think we need to ask the farmers what they think it looks like so that we're on the same page.

Again, I'm not a farmer, but if that was legislation for a private citizen in a home, I would want to hear from the person, "What do you think that restraint looks like?" You're going to get varied answers. That's why you need to understand what that looks like to the average person—not the average person who would even think about doing that—and then maybe the education and the training around that could help perhaps to make this legislation stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm a little bit curious on it because she said that we're introducing something that's kind of new and that we should be offering training for everybody on it. What we're doing is, we're talking about existing laws already when it comes to citizen's arrest. We're not introducing anything new; it's already there. It's available to everybody in Canada as it is right now. So why is this a difficult concept? We're saying this is something that everyone is able to do. Are you suggesting, then, that we should treat farmers as less than everyone else and not give them the ability to do things that everyone else in Canada has the ability to do? I'm confused by that. Could you please explain it?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Sorry for your confusion. The fact that we're debating this bill and we're talking about that specific piece of the legislation, it needs to be a conversation. No, it's not new as far as trespassing and that kind of thing, but we are here and it says "to use reasonable force." I don't know about anybody in this Legislature; if someone was asked to use reasonable force, do they understand what that means? Do they understand what that means and what that looks like? So awareness and education and training around what that looks like can probably help prevent future issues that no one wants to see go disastrous.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: The legislation has been on the books for a long time on citizen's arrest, and we're not opposed. The threats that farmers are facing now with animal activists are relatively new, and the tactics of animal activists are relatively new.

What we are proposing, and what I hope the member elaborates on, is to provide the training for farmers to deal with those threats that are relatively new. There is nothing in this legislation that provides those tools. The legal tool is there, but the actual training tool is not. Could the member elaborate on that, please?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I agree, but this is what the nuance is of what we're discussing. Therefore, there should be amendments in here. There should be legislation in here about training and education for farmers—to protect the farmers, as well as to protect people who go on their property without consent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions? I recognize the Associate Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and to the member from London—Fanshawe—I know she's a proud grandma.

I want to just reiterate that the minister has gone across the province. We've met with every stakeholder that wanted to meet with us out there. We've had lots of input. That bill was drafted based on that input, and we're going to have further consultation for some other things.

I guess my question for you—and I'm not against training, but at the end of the day, as a grandma, if someone was coming toward you to go after your two grandchildren and you knew they were doing that in a

vexatious—would you use reasonable grounds to protect you or your grandchildren, with or without training? At the end of the day, it's "reasonable" limits. Someone else is going to determine—because we all have different interpretations.

But at the end of the day, we're putting the law back and protecting the person who is actually being threatened, who is being harmed, whose livelihood is being threatened. I believe we're on the right side of this. I believe we're protecting the farmer and the person on the right side of the law. I hope you will agree with me. At the end of the day, you would protect your family and loved ones the same as we're giving to the farming community.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I understand the line of questioning—because it really feels like it's a line of questioning—but this is about farmers and trespassing and how to react when there's a trespasser on their land. It's a vague concept, and it needs to be strengthened and it needs to be understood. It's a new law; It's new legislation. Both parties need to understand their responsibilities as to what your government has legislated. I understand there have been consultations—and that's good before you draft something—but nothing is ever perfect when it enters this building, and nothing ever stays the same. Everything is a moving organism—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I look forward to the next question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: The subject of training—I'm glad it's coming up. Actually, the more training we can provide farmers and farm families, before incidents happen, on what is reasonable force, what could be seen as unreasonable force—because I think the last thing any of us want is for the first person to end up charged, or someone to end up in jail, to be a farmer who was convicted of using unreasonable force in a very heated situation. But this bill does not provide any funding or description of funding for that training to arm farmers with the knowledge on how to handle these situations.

Could the member describe if that training would be beneficial?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Absolutely, I agree that that would be beneficial. It's going to be beneficial to farmers, and it's going to be beneficial to people coming onto the property. It's going to benefit both parties.

The member is quite accurate in saying that it's not in the bill at all, and there isn't any funding to consider that amendment, that type of good piece of strong legislation, to support what you're proposing around farmers protecting their property. So putting that amendment, putting that requirement for training in, would help this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm going to read from an article from the Simcoe Reformer from July 24, 2019. It talks

about a number of different things. It comes down to something that councillor Chris Van Paassen said: “People are quite concerned about their safety and the safety of their livestock,” Van Paassen said.

