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16 juin 2020

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 June 2020

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 juin 2020

The House met at 1015.

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

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that the following document has been tabled: a report concerning the review of cabinet ministers' and opposition leaders' expense claims, complete as of May 25, 2020, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Guy Bourgouin: J'ai l'honneur de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler de l'inquiétude des parents de Mushkegowuk–Baie James. Huguette Rodrigue, une résidente de Hearst, est une travailleuse de première ligne. Elle donne tout son temps à l'Équipe de santé familiale Nord-Aski depuis le début de la pandémie. Mais à cause des directives du ministère de l'Éducation, elle n'aura pas de garderie où envoyer ses enfants demain.

Le centre où elle envoie ses enfants ouvrira ses portes à sa clientèle habituelle. Et l'autre garderie en ville n'ouvrira pas ses portes cet été.

Avec toute raison, les garderies doivent assurer la sécurité des enfants et des travailleurs. Mais ils font face à une réduction du nombre d'enfants par salle et à l'achat d'équipement de protection individuel sans avoir des directives claires et de l'aide financière directe du gouvernement.

Monsieur le Président, les résidents de Mushkegowuk–Baie James sont très reconnaissants du travail exceptionnel des éducatrices et des administrateurs pendant ces temps difficiles. C'est maintenant au tour du ministre de l'Éducation de faire sa part et d'investir directement dans nos garderies pour assurer que les travailleuses comme M^{me} Rodrigue puissent continuer à aider nos gens.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise in the Legislature today to share an important milestone for my community of Sarnia–Lambton. After three very challenging months, as of 9:30 a.m. yesterday, Bluewater Health in Sarnia–Lambton has zero cases of confirmed COVID-19

patients in acute care. This is the first time this has happened since the onset of our community's first hospitalization due to the virus on March 21, 2020.

1020

Of course, we must recognize that this virus is still in our community, and we must remain vigilant in our efforts to follow public health guidelines, but this does mark a milestone for Sarnia–Lambton.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the dedicated front-line workers across Lambton county for their commitment to our community.

The collective efforts to control the spread of the virus by the people of Sarnia–Lambton are starting to pay off. On Friday, our community will proceed to phase 2 of the provincial reopening plan. I'm excited for those businesses in our community that will be reopening after so many weeks of sacrifice, and I'm encouraging everyone in Sarnia–Lambton to once again join together and support the many local businesses that have struggled through these challenging times by committing to shop local.

Together, Mr. Speaker, we can control the spread of this deadly virus and quickly help to build back our important small business community.

Stay safe.

MIGRANT WORKERS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, Ontario welcomes about 20,000 temporary foreign workers each and every year. That's more or less the entire population of Niagara-on-the-Lake or Amherstburg or Collingwood or Essex or Huntsville or Tecumseh. Generally speaking, they live in open-concept bunkhouses, or too many of them are squeezed into a crowded home, with little privacy.

This pandemic has hit these workers hard. The Globe and Mail claims that 600 migrant workers have already tested positive for COVID-19 in Ontario.

In my area, two young men from Mexico have died. They were 24 and 31 years old.

Canada is failing our temporary foreign workers, and Ontario is failing our migrant workers as well. They come here because Canadians don't want to do the work. They put in 60 hours a week or more to support their families back home. If they call in sick, they don't get paid, and that's a problem.

These are essential workers, but because of their circumstances, they are also treated as expendable and exploitable. Their wages should be protected if they catch COVID-19. We need a wage subsidy for our migrant workers.

Good things grow in Ontario, and we need migrant workers to get local farm fresh fruits and vegetables to our kitchens and tables. We can do better, we must do better, for these essential workers.

SOMALI HOPE ACADEMY

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, Bur Salah is a small village in rural Somalia. It's home to the Somali Hope Academy primary and secondary education school. You might not know this, but the Somali Hope Academy in rural Somalia has a very unique and special relationship with Canada: The school was built and funded by the Somali Hope Foundation, a Canadian-led initiative.

Somali Hope Academy's development was a dream of Sergeant Mahamud Elmi, an Ottawa resident and sergeant of the Ottawa Police Service, who, in his youth, fled the civil war in Somalia. As a Somali Canadian, Sergeant Elmi works tirelessly to build relationships and make a difference in the Ottawa community. However, he always wanted to make a difference in the country of his birth—a country that has continually suffered immeasurably over the past 30 years. His dream was to contribute to a brighter future for the children of Somalia, and education was a key part of his plan. He envisioned a world in which all Somali children—boys and girls—can pursue free, quality education.

This is a very special year for us as we celebrate our 10-year anniversary. Fundraising began in 2008, supported by Human Concern International, the Somali community, the Ottawa community, the Ottawa Police Service and the Lerner family.

Since the Somali Hope Academy is run entirely by volunteers, 100% of all money raised goes directly to the school.

In 2012, Sergeant Moe Elmi's dream of providing free education to underprivileged youth in rural Somalia finally became a reality.

This year, we had to cancel our gala because of COVID-19, but we will be doing a virtual gala. I encourage everyone to go to somalihopefoundation.ca to find out more.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My office has logged 112 different times that nurses have reached out to me during this pandemic. These are the same front-line workers that the Premier calls heroes. In fact, under normal circumstances, I would have invited them here, and they would have come, and they would have sat right over there. Everyone would have clapped and given them a heroes' welcome to this assembly—except there is a big difference to how I see them as heroes and how this government does.

They are heroes during your press conferences and on your social media posts, but when they need something, they are met with silence. Not a single nurse in the NHS has received the pandemic pay yet. When one of our Niagara regional hospitals had an outbreak a few weeks

back, one nurse called in to say that the province's loosey-goosey guidelines on PPE left them in total chaos.

Last week, the government had to answer a question on their legislation capping nurses' pay. In February, in Richmond Hill, this meant that this government took back 19 cents an hour from the nurses who worked there.

Nurses are heroes, for sure, but so long as you don't ask when you are getting paid or for more protective equipment—so long as you come cheap.

These men and women and their response to the pandemic brought our province back. I am tired of seeing them being called heroes then being treated in a way that does not befit a hero. It is not good enough that nurses are heroes only when they are quiet and come cheap. Nurses and all front-line heroes deserve better from this government.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: Ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui en Chambre—coïncidence avec la journée de mon anniversaire et ma première déclaration. J'ai décidé de partager une nouvelle positive.

Le bien-être des aînés est devenu une préoccupation majeure partout en Ontario. J'ai visité plusieurs résidences dans ma circonscription avant la pandémie, et j'ai tenu à recommuniquer avec chacune d'elles pendant la pandémie. L'une de ces organisations s'appelle Montfort Renaissance. C'est un centre bilingue qui offre des services d'aide à la vie autonome dans une résidence et aussi des services à domicile et des services de jour pour les aînés.

Cependant, ce qui est exceptionnel avec Montfort Renaissance, c'est qu'il semble que cette résidence ne se soit pas laissée prendre par surprise par cette pandémie. En effet, Montfort Renaissance avait déjà en place un plan de pandémie. Les employés étaient formés sur les meilleures pratiques, et un plan de crise a rapidement été mis en place.

Leur nombre de cas de COVID-19, monsieur le Président, c'est zéro : aucun cas parmi les résidents. Cette organisation appuie donc directement notre système de santé et est un modèle à suivre sur la façon de prendre soin de nos personnes chères avec dignité et respect. Il me fait plaisir aujourd'hui de les féliciter publiquement pour leur succès.

Nous savons tous qu'il faut repenser la qualité des services offerts à notre parenté qui a besoin de soins. Cette réflexion devrait être accompagnée de changements législatifs et du financement nécessaire afin de démontrer le leadership et la responsabilité que les Ontariens sont en droit d'obtenir du gouvernement.

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Stan Cho: June is Filipino Heritage Month. This morning, I want to recognize the over 280,000 Filipinos in Ontario, many of whom call my riding of Willowdale home.

Filipinos began immigrating to Canada in the 1930s and, over the past nearly 100 years, have made a great

contribution to our country and our province. Over the last few years, I have gotten to know many in the Filipino community. They are some of the warmest, most welcoming, hardest-working and kindest people I have ever met. They are fiercely proud of their heritage and culture, and have shared their wonderfully colourful language, mouth-watering cuisine, and the values of serving their community and the importance of family in our province.

In 2017, I was honoured to join the ranks of the Order of the Knights of Rizal, an international order created to honour and uphold the ideals of Philippine national hero Dr. José Rizal. As Sir Stan, I have enjoyed many special occasions celebrating with my friends in the Filipino community, who never hesitate to invite me into their homes to enjoy great food and to learn about their spirited culture.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this year, celebrating Philippines Independence Day on June 12 and all that the month usually has to offer wasn't possible, but I wish all my friends in the Filipino community and across Canada a happy Filipino Heritage Month. I look forward to seeing you again in person and enjoying my favourite summer treat, halo-halo. Salamat po.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jamie West: Melodie Hughes from my riding of Sudbury has been raising alarms about issues in long-term care for years, after her family had a devastating experience in 2015. Melodie tells me that her mother, Carol Ann Hughes, was sexually assaulted. She was at Mackenzie Place Long Term Care Home, a Revera Living-managed facility in Newmarket. Melodie says the investigation into her mother's sexual assault left her with zero closure. She still has no answers and feels that the home was never held accountable.

1030

In 2018, Melodie spoke with the Premier about the urgent need to fix long-term care. The Premier told her he was committed to improving care for seniors in this province, but after reading the Canadian Armed Forces report on long-term care, Melodie believes that Ontario is moving backwards. Reading the CAF report sent Melodie right back to the moment when she learned her mother had been assaulted.

Speaker, we need a long-term-care judicial find-and-fix inquiry that will compel this government to fix the problems in care that everyone knows have existed for far too long. No one should have to go through what Carol Ann experienced. No senior should have to experience the appalling conditions in our long-term-care homes.

Melodie is calling on us to take action. Will this government listen to Melodie and the millions of Ontarians calling for a find-and-fix inquiry?

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Today I'm honoured to stand here in the Legislature to acknowledge recipients in my Oakville riding of important financial grants from the

Ontario Trillium Foundation and sincerely appreciate their recognition by the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

There are four recipients of the grants. The first is Acclaim Health, which is a registered charity that has been operating for 85 years, with programs that support physical and mental well-being through independent living, reduced social isolation, dementia care and end-of-life care. Their grow grant will help reduce social isolation for caregivers of people living with dementia in the Halton region.

The next organization is the YMCA of Oakville, which has been operating in the community since 1956. The YMCA of Oakville has played a role in improving the quality of life for thousands of people in Oakville. Their seed grant is provided for them to pilot a free 12-week group fitness and peer support program for young people, aged 13 to 18, who are struggling with their mental health.

Another recipient is Home Suite Hope, whose aim is to break the cycle of poverty for single parents and their children. Their seed grant helps them scale up their Home-ward Bound program to help young, single mothers find careers.

Finally, the Halton Environmental Network has been working to support and enhance the capacity for local climate action and environmental sustainability across our community.

Congratulations to all these great organizations for their grants, and thank you for making a positive difference in our community.

WALT ELLIOT

Mr. Parm Gill: I rise today in recognition of a former Liberal member of provincial Parliament, Walt Elliot. Mr. Elliot peacefully passed away on June 4, at the age of 87. He and his beloved wife, Anne, recently celebrated 60 years of marriage.

Walt Elliot faithfully represented the former riding of Halton North from 1987 to 1990.

Before entering into politics, Mr. Elliot worked in his community as a school teacher and later as a principal. He was actively involved in fundraising for many community organizations, including but not limited to the United Way, the children's aid society, the Ontario Agricultural Museum, the Halton Region Museum and McMaster University.