“Farmers and the organizations representing them sat up and took notice last spring when an animal rights activist broke into a Lucan-area barn and removed” a piglet.

“The Toronto woman was charged with break-and-enter and mischief. However, the London Free Press reported May 12 that crown attorneys dropped the charges because ‘there was no reasonable prospect of conviction.’

“On social media, the activist declared this a landmark win for ‘the right to rescue.’”

1710

Currently, there are laws that deal with trespassing, but they aren’t strong enough to stop someone from coming onto a farm, breaking into the farmer’s barn and stealing a piglet. That individual who did that remarked on social media that their right to rescue was demonstrated by that. But that individual placed the entire herd in jeopardy.

That’s what we’re trying to address. We’re trying to make sure that these types of things don’t happen, that we have food safety, because food safety is something that we all should be concerned about.

Give me a second to find another quote here that I had. I have it right here. I’m sorry.

This one comes from—the article is entitled *Modelling Farm-to-Farm Disease Transmission through Personnel Movements: from Visits to Contacts, and Back*. It was written by Gianluigi Rossi, Rebecca Smith, Stefano Pongolini and Luca Bolzoni. I’m going to paraphrase some things. I won’t get too far into it.

It says, “Infectious diseases in livestock can be transmitted through fomites.” Fomites are small objects or clothing or something that can transport types of diseases. It’s not necessarily something that’s airborne. It’s not necessarily something that’s water-borne or in water droplets. This is something that has the ability to transfer the disease from one area to another area. These fomites are “able to convey infectious agents. Between-farm spread of infections through fomites is mostly due to indirect contacts generated by on-farm visits of personnel that ... carry pathogens on their clothes, equipment, or vehicles.”

This is a study that was done on how you can transmit disease from one farm to another. Biosecurity is all about how we prevent that disease from being transmitted. When someone comes onto the farm uninvited, and they have no protective measures—I’m going to use a word that probably most people will laugh at and say, “No, it’s not really part of farming,” but prophylactics are really what we’re talking about with it. If you have nothing that is blocking that, if you’re not taking those precautions, then you have the opportunity of doing significant harm to our food supply. What this bill does is put measures in place to stop that.

We’ve seen that one case alone. A woman from Toronto thought she was doing the right thing by rescuing

a piglet. She trespassed; that’s one law she broke. She broke into the barn. That’s break-and-enter; that’s a second one. She grabbed the piglet and stole it. There’s three laws that she broke. The crown decided not to carry on with it because there was no reasonable prospect of conviction. Three times she broke the law, and yet there was nothing that we could do to protect that farm.

Our farmers have a great deal invested in what they’re doing. The Cavanagh farms, just outside of my riding, have an automated milk system. For anyone who has never seen this, it’s an amazing thing. These cows go and milk themselves, and they do it four or five times a day. They’re happy, and they produce more milk. The cows are in barns. They decide when they want to go in and be milked themselves.

If you don’t know that, if you don’t understand how that process works—a lot of people think about the older style of milking, where, early in the morning, you bring your cows in and you milk them. Later on in the afternoon, you bring your cows in and you milk them. They might not recognize that we’ve got a new system now that produces more milk. The cows are happier. We don’t need as many cows to produce as much milk now. But you can have an activist who doesn’t understand that, who thinks then that the farmer is doing something wrong with that herd, when in reality, the herd is in a much better place because of it.

Brian Haass is another farmer in my area. He is a dairy farmer as well. He was so excited this past summer to show me on his iPhone the milking app and how he received alerts when cows weren’t coming into the automated milking portion in a timely fashion when they should be. He got an alert saying that a cow hadn’t come in. He got an alert that one of the teats wasn’t producing as much milk as the others and perhaps he needed to be taking a look at that. These farmers are investing a great deal of money looking after their cattle. They recognize that their livestock is their livelihood.

Randy Bullock is another farmer in my riding. He’s a fourth-generation dairy farmer and he wants to be able to pass his farm on to his kids, because they know it’s a noble thing. But they’ve talked to me. They were at our round table in Peterborough and they talked about the mental stress that’s put on them—the fear that if he goes away for a weekend and his sons in their early teens are looking after the farm, that somebody may come on to the farm and what’s he going to be able to do. There is no protection for them. Although our current laws, in theory, should protect them, we’ve seen they don’t. That case of the woman from Toronto is a perfect example.

Tara Bullock, his wife, is an insurance agent, as well as working on the farm. One of the things she talked about at our round table was that as an insurance agent, she can’t find an insurance company that will insure for loss when someone comes on to the farm and does something to their livestock. There isn’t an insurance policy available to them. This is their livelihood. We need to be protecting them.

My father-in-law, for a number of years, was a transport truck driver. He is 70 this year, at the end of this month.

He has said to me, “I would not want to be driving livestock now. I’d be driving a massive vehicle, and the likelihood of somebody coming up and interfering with it because of the animals on it, that scares me. It scares me because it would knock me off my game. I’m driving a vehicle that is tens of thousands of pounds, and if I’m not paying attention, if I’m not on my game and if I’m not able to concentrate on what I’m doing because all I can think about is that activist who did something to my rig while I was at the stop sign, I’ll kill somebody.”

What he meant by that was the likelihood of him having an accident driving the transport, because in the back of his mind, he’s thinking about what may have happened when an activist came and did something to the livestock that he was trying to transport—that’s a scary thought. These are all things that we need to take into account with it.

This legislation, I believe, finds the perfect balance. It gives us the ability to make sure that our food source, our supply of food, is safe. It gives us the ability to say, “Farmers, you’re protected on your property.” We recognize that there is a mental health aspect to it when activists can come on there. We’re saying, “If you trespass, we recognize that’s wrong.” You have the ability to protest, but follow the law. You can protest on public property, but don’t come onto the farm. Do not trespass on the farm and think that you have the right to do that, because the law has never given you the right to trespass on someone’s private property.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Questions and responses? I recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I enjoyed the member’s speech. I agreed with 90% of it, perhaps more.

I was quite shocked when the term “prophylactic” was used. I wonder: In the legislation, it says that some people can come onto a farm despite this—a police officer or a firefighter. Considering how important it is, should they also be in the legislation, that they also should have biosecurity protection or, in your words, prophylactics?

1720

Mr. Dave Smith: I like how the members of the opposition take the extreme and try to turn that into the norm. When the police are being asked to come onto the farm to deal with something, the police are being asked to come onto the farm to deal with something because there has already been a breach and they’re coming onto the farm, then, to deal with the individual who has created that breach. They’re not coming onto the farm to go up to the livestock and fondle the livestock or do something with the livestock. They’re coming onto the farm to deal with the legal aspect of the individual who trespassed, who did something they shouldn’t have done. That’s what we’re talking about here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I listened quite intently to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha’s comments. We share a lot of agricultural groups together. I represent part

of Peterborough county. We have the Peterborough County Cattlemen’s Association and the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture. We are very passionate about our agricultural producers and our farmers and what they bring to our economies. We have listened to them for many, many years on a lot of the concerns the member has brought forward.

But I just wondered if he would maybe have the opportunity to describe the passion that our farmers and agricultural producers have for what our communities need and what the province of Ontario needs, and what we can do to assist them and what’s in this bill that you’ve heard.

Mr. Dave Smith: I think that anyone who is involved in farming is very passionate about what they’re doing. They love the lifestyle. They love the fact it’s a family business. They love the fact that they get to be living where they are working at the same time. As much as you can love an animal, they love their animals. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: Their livestock is their livelihood. There’s no way that any farmer is going to do something that is going to jeopardize their livelihood. They recognize that it’s their way of life. They treat their animals with a great deal of respect because they know it’s their way of life.

What this bill does is it provides law enforcement with necessary access to uncover any type of cruelty that might be there. But we’re not seeing that from the vast majority of the farmers. What we’re seeing is that the farmers have that passion. They love what they’re doing. They love the animals they’re working with. They want to make sure that they can continue having that livelihood.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: Further to questioning, I wasn’t trying to be facetious. This legislation is meant to protect biosecurity. I’m 100% behind it as a farmer. But would it not benefit the legislation to say that those people who can bypass the legislation, for good reason—I’m not questioning the reason. For instance, a municipal building official can bypass this legislation. Would it not be beneficial for the legislation to say that that officials should—must—adhere to all biosecurity protocols?

Mr. Dave Smith: When someone comes onto a farm—a building inspector, a police officer or any other official—they’re coming on with permission from the farmer. The farmer is going to do things that protect their farm. These are interactions that are welcomed. The farmer is going to be there with them; they’re escorting them there. Each individual farm has different biosecurity techniques. So for us to lay out that “Thou shalt,” you’re not taking into account the different uniqueness of each of those farms.