During his time in this House, under Premier Peterson, he served as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Housing.

On behalf of all of my colleagues in this House, I want to pass our most sincere condolences to the Elliot family—and the way we can all strive to serve our communities as honourably as Mr. Elliot, Mr. Speaker.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa South has informed me that he wishes to raise a point of order. I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you. I'd like to wish a happy birthday—joyeux anniversaire à notre collègue la députée d'Ottawa-Vanier.

Happy birthday.

Applause.

QUESTION PERIOD

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question this morning is to the Premier. Ontario families are continuing to deal with the crisis in our long-term-care homes: 1,792 seniors have lost their lives, and six more homes are reporting outbreaks.

Last week, the Premier told a reporter asking about long-term care, "We didn't fail. We've thrown every tool we have at these long-term-care homes."

Speaker, does the Premier truly believe that his government made no mistakes and that his government truly did everything they could when it comes to protecting seniors in long-term care?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I can say yes, truly we threw everything we possibly could at it, absolutely everything. When we ended up getting calls about outbreaks, we sent hospitals in there. We did have inspections, over 3,000 over the prior year. We made sure the military came in to the red homes.

I'll give you an update from May 28, Mr. Speaker. We had 2,589 cases. That's a combination of residents and staff. On June 12, the total confirmed cases was 1,154. Still, that's a high number, but what is good news—and we're getting there; we still have a tremendous amount of work—we went from 123 outbreaks in long-term-care homes, with 172 long-term-care homes resolved, down to 63 long-term-care outbreaks and 238 long-term-care homes resolved.

We're putting every resource we have at these long-term-care homes, and if the Leader of the Opposition has any other ideas, she can send them over.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I've sent many over, and unfortunately, they go unanswered.

Having said that, there are almost 1,800 people who have lost their lives in long-term care to COVID-19.

This morning, I spoke with Maureen McDermott, whose mother resides in the for-profit River Glen Haven long-term-care facility in York-Simcoe, where 20 residents have died from COVID-19. She began raising the alarms about the state of care in that home back in April, filing formal complaints with the government after staff repeatedly hung up on her when she called to get updates on her mother, desperate for information. And for weeks, the government refused to take over that facility.

Can the Premier honestly tell Maureen that his government did everything they possibly could have done to protect seniors in this home?

Hon. Doug Ford: My heart breaks for Maureen and families like Maureen's. No one wants to see deaths. It doesn't matter what political stripe you come from—no matter if it's from the orange party, blue party, red party or green party. Everyone is doing their best to make sure we resolve cases.

We have enough PPE—within 24 hours, if a home is out of PPE, we end up sending it over immediately. Again, we send hospitals in there to take care of the homes. Actually, we've brought in hospitals and we've taken a licence off one home, and we've brought the hospitals in to run the entire home, numerous homes, when we see the cases escalate.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing everything possible in our power, sparing not a penny, to make sure we resolve these issues that we're seeing in long-term-care homes. We're making headway. The numbers show it. They prove it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families like Maureen's have been pleading with the Premier to take action for months, and instead, he kept control in the hands of for-profit operators. In April, while the Premier was telling families there was an "iron ring" around long-term-care facilities, the administrator of that facility was telling local reporters, "We can only isolate to a certain degree because all the residents on the second floor are wanderers."

There was no iron ring at River Glen Haven, and the Premier either knew that or he wasn't doing his job.

Will the Premier now admit that his government did fail and apologize to Maureen and thousands of families like hers?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: Again, my heart breaks for Maureen and so many other families that have gone through this tragedy.

It's not just here in Ontario; we've seen it around the world. We've seen it in our neighbours to the east of us, in Quebec. Again, we're putting every single resource we have, and it's a terrible tragedy.

1040

But what has gone on for decades under the previous government, under the NDP propping up the previous government—they never did anything, nothing at all. We are going to fix the problem that we inherited, and which has been around for decades, absolutely decades. This is coming to an end. We're going to fix the problem, moving forward, for good. It's very simple. All the other governments talk a lot, but they did absolutely nothing, including the opposition party, who stood by for decades and didn't do anything. We're doing something now.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier.

Unfortunately, a broken heart isn't good enough for all of those seniors who have lost their lives in long-term care.

In fact, other governments right here in Canada took early action to respond to COVID-19 in long-term care.

The results show those actions were faster and better than Ontario's. British Columbia intervened in March to take control of for-profit long-term-care homes that weren't coping with outbreaks and, in March, took control of staffing to ensure that staff would work at one facility and have the proper equipment to protect themselves and residents—back in March, Speaker.

BC, at this point, has seen 168 seniors lost to COVID-19 in long-term-care homes. Almost 1,800 have died in Ontario's long-term-care homes. Why was Ontario unable to actually forge an iron ring around long-term care, like BC in fact did?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I love how the leader of the opposition uses BC all the time. I have a great deal of respect for Premier Horgan. I consulted with him numerous times and continue to consult with him. But what the leader of the opposition is missing is that they're one third our size. They were a month earlier than we were. Have we all learned a lot of lessons? Absolutely, we've learned a lot of lessons. That's the first step—admitting where there are cracks in the ship. We saw massive cracks in the ship; there's no denying it. I was the first one to come out and say, "There are massive cracks in the ship," and that's why we've asked for an independent commission.

We need answers. We aren't shying away from problems in long-term care; we're tackling these problems. We're meeting them head-on, unlike previous governments that totally ignored them and swept them underneath the carpet. I don't look at it as profit or non-profit. I look at all long-term-care homes equally because they all have the most vulnerable people in the homes. We're going to fix this problem, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To fix a problem, you have to admit that you had one, Speaker, and I think this Premier still refuses to acknowledge that they should have moved more swiftly and more decisively when it came to our vulnerable seniors in long-term care.

For months, the Premier ignored pleas from front-line workers who were calling on the government to intervene and take control of failing for-profit homes. For months, those pleas were ignored, Speaker. And for months, the Ford government insisted that it just wasn't necessary, that these for-profit homes were protected by an iron ring that really didn't exist and that such takeovers would not even be possible under Ontario's system. That's what the Premier was saying, Speaker.

The Premier says, "Ontario did not fail our seniors." Why did this government fail to take decisive action other provinces did and instead leave control of long-term care in the hands of operators who are now being investigated for potentially criminal levels of negligence?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Long-Term Care to respond for the government.

Hon. Merrilee Fullerton: Thank you to the member opposite for this important question.

Looking across the globe, long-term-care homes and our most vulnerable people in society have been tragically affected by COVID-19. There is no doubt; we must all acknowledge that. It is fact.

Looking across Ontario, even at the peak of our COVID-19 outbreak, 70% of our homes were not in outbreak, and most of the time, 80%.

My heart breaks for everyone who's been affected by this terrible virus and our most vulnerable people.

Our government did act swiftly—and I know there is a narrative out there about inspections, about not taking action. We acted early. We acted early on some of the measures, earlier than some of the other provinces. We have a geographic difference; we have a population difference. Every measure and every tool has been used and will be used: calling in hospital teams, infection prevention and control teams, additional staffing with portals, our hospital integration.

We're looking at an integrated process forward to rejuvenate long-term care. We will fix this problem.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's words were, "We didn't fail," but nobody believes him because he did, he failed. The Premier failed to listen to Maureen and others when they told him that their loved ones weren't safe at River Glen Haven. He failed to read the emails from women like Cathy Parkes, who was sounding the alarm bell about abuse and neglect at Orchard Villa.

Will the Premier now admit that his government, in fact, did fail and apologize to Maureen and thousands of other families like hers?

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

Looking at families across Ontario, we understand the hardship that they have faced during COVID-19. COVID-19 has been a challenge in many, many ways, and we acknowledge that.

Our homes have been supported. We've taken measures left, right and centre, and we will continue to take measures as we move forward.

When we look at the funding that we put forward very early to make sure our homes could have more cleanliness, more sanitization—we had our inspectors in there on an ongoing basis as soon as they could go in safely. In fact, our homes have had in-person inspections on a regular basis, despite the narrative from other corners.

The truth is, we have taken responsible actions—swift and decisive actions—over and over again, and we will continue to do that.

It is our number one priority to keep our long-term-care residents safe.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier.

Across the world, governments are fundamentally re-evaluating the state of policing in their communities.

Hundreds of thousands of people have marched in the streets demanding systemic change and action to address anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism.

In less than two months, three Black Ontarians have died during interactions with police. Regis Korchinski-Paquet, D'Andre Campbell, and Caleb Tubila Njoko all lived with mental health issues. They were loved, and they should be with us today. No one should die after calling 911 for help.

What is the Premier's plan to address this urgent call from communities for fundamental change to policing in Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Solicitor General to reply for the government.

Hon. Sylvia Jones: I think we all understand and recognize that policing and community safety has changed in the last number of years. The issues faced today by police services and the communities they serve are increasingly complex.

As part of our government's \$174-million commitment to address mental health and addiction in fiscal year 2019-20, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Health announced \$18.3 million in new funding to support those affected by mental health and addiction challenges in the justice sector. This includes \$6.95 million for new mobile crisis teams with dedicated safe beds and transitional case managers.

Speaker, I think we all understand that when almost 40% of police calls are interacting with individuals who have mental health or addiction issues, we need to do things differently. That's why our government has made such a strong commitment to mental health and—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For decades, governments ignored the crisis of communities, whether it was the Liberals' failure to act on recommendations from the Roots of Youth Violence report, which they commissioned, or the Ford government's decision to roll back police oversight, cut millions from anti-racism and education programs, and axe \$335 million in mental health funding.

Tackling systemic racism requires real action. The SIU must include public, independent oversight. We need to truly end carding. And we have to fix the imbalance between policing costs and armed crisis response versus meagre investments in community supports and mental health—ollbacks that this government has made.

Will the Premier commit to take these long-overdue first steps to address systemic racism in the province of Ontario?

1050

Hon. Sylvia Jones: There are so many parts of that statement—it's not really a question—that I could delve further into, but let's start with the Anti-Racism Directorate. There has been zero change in the amount of budget that they have. Frankly, they have done some incredible things already, including mediating partnerships between the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board and the

Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion to support Black youth in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. I would have thought the member opposite would have known about that, since it was in Hamilton.

We've supported the Toronto District School Board and the Children's Aid Society of Toronto to address anti-Black racism in their respective organizations. The Anti-Racism Directorate has supported the Durham region school board with developing anti-Black racism training for kindergarten teachers. And there are so many things that we are doing at the Ontario Police College to make sure that our front-line police officers, who are doing very challenging work during challenging times, have the training and skills needed to make sure we serve all of Ontario.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Mr. Parm Gill: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last week, many Ontarians were relieved to hear that case numbers had dropped and that many parts of Ontario could reopen. Yesterday, even more of Ontario was told that businesses, both big and small, could reopen.

This news is encouraging for everyone in the Legislature, my constituents, and all Ontarians in those regions and across our great province. It would also be a relief for businesses who have been closed for a number of months and can finally reopen and support their local communities.

Will the Premier please tell us more about what these announcements mean for the people and the businesses of our great province?

Hon. Doug Ford: Through you, Mr. Speaker: I want to thank the member from Milton. As always, he's doing an incredible job out in Milton.

When I stood in front of Ontario last week, I announced our plan to reopen Ontario. I wanted my message to be clear: We support you and we will get through this together. That's the reason we've seen the numbers come all the way down like this—it's because of the people of Ontario. We announced that 24 regions were going to open up last week. Yesterday, we announced another seven more regions that are opening up. And hopefully, in a very short while, we'll announce that we'll be able to open up Windsor-Essex, and we'll be able to open up Toronto and Peel.