What we do is we respect that the farmers know what they need to do for biosecurity on their farm and when someone comes on their farm invited, when someone comes on their farm who is welcomed by the farmer, the farmer is going to go through those security measures with them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: I really want to commend my colleague from Peterborough–Kawartha on his detailed analysis of this piece of legislation and his perspective that he has brought to this debate. We all know the importance of the agricultural sector in this province and the contributions of that sector to the economy and the amount of jobs it creates. This is has been—the way he put it—a great way for us to look into the many challenges that come across.

One thing that I would really like to hear more about from the member is the specific feedback that he heard from farmers who were directly impacted by a lot of this. What was some of the feedback that was really driving this? What was holding back some of that ease of doing business within that agricultural sector, and how will this help further grow—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Dave Smith: The title of this bill really does describe everything: It's not just "security from trespass;" it's the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act.

One of the things that I heard consistently from the farmers at the round tables that we held and from those who came directly to my office, as well as at the number of meetings I've had with the federation of agriculture, with the dairy farmers' association, with the cattlemen's association—they've all basically said the same thing: They have a great deal of concern about people coming onto their farm uninvited, harming their livestock, scaring their family and making life more difficult.

One farmer in particular talked about the mental health aspect of it. She has some children, and her concern is that they are going to feel insecure in their own home because of those activists.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: The member made a very valid remark that one of his constituents, a dairy farmer—and I felt that, as a dairy farmer—didn't want to leave for fear of something happening, and that his sons in their early teens who were taking care of the farm could be impeded by protesters, animal rights activists.

How are sons in their early teens going to deal with a citizen's arrest without any training on what exactly reasonable force is, if reasonable force is required to protect their animals?

Mr. Dave Smith: First off, I'm a father of three, and I want to make sure that my home is safe for my kids. My kids have all left my home now. They have gone off to university. I would do everything I could to protect my children in my home.

Mr. Bullock was pointing out that he wanted to make sure that he could do everything possible to protect his kids, and unfortunately, with some of the activities that have gone on now with activists coming onto farms, he didn't feel he could protect his family if he was not there.

That's one of the most valid points that anyone can make. Every single parent in this province would echo those same things. They would do everything possible to protect their family. This bill gives some of that ability to protect their family.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I will remind all members to address all comments, though it's a challenging new set-up, to and through the Chair.

Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I recognize the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I'm just negotiating with our colleagues across the aisle about who's to speak next. I've said that I will speak next. The opposition House leader will be back to speak at another time.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020, that was introduced by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. He kindly came to my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock on February 4 to hold a round table. We held it at the Lindsay agricultural fairgrounds, which—I'm going to put the shout-out—is hosting the plowing match this year. The International Plowing Match will be at that very spot where we held the round table in February. It's going to be after Thanksgiving this year, which is a little unusual, but they are pinch-hitting for a spot to have the International Plowing Match. We haven't had it, I don't think, in that riding since the 1980s. It was in Peterborough in 2009. So we're very happy, and I thank the Lindsay Exhibition and the Lindsay Agricultural Society for offering to do that.

1730

I told the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane that I would do a shout-out to his host municipality, the town of Verner, that hosted us in 2019 for the International Plowing Match. I remember him speaking with passion about how the local agriculture community were—not only did they host and do a ton of hours of volunteer work, which makes these things happen, but I think the president was also out there hooking up the trailers as they left to the dumping station. There was no job that was too small for these people to do in their community. So I say thank you to the member and his community for hosting that, and welcome you to Lindsay.

When we had our round table meeting in February, we had 13 commodity groups that came out for the meeting, so I thank them. They had grain farmers, dairy producers, pork producers, beef farmers, soil and crop improvement associations. We had the local city of Kawartha Lakes' economic development officer. Part of her role is with agriculture and agri-business, because that is right up there as my number one industry in the Kawartha Lakes part of my riding. That's a little flatter ground for agriculture in my riding. We get into the Canadian Shield when we get up to the Haliburton area. We have some farming there, and I give a shout-out to the Haliburton federation of agriculture. They have a little bit of a tougher go than the Kawartha Lakes and Victoria county federation of agriculture.

They came with great interest. My farmers are never short of opinions; I can say that. They're never scared to bring forward comments and concerns. But this bill addresses the really unique concerns that the agriculture communities have on farm trespass. I know that the Minister of Agriculture had been in Peterborough just hours before he came to Kawartha Lakes, to Lindsay, to hear this ongoing issue.