We understand—but we're always going to listen to the health and science first. We've seen the numbers come down. We're confident the numbers are going to continue coming down. We had over 24,000 tests. Again, the numbers of COVID-19 cases are down—

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

Mr. Parm Gill: I want to thank the Premier for the answer and for his great leadership.

It is always encouraging to hear that Ontarians are coming together and ensuring we can all get back to work sooner. I am proud to work—and I want to also thank the

dedication, the leadership that my constituents have shown during these difficult times.

I know that we need to keep public health in mind when we approach our reopening. Case numbers and testing are critical factors when it comes to assessing what stage we can move into.

Can the Premier tell us more about what has been done to get us even closer to stage 2 of province-wide reopening?

Hon. Doug Ford: Thank you again to the member for Milton.

I want to be clear: The public health trends across the province are headed in the right direction. They're actually headed in such a great direction that we have the lowest cases against any region in North America—states our size, provinces; I guess the most comparable would be Quebec. We have the lowest cases per 100,000 in all of North America.

The system is working, Mr. Speaker. Our plan is working. The people are supporting the plan, and it's amazing. When everyone is pulling in the same direction, it's amazing how much work you get done.

Rather than playing politics and nattering back and forth, I have an idea: Why doesn't the opposition support us on some of these ideas? Come out and help us, just like their federal counterparts with the federal Liberals, who are working like this together—calls every single day, working together, seeing how we can source more PPE, how they can support each other.

That's what we need in this province. We don't need the bickering and the fighting constantly, when this problem has just happened over the last five, six—

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

POLICE OVERSIGHT

Mr. Gurratan Singh: My question is to the Premier.

D'Andre Campbell was a 26-year-old Black man from Brampton. He was suffering from a mental health crisis, so he decided to call the police. He didn't survive that phone call. He was tasered twice and shot and killed by police in his own home.

Two months later, the officer who killed D'Andre Campbell has not had to answer a single SIU question about what happened, and because this Premier has delayed legislation that would have required officers to participate in investigations, there's nothing the SIU can do to bring this officer to the table.

This complete failure of accountability lies squarely at the feet of this government. Enough is enough. We need justice.

Will the Premier act now to fix our broken SIU so that this officer and every officer involved in police killings is investigated so that justice can be served?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Attorney General to reply for the government.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you to the member opposite for the question.

Public safety is a top priority for our government. We're committed to providing front-line police officers with the tools and the resources and the supports they need to keep the community safe. That's why the government passed the act that you referenced—the Comprehensive Ontario Police Services Act, the COPS Act. It will work to help the people of Ontario. It will help front-line policing. It will help policing partners. It also provides for some oversight.

The SIU is an independent body that does work to make sure that matters are investigated without political interference. As such, obviously I can't comment on any particular case, but rest assured that the system is independent, that it's structured with the tools that it needs and will continue to do its job.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Supplementary question, the member for Beaches–East York.

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: My question is also for the Premier.

Calls for reform to police oversight have echoed unanswered in this province for years. From protests in the streets to expert reports, no one has been able to convince this government or the Liberal government before it that Black lives matter enough to change the law and make it stick.

While the Premier takes turns denying the problem exists or delaying solutions, the families of D'Andre Campbell, of Regis Korchinski-Paquet and of far too many other Black Ontarians seek answers, knowing they can't depend on the SIU to find the answers for them.

My question is simple: Will the Premier commit today to reform the SIU and police oversight in Ontario without delay?

Hon. Doug Downey: I thank the other member for the question.

We have been adjusting the way that oversight works. We have not adjusted the independence, and we have not adjusted the arm's-length nature of it, but we have adjusted the tools that they have, and we will further strengthen the already independent and effective police oversight.

The COPS Act includes a new, stand-alone Community Safety and Policing Act. It will, when in force, rename the OIPRD as well—the law enforcement complaints agency—and start a new legal framework for that agency.

Mr. Speaker, we are proactively picking up the pieces left by the previous Liberal government, and we are making sure the system works more effectively than it has in a very long time.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Premier.

Systemic racism has always existed in Ontario, but many are just beginning to understand and appreciate just how deep and how entrenched it is in our society and our institutions.

When our public school system was founded by Egerton Ryerson, it included residential schools for

Indigenous children. It underfunded and segregated schools for Black students. Higher education at the time was reserved for boys.

Racism is not inevitable. It is designed. It is learned.

Addressing systemic anti-Black racism early in our education system will remove barriers to success for Black students.

Will the Premier today instruct his Minister of Education to mandate that the true history of Black Canadians be taught as a mandatory part of Ontario's education curriculum?

1100

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: As you know, obviously, this government takes anti-Black racism very seriously, as I know all members of this House do. We have been as concerned as anybody has with the events that have occurred over the last number of weeks across North America.

I will take the member's comments under advisement and make sure that they are forwarded to the Minister of Education.

At the same time, the member will know that the Premier worked very quickly prior to this, in December, and appointed Jamil Jivani to advance opportunities in the community. I'm sure the member opposite will agree that he is a very passionate voice and somebody who I know members on this side of the House are anxious to work with.

As I said, I will take the member's recommendations and forward them to the Minister of Education.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Back to the Premier: Premier, we heard in this House that this government will not tolerate any racism in its government, but the urgency is here. Lives and futures are at stake. We know that systemic racism cannot be rooted out until we understand how deep it truly goes in this province. Despite this knowledge, this government is still underfunding and hindering the work of the Anti-Racism Directorate. You are ignoring the tools that are there to address this problem.

Other provinces, like Quebec, have set up an action committee to combat racism, yet Ontario has only provided the words, without meaningful action. We must work together to change the outcomes for Black, Indigenous and other people of colour in this province.

My question to you, Premier, is will you support the creation of an all-party committee to take action on the many dozens of reports that have been presented about the issue of anti-Black racism in this province? Will you do that today, Premier? Yes or no?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to reply.