One of my farmers that was there, Mark Torrey—he's a local beef farmer. He is also the Ontario Federation of Agriculture representative. He was there and his quote was: "It was a concern 40 years ago"—this is farm trespass—"and it's a concern today." The bill isn't "about limiting activism" but rather ensuring safety and security....

"Farmers are facing increasing challenges and difficulties. 'Mental health is a major issue in agriculture today.... This offers some peace of mind.'"

He's a many-generation farmer in our area. So I was very appreciative that he came out and represented OFA and represented a lot of concerns that he has heard, and he has, obviously, for generations, heard about that.

The bill, if passed—and that's why we're having this debate and listening to feedback—would consider farmers, employees and animal welfare and safety as a key component and cover the transportation of animals. I have the only pork producer, I think, of Durham, Peterborough and Victoria or Kawartha Lakes. I have only one left, which is astounding, but that's how the markets go. They came out, and I appreciate the Malcolms. They've been generations of pork producers. They came out and were very happy to see the fact that the transportation of their livestock is covered in the bill.

It's interesting when you have these round tables. I have them in my communities all the time, and you hear a lot of feedback. It's important to have these round tables because you get the different things they might have forgotten to mention to you when they saw you last time at the fair. But this is what they've been looking for. This was very much supported and I'm going to get into some more quotes coming up.

This provides stronger recovery mechanisms for harms caused by a trespasser. It protects the owner-occupier for civil liability if a trespasser is harmed. It extends the limitation period to bring about charges to two years from the date of the trespass or from the date when the trespass was first discovered. It allows for consent to be voided if obtained under false pretenses or duress. Madam Speaker, that gives some address to what the bill is going to perform.

We've heard in the Legislature a lot about biosecurity and why we need to develop health and safety protocols based on the best knowledge of science that we have. It's for the sake of our farm animals and our food supply that we must follow them.

People, when they hear "biosecurity," might say, "What is that?" But really, it is people who are coming onto the farm property where livestock are housed—and in the transportation—who don't realize that they are affecting

the quality of the food chain. We take great pride in Ontario and in Canada in having a very secure quality supply of food that we produce. The minister consulted a broad range of commodity groups. He consulted the agriculture community. We've heard back for many, many years—I've been in the Legislature for the better part of 17 years now, which seems a long time when I say that. We have 900 stakeholder letters; 60 municipalities have actually supported this bill for increased protections.

Keith Currie, who is the Ontario Federation of Agriculture president, talked about our process and said, "I'm really encouraged by the process that brought this entire bill into place. The farm community has been working together collectively for a better part of this year and alongside us has been the government of Ontario." That speaks volumes, Madam Speaker.

I'll give a shout-out—because agriculture sometimes feels inferior to the auto industry for the amount it contributes to the economy. But when you say the agriculture sector, it supports more than 837,000 jobs in Ontario. One in eight jobs in this province is tied to agriculture. Our farmers employ people in rural and urban communities. People forget about the agri-food processing that's in our rural communities. It's so important to recognize the contribution that agriculture makes to the province of Ontario and certainly to my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I want to quote from my local sheep producer, because sometimes we forget about the sheep.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We want to hear from the sheep.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I know, so if you don't mind if I put my glasses on.

Marc Carere is chair of Ontario Sheep Farmers and his quote is, "Ontario sheep farmers are committed to the highest standards of animal care. I would like to thank the minister for his collaboration and leadership in bringing forward this legislation that includes a much-needed emphasis on biosecurity. It is critical to ensuring the highest standards of animal care and ensuring that farms are safe places to work and live for our farm workers and families." Again, I appreciate Marc, who is from my great riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, for his contribution and input that he added.

As I said, the agriculture people in my riding are quite strongly worded. If there's something that needs to be said, they'll say it, as I guess most agriculture people do. I'm looking across to the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane. As we all know, he has been involved in agriculture all his life. We very much listen to what they are saying.

I am looking for one more quote that I wanted to get in and that was from the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario: "Minister Hardeman tabled the bill with words we were hoping to hear. The bill is intended to protect farm animals, the food supply, farmers and others from risks that are created when trespassers enter places where farm animals are kept or when persons engage in unauthorized interactions with farm animals."