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member opposite for the question.

What we have done here on this side is we've introduced a new council a couple of weeks ago. Jamil Jivani

will be heading up that council. It's called the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity, and it's focused on making sure that there are mentors for individuals in the communities that the member opposite referenced—But not only mentors. There is a game plan, Mr. Speaker, and Jamil is putting together the council right now. They have until Thursday to put their names forward to be a member of this council, which is actually going to make a substantial difference in the lives of these individuals. Working with our partners that we already fund in this sector, we have 50 different members in the Ontario Black Youth Action Plan that our ministry and other ministries are funding—Black-led groups, for the most part, that will be expanded as a result of financial incentives that were announced a couple of weeks ago to the tune of about \$1.5 million, to ensure that we're getting better outcomes and creating better opportunities for members of these communities across the province.

ASSISTANCE TO TOURISM INDUSTRY

Mr. Stephen Crawford: My question is to the Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries. While sitting on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, I had the opportunity to listen to tourism and attraction owner-operators who are looking for support and investments to help with future planning and marketing initiatives following COVID-19. I know the minister has been speaking to stakeholders frequently to listen to their concerns and collect invaluable real-time data that has helped guide her ministry to provide investment and supports that will provide much-needed relief to the \$36-billion tourism industry.

We know that our government and this minister are listening to Ontario's tourism operators. In fact, at committee, Ms. Debbie Zimmerman, CEO of the Grape Growers of Ontario, said, "I want to begin ... by thanking the government of Ontario for being accessible and responsive to our needs and for pivoting quickly in these unprecedented times."

Can the minister please update the House on what our government is doing to directly support tourism operators to ensure they'll be in the best position to welcome back visitors when it is safe to do so again?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank the member from Oakville for his question and also for his leadership. He recently chaired a meeting for me with a regional tourism organization in Hamilton, Halton and Brant. He's also been a leader on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs as we do a sector-led initiative with respect to tourism and hospitality.

I have to say, AS A long-standing member of this Legislature for the past 14 years, 140 different presenters appeared before that committee; That is unprecedented. We have held six telephone town halls with well over 1,200 stakeholders in each one of them. We have retooled the Tourism Development and Recovery Fund. We've tripled that funding. We have flowed \$9 million already for festivals that aren't able to continue, but we want to see them back in 2021.

In the member's own riding, we have flowed over \$875,000 through the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and as of today, we will be flowing \$350,000 in marketing funding, because of the hard work of that member, to his region.

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

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Minister, that's great news. I'm very happy to hear that.

I know these measures and supports are greatly appreciated. Local investments go a long way in promoting the wonderful destinations and attractions that our communities and regions have to offer Ontarians, particularly as they may be considering a staycation with their friends and family this summer.

Rick Layzell, CEO of the Boating Ontario Association agrees, noting at committee that our "tireless efforts are sincerely appreciated, not only by our industry but by the thousands of Ontario families who are out there actively and safely boating today."

Minister, can you please tell us how our government has continued to support tourism operators throughout this summer season?

Hon. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much to the member.

Obviously, in terms of the economy, the hardest hit, the first hit and the longest to recover will be our tourism, culture, and sport industries. We are right now facing a triple threat on our spectacular double bottom line. I've often said in this House that we are responsible for the cultural fabric of the province of Ontario, but also \$75 billion in economic activity. Unfortunately, we are now facing that triple threat—first, the public health crisis; second, the economic crisis; and now, third, the social crisis—in trying to make sure consumer behaviour is not inhibited, particularly as it pertains to our tourism and our culture sectors.

That's why our government has announced, just yesterday, \$13 million in marketing funding; \$350,000 of that will go to this member's riding. But we have continued to flow that money across the province—\$1 million to Ottawa on Friday, \$1 million to the Brockville and Leeds–Grenville area on Saturday, over \$350,000 in Muskoka on Sunday.

And, of course, Speaker, I'll be at Blue Mountain today and in Niagara Falls on Friday, as we continue to support our tourism operators and those local communities.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Doly Begum: My question is to the Premier. Since this government announced the child care reopening in this province, without ever talking to any operators, any parents, ECEs—people who actually operate on the ground, people who actually need child care spaces. Without consulting with any of these people, they decided suddenly, with three days' notice, to open up child care centres.

Since then, we have heard from parents who are worried sick. They're worried about the future of their

children. We have heard from parents who have been told that fees are going up. We have been told that these parents, who are already paying fees more than their mortgage, more than their rent—we're now experiencing the highest child care costs in this province, and now these child care costs will go up.

We've also heard from essential workers, people who this Premier calls our heroes, who are afraid of losing their spaces. We're hearing from front-line workers who are losing their emergency child care spaces and have no alternative.

My question is, will this government admit that their lack of a plan is hurting families and step up with the funding child care centres need, and make the recovery easier and safer for everyone?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the minister worked very closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health to put in place a plan that would support our child care operators as they began to reopen up.

The member will know that while child care centres are allowed to reopen, they're not mandated to reopen. They can only do so and should only do so when their workers are safe and the people they're taking care of are safe as well, Mr. Speaker.

To suggest we didn't work with them is just simply wrong. As you know, this is a very important sector to us. It's important to the economy. As we start to reopen, we understand how important child care is for individuals who are returning to work. Funding has been put in place to ensure that child care centres do not increase the costs to parents.

We will continue to work very closely with the sector to make sure that our children are safe and, equally importantly, that the people who provide the care are safe as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Back to the Premier: The government's lack of a child care plan is hurting families and child care operators.

1110

Jeff, a supervisor at Friends Day Care in my riding, said the Conservatives' plan fails to address capacity issues, fails to address the increased cost of reopening and fails to provide proper funding and direction for staffing. Some child care centres might never reopen.

Premier, how can you expect child care centres to provide child care for parents so they can return to work if these child care centres can't even afford to pay their own staff?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I just said, we worked very closely with the sector well in advance of the announcement that the sector could begin to open. As you know, there was an emergency order put in place earlier on that would allow for essential workers to have the provision of child care. We've advanced some of those sectoral guidance—the minister working closely with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, working with the Minister of Labour. We've put funding in place to

ensure that centres, when they do decide to open, can do so safely. We've expressed that it's important that all child care workers are tested. There's funding in place for PPE. There's funding in place for disinfecting.

We will continue to work very closely with the sector, Mr. Speaker, because as you know, as we begin to open up the economy—as the Premier announced earlier today—this is a very important sector. We want to make sure that the people providing services and the kids they are taking care of are safe.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

M^{me} Lucille Collard: My question is to the Attorney General.

Vendredi dernier, la Cour suprême du Canada, dans une décision importante et historique, a affirmé que les francophones de tout le pays ont droit à la même qualité d'enseignement que leurs voisins anglophones. Cette décision aide à corriger une inégalité dans la qualité des services gouvernementaux fournis dans nos deux langues officielles.

Cette inégalité existe ailleurs aussi. Elle existe dans la capacité des Franco-Ontariens d'accéder aux services d'aide juridique en français. Le projet de loi 161 offre la possibilité de corriger cette inégalité.

Allez-vous saisir cette opportunité afin de garantir que les francophones et les anglophones aient accès à des services d'aide juridique de qualité équivalente dans la langue officielle de leur choix, peu importe où ils vivent dans notre province?

L'hon. Doug Downey: Je veux remercier la députée pour la question—et joyeux anniversaire.

We are determined to work with the francophone community to improve access to justice in French in Ontario. Bill 161 contains proposals to improve the way the justice system operates every day to provide people faster, more affordable access to justice.

I'm very pleased that for the very first time ever, the proposed legislation would mandate Legal Aid Ontario to consider the needs of francophone individuals and communities when it is providing legal aid services. Our government is proposing this legislative change in recognition of the importance of ensuring that Franco-Ontarians can access legal services in French.

In addition to the legislative proposals related to the Legal Aid Services Act, the Smarter and Stronger Justice Act proposes amendments to the Class Proceedings Act to improve notice to class members by directing that the notices be published in both English and French—hardly something that we should have to do in this day and age, but it wasn't happening, and we're making it happen. It is our government's belief that this change will help ensure that Franco-Ontarians receive proper notice of class proceedings in which they may be eligible to participate.

I'll have more to say in my supplementary.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'm glad to hear what the minister has to say about the importance of francophone services.

I'm calling on the government to support my proposed amendment to schedule 16 of Bill 161, which will protect equal rights for both francophones and anglophones in Ontario to access legal aid services in the official language of their choice. It's very important that these rights are recognized in equality.

Will your government support this amendment during the clause-by-clause review of Bill 161 tomorrow? I would take that as a really great birthday gift.

Hon. Doug Downey: I thank the member opposite for the question.

The amendments deadline was last night, so I have not had a chance to see them yet. Certainly, we will review all of the proposed amendments from the opposition parties with this in mind, with our commitment that every person in Ontario should have access to the justice system in the official language of their choice. So the committee will look at the amendments, our government will look at the amendments with that in mind.

I want to thank you for working with us through the justice committee as it reviewed the bill, and as it goes clause-by-clause this week.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Stan Cho: My question is to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services.

Young people are the future in this province, but for decades youth from disadvantaged communities have faced significant barriers to succeeding in our society and in our economy. We know these barriers aren't new, Mr. Speaker, and we know that in many cases COVID-19 has made these issues far worse. At a time when Ontario is facing some of the most significant challenges in our history, we must do everything we can to equip the next generation of leaders in communities across this province with the skills necessary to overcome the social and economic barriers they face.

Minister, could you tell the House more about the recent announcement on the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity and the positive impacts this will have for youth in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: I would like to thank the member from Willowdale for the great question this morning.

Our government is looking for a group of diverse leaders who will form our new Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity. The council will include young people between the ages of 18 and 29 and adults with expertise in areas such as community organizations, not-for-profits, business and education.

The council is going to be chaired by Jamil Jivani. He is the province's advocate for community opportunities when the province was introduced to just a couple of

weeks ago by the Premier. He will work with the government to ensure that young workers, especially disadvantaged youth, have the opportunity to succeed in Ontario's rapidly changing economy. It will engage directly with young people in communities across the province to identify strategies to address the challenges facing many young people today, such as completing an education or accessing stable employment.

We're going to work with our community partners, and there are many that we're working with in the Black Youth Action Plan: Women's Multicultural Resource and Counselling Centre of Durham, in the riding of the Minister of Finance; Goldilocks Productions—

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

Mr. Stan Cho: Thank you, Minister. This collaboration between young people and the leaders in our community is crucially important. With approximately one in 10 youth in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 not in work and not in education, it is more important than ever to challenge the status quo and connect our young people to employment and the right training and supports to help them succeed. That's why the work of this council is going to be crucially important, and it's going to be important that they move quickly and decisively.

Are you able to tell us more about what our government and the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity will do to start addressing the barriers that prevent young people from succeeding to their full potential here in Ontario?

Hon. Todd Smith: Thanks again to the member from Willowdale for the question.

Our government recognizes the impact that COVID-19 and the outbreak in our province is having, and the need to move quickly to address some of those concerns and to take action. That's why we announced \$1.5 million in funding to organizations, like some of the ones that I mentioned earlier, that will provide urgent COVID-19 supports and address the immediate needs of Black children, youth and families in the province.

Moving forward, the council's first priority will be to work collaboratively with government, communities and young people to identify additional strategies to support vulnerable and marginalized youth to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak.

I'd like to take this opportunity again to encourage all youth who are interested in being a voice for their community to apply before the June 18 deadline—that's Thursday, Mr. Speaker—and have the opportunity to advocate and provide insight to government as one of the council's youth advocates.