I want to thank everyone for—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Questions and responses? I recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Minister of Infrastructure for her remarks and for a shout-out to Verner. We are going to come to Lindsay too.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Yay. Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: We're going to spend the week or however long it is, and we're going to do—

Hon. Laurie Scott: We're actually staying for a few days.

Mr. John Vanthof: So it will be a bit colder than Verner?

Interjection.

1740

Mr. John Vanthof: The Minister of Infrastructure and I met each other a long time ago through a mutual friend, who is better with words than either one of us, Mr. Lloyd Wicks.

We agree with the intent of the bill. We agree with the portions of the bill that protect biosecurity. Would the minister comment on whether or not it should be in the bill, in a fact sheet or something, that one of the first things that a farmer should do is actually call the police before he or she attempts a citizen's arrest?

Hon. Laurie Scott: The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has been asking that question a few times today. We've heard that every situation is different, but I think we all know and are trained in some degree of what you should do. We have fight-or-flight responses that we initiate. Every situation is certainly going to be different. I hope the phone is handy. My cellphone is handy, but maybe not everybody's is.

You don't know when situations occur, but the bill would not give farmers the right to use unreasonable force. I think you have to protect your safety first. Is it to run into a closet that might not have a phone? You don't know. Each situation has to be dealt with. I'm sure that the member will ask the question again, but this is that judgment is done on what is in—I'm sure if there's a phone handy, I'm sure that calls will—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. Further questions?

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria: First of all, I want to thank the member for that great speech and, really, the commitment to supporting the agricultural sector and industry, which we know is so important not only to Ontario but this entire country. It really highlights the need for certain pieces of legislation to better promote the economic growth of that industry and to ensure that—and unfortunately, there's only I think it was one pork producer left in her riding now. It speaks to the competitiveness, and it speaks to this government's overall goal of improving Ontario's competitiveness and making sure that we look at every single sector. We know that legislation like this will help improve that for the agricultural sector.

But I'd like to hear the minister potentially expanding upon some of the unique challenges that this industry is facing with respect to trespassing.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I want to thank the associate minister for asking the question, because it is true. We've heard about safety a lot, and safety of the farmhouse, even, where family members are. That's usually close by the barns where the livestock is held. There are children running. Most often, you're having a meal at the kitchen table, and somebody could be coming to the farm building and it's all in close proximity.

This has been a consistent message. When the minister introduced the bill, every agriculture commodity group was in the chamber, and I think that speaks volumes to safety for farm families themselves but also for the livestock and biosecurity.

I thank the member for the question and look forward to more questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: The minister is correct: I have been trying to get confirmation on whether one of the steps, before you make a citizen's arrest, should be to call the police. I commend the minister. I believe she said so. And provided—if there's no cell service, fine; if there's no phone, fine. But it should be recommended that you call the police.

The question might be that each time the police are called, that will be billed to the rural municipality. Is that one of the reasons?

Hon. Sylvia Jones: That's not how it works.

Mr. John Vanthof: Good. Could the minister please elaborate if that is the case or is not the case—or the minister next to her?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Response?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Order, please.

Response? I recognize the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the Solicitor General directing the answer to the question—that that's not how it works—to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, with respect to the billing. Sometimes we do get interchanged, the two ministers—

Hon. Sylvia Jones: Once or twice a day.

Hon. Laurie Scott: Once or twice a day, it happens, so I appreciate the input.

But you know the people in rural Ontario. They have good common sense of what to do in the action. I nursed for many years. It depends on the situation, what your first response is, and you hope it's the safest response, initially. I think that that's how things will be dealt with, for sure.

I think that the legislation was brought in as a deterrent, also. I didn't get into the increase in fines and the changes, in the short time that I had. I think, overall, that the intent is a deterrent, and it's much-needed legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Logan Kanapathi: Thank you, Minister, for that eloquent speech, and thank you for your passion for farming communities and farming families.

My questions would be: What are some concerns that rural communities in your riding have expressed to you about trespassing on their farms? Could you elaborate on that? I know you had lengthy consultations with your farmers and farming communities, and you are passionate about that. Please explain more about what you are finding.

Hon. Laurie Scott: I really appreciate the member's question, and the member's background, having agriculture in his family, and what he brings forward to this bill.

We've talked a lot about safety. Absolutely, it's not only the safety of the farm and the farm family and the employees who are there, but it's the safety of the animals also. That is what we've heard.

As I've said, rural communities and agriculture members and farm families are very resilient. We've heard, over the many years that I've had the ability and the fortunate opportunity to represent them, that they needed protections in the ever-changing world that we live in—the increase in some groups that are affecting their ability to be safe in their own homes—but also the awareness that we need to have on the safety for the animals.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to pick up on the comments and the questions that have been made by my colleague the member for Timiskaming, our agricultural critic, and that is that rather than being in a situation where you have somebody who's doing something on your farm that shouldn't be happening—and we agree with you; we need to be able to protect biosecurity, and we need to make sure that the farm is not invaded in some way—why wouldn't you call the police first, before actually doing a citizen's arrest?

Here's my point: What is the first thing they tell you when there's a burning building? Run out of the building. Then call the fire department. You don't try to put the fire out, and then call the fire department once you've not been able to put it out. So why are we following an inverted principle when it comes to the arrest mechanism within this legislation?

Hon. Laurie Scott: I think the member's question is very good. I think it's all situational, right? It depends on where you are on the property, or in your house, what you do.

For sure, you've got to get to a safe place, initially. Is it running out of the building if it's on fire? Hopefully, you can. If it's someone who's coming onto your property and you can run the furthest away from them, then for sure—and we hope that you have a phone handy.

But I think that in the common sense of what is occurring, people will call for help, and they will call when the first opportunity arises to call for assistance. We don't expect anyone to manage this alone. Those people who can protect us will come forward as soon as they can. Maybe the fastest thing is the pocket-dial, and it's the neighbour next door, and maybe they call.

As I said, everyone has to take the safest route they can on the first—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you.

Further debate?

1750

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I really want to make two or three points in this particular debate. The first part is that we agree for the most part with what this legislation is trying to do. You need to protect biosecurity. You can't have cross-contamination on the farm, be it livestock, be it whatever. That has to be maintained.

Number two, you do have to have some protection for those who run the farms and run those type of operations—that you don't have people coming in and obstructing in some way what it is that they're trying to do, putting maybe themselves in danger and putting others in danger or at risk.

But I think there are a couple of points here, and I think, in committee, we should be able to clarify that. It just seems to me that in the section that the member of Timiskaming—Cochrane, our agriculture critic, has raised—and that is the issue of the power of the citizen's arrest. There should be something in there that infers that people shouldn't take the law into their own hands. If they have to, and it's a situation where there's really no other choice and the police are so far away that you can't do nothing, there's a mechanism for them to do what it is that they've got to do. We understand that. But if you make it the default that automatically people do a citizen's arrest and they don't call the police, you're putting, I think, that person in a situation where it may be dangerous, in the sense of escalating a situation and/or, quite frankly, hurting the view of the public when it comes to food processing plants and others.

I used the analogy just a little while ago, and I'll just use it again. The first thing we're taught from the time that we're very young is that if there's a fire wherever you are, you don't try to put the fire out. The first thing you do—you don't even try to call the fire department. You run out of the building, and then you call the fire department. There's a reason why we do that: We don't want people putting themselves at risk in order to try to fight a fire with all great intentions and, all of a sudden, being in a situation where they get hurt or, quite frankly, could die.

I think, in this legislation, there has to be some clarification that the intent of this is in cases where it is not practical for the police to show up on time or where the thing has escalated in some way and the farm or the food processing plant or whatever has to deal with it because it's immediate—yes, there's some logic to what the government has put in the legislation. But there has to be some sort of a pause there so that we don't end up in a situation where we're saying to the farm community, “You know what? You've got the power now. You can do what you got to do. Don't worry about it.” I'm sure that's not the government's intention, and I think we need to be able to clarify that.

What members of the government have said that I will agree with is that 99.9% of people in the farm community know exactly what needs to be done and they're trying to do it right. All they're trying to do is their job. But what we don't want to do is put them in a situation where, all of a sudden, things get out of hand and it's like they don't have that protection in the law of being able to say, "Well, hang on a second. I'm going to call the police," and the person says, "No, I'm not leaving," and you're not calling and, "All right, then I'm doing a citizen's arrest." I think there needs to be some kind of a pause.

The other thing that I want to raise is the issue of First Nations and hunting. It's a little bit of a different issue for northern Ontario because, in most cases, hunting happens on crown land, but not everywhere. There are a lot of places along Highway 17, Highway 11 and other places where we have a strong farm community, and there's hunting that happens on farmer's land. For example, my daughter lives by the river. She has five or 10 acres. First Nations people call her and say, "Listen, I'm going to go hunt goose on your property. You're okay with that?" "Fine; not a problem." There's an understanding by some First Nations members that this legislation will impede them from being able to do that, that the farm community will be able to in some way stop First Nations members from being able to exercise their constitutional right to hunt and fish.

I know the government said that that's not the case, and I take the government at face value. I don't think the government wants that and I don't think that's what the government was trying to set out. But it has certainly created a little bit of confusion.

For example, last weekend, I was driving back from Ottawa. I stopped at one of the reserves on the way by with my colleague Mr. Mamakwa from Kiiwetinoong, and that was the big issue that the chief wanted to talk to us about—this entire issue. I said to him, "I don't think that's the case, Chief. I don't think that the government is trying to stop you from being able to get access, in order to exercise your constitutional right to hunt and fish." "Well, that's what we're being told by others." So we got on the phone with the Chiefs of Ontario, and the Chiefs of Ontario's understanding was that there was a danger that that could happen.

So I look across the way, and I say to the government that if we both agree, New Democrats and Conservatives, that we do not want to impede on the right of an Aboriginal person to hunt and fish as per their constitutional right, we should put a non-derogation clause in the legislation. When this bill goes into the committee, we may very well want to put in a non-derogation clause that says that in no way, shape or form does this bill impede on a treaty right or a constitutional right enjoyed by First Nations in this country. Putting in a non-derogation clause, I think, would just put that whole issue to bed. I listened to the parliamentary assistant for MNR and other ministers of the crown get up and answer that question, saying, "No, that is not our intent." I take it at face value, but I think we could clarify this by putting in a non-derogation clause that would allow us to deal with that.

The other issue I want to raise is that, you know, we're darned lucky in Ontario, and it has been said by all members on both sides of the House. We have a farm community that is amazing. They do amazing work at growing and raising the food that we eat. We have a food processing industry in Ontario that's second to none. We don't think about ourselves being in danger by eating vegetables or meat grown here in Ontario. I think it says a lot for the system that we have in place that we have such great confidence in food safety.

Could we always make it safer? Absolutely. We should never sit on our laurels and think that everything is good and nothing else can be made.

But one of the difficulties in how this bill is drafted, and I think it's something that we've got to think about—the stated intent of the bill is fine. We can support that. We have no difficulty, as New Democrats, supporting the intent of this legislation. But it's like the old saying: You don't want to throw out the baby with the bathwater. You don't want to give an impression that, somehow or other, people are going to be able to do things that they never did before, when it came to protecting their ability to operate their business, be it a food processing plant.

This whole idea that you have a two-year statute of limitations where you can go back and charge somebody for having taken pictures of some act that happened—that shouldn't have happened, that contravenes existing laws or regulation—and/or be in a situation that takes away the ability for us to have—what's the word that I'm looking for? I hate that, when you do this and you forget a word. It happened to you a little while ago. When it comes to the ability of whistle-blowers.

Yes, we get mad at whistle-blowers. If somebody works in your office and blows the whistle on something having to do with you or me, I understand that people get upset about that. But it's the way that we're able to shine the light and to make sure that things are done in a way that's transparent and clear, and that we don't have things that are going on that are unwanted or unneeded.

I think there's a really fine line here. I understand why the government is doing this in this legislation. I understand they're trying to find a way to get at how do we stop people from infiltrating a particular organization with the intent to be able to find all the dirt, and then, two or three months later, or four months later or whatever it is, leaking the information. Yes, I kind of understand why you're trying to deal with that. There are some logical arguments for why you would want to deal with that. But I think we need to be careful that we don't overreach on this particular aspect of the legislation, because it could lead, quite frankly, to a constitutional challenge, as we've heard from a number of people who spoke before. More importantly, it could really darken the name of the industry, and I don't think we want to do that.

This industry is amazing. The farm community and the food processing community are second to none in Ontario. I think we want to go to where you need to be, when it comes to protecting biodiversity and making sure that we protect the operations that are there from malicious things happening. But we have to do that in a way that I think

creates a balance. I think we need to talk about this a little bit more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Thank you. There will not be time now for questions and responses. There will be the next time this debate is called.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Monday, February 24, 2020.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Harris, Mike (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
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Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
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Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	
Mitas, Christina Maria (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre	
Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Morrison, Suze (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
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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
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Scott, Hon. / L'hon. Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	Minister of Infrastructure
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
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	
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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
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Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	

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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
Vacant	Orléans	
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