MIGRANT AND LOW-WAGE WORKERS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the government House leader. Good morning, sir.

Speaker, as you know, good things grow in Ontario. But what people don't know, or pay little attention to, is that those who help ensure that good things grow aren't getting

the basic supports and protection they need to keep themselves safe. Hundreds of migrant farm workers in southwestern Ontario are ill, two young men have died, and still the government refuses to ensure these essential workers have the pandemic pay they deserve.

Speaker, when will this government step up and help Ontario's agricultural community with a real plan for migrant workers fighting COVID-19?

1120

Hon. Paul Calandra: Let me just say that I agree with the member. This is obviously a very important sector. My hometown of Markham–Stouffville is home to many workers, and they do very, very valuable work for the people of Ontario.

As you know, we've been working closely with the agri-food sector to ensure that resources have been put in place, that there is additional funding to ensure the provision of PPE both to increase and improve hygiene and sanitation standards on sites. I know at the same time, the Minister of Labour had mentioned previously—over 200 site visits with over 60 orders.

The member is correct: It is a very important sector. That's why we're treating it as importantly as we are. We have put in place funding to help those farms that may need additional supports when it comes to housing, and we will continue to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The supplementary question, the member for Sudbury.

Mr. Jamie West: My question is also to the Premier.

Not only is this government failing those who grow our food, but it is also failing the workers who helped ensure that throughout this crisis we had food on our table.

The pandemic made clear the vital work done by Ontario's front-line retail workers. But while some companies did step up with pandemic pay, that's now also being cut in the middle of the pandemic. Now workers are being told to make ends meet with the low minimum wage that this government also rolled back.

The pandemic didn't magically disappear this week. These workers still face threats every day. They are still heroes. And after putting their lives on the line for us for months, these workers deserve a paycheck that reflects their hard work and their sacrifice. We're now in a new normal. Workplaces have changed. The risks workers face every day have changed. Their jobs and responsibilities have changed.

Going back to normal is not enough. Ontario needs real change to help recover from this crisis. Why won't this government step up for low-wage workers and the families that they support and increase our minimum wage?

Hon. Paul Calandra: This government has been working right from the beginning to ensure that the people who provide service in small, medium and large enterprises are well supported. That's why we've reduced taxes across the sector. We've improved the workplace standards for our employees.

Specifically to the question of migrant workers, we understand how important they are to the agri-food sector

in the province of Ontario. Frankly, we could not accomplish all that we do in this sector without them. That's why the Minister of Labour, working in consultation with the Minister of Agriculture, moved very quickly to ensure that there was sectoral guidance in the sector. We provided additional funding to make sure that the health and safety of these very valuable workers could be improved. There have been over 200 site visits and over 60 orders.

Is there more to do? Absolutely. Is this a new normal? Probably for a long period of time. That's why the ministers will continue to work very closely with their partners to make sure that we enhance the safety and security of the people who come here and do valuable work for the people of the province of Ontario.

HOUSING

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I just want to give a special shout-out to my summer intern, Katherine Colbert, who I know is watching live.

My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. COVID-19 and the need to shelter in place has shown our province how important it is that every Ontarian has a place to call home. I am proud that this minister is working to make that a reality.

The various programs administered through his ministry are making a positive impact, not just for the people in my riding of Carleton, but for people across Ottawa and Ontario.

Could the honourable minister please explain how this government has increased funding to our various housing initiatives and how they're making an impact through these unprecedented times?

Hon. Steve Clark: I want to thank the member for Carleton for the question and for her tremendous advocacy both in her riding and in the Ottawa area.

Our government has made it a priority to invest new money in our communities and to partner with the federal government on new projects. This year, my ministry invested \$148 million to help our most vulnerable in response to COVID-19 through the Social Services Relief Fund.

In 2020-21, we are also investing an additional \$55.7 million into programs like the National Housing Strategy and the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. In fact, this year, our government will invest close to \$1 billion through our Community Housing Renewal Strategy to help build, retain and grow our community housing system in our province, and to help people experiencing homelessness.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the honourable member for that response. It's a team effort, and the reason I can advocate for the people in the area is because I'm supported and surrounded by such fantastic ministers like the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Long-Term Care and also the minister of heritage, tourism, culture and sport.

Mr. Speaker, through you: We know that the federal government has renewed its interest in the housing space and made funds available through the National Housing Strategy. Could the minister explain how our government has partnered with the federal government to leverage these funds and continue to help Ontarians find homes?

Hon. Steve Clark: Again, another great question from a great member.

Last December, federal minister Hussen and I announced the signing of the \$1.4-billion Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, and I'm proud that our government was the first in Canada to sign this bilateral agreement under the National Housing Strategy.

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit is a portable benefit. It will help Ontarians find homes in their communities that meet their needs and their budget. As of June 1, 1,600 families have already received direct assistance through this program, and by the end of the year, that number could grow to as many as 5,200 families. Over the nine years of the program, more and more Ontarians will be helped each year, ensuring that we can continue to help low-income Ontarians stay close to the supports that they need.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Marit Stiles: My question is for the Premier. It has been a rocky few months of emergency, distanced, remote learning, and we know that a return to in-class instruction this fall is not going to be easy. Students are going to need new supports. They're going to need mental health workers, they're going to need extra time with educational assistants, and they are going to need much smaller classes that allow for safe distancing. Schools are going to need PPE and more staff to do the extra cleaning.

Yet despite all of those looming challenges, we are months overdue for school board funding. Front-line teachers and other education workers are telling us they haven't even been consulted on any of the plans for reopening.

With the mess that this government has made in child care reopening, how can we trust them to deliver a safe and orderly return to classes for Ontario's two million students?

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: I guess I'm a little bit more optimistic than the member opposite is. I think that our partners in education have done a wonderful job dealing with the emergency that evolved in COVID-19. I know that my kids have—well, not ideally, but have been online with their teachers quite often, doing their lessons and doing some great work. So I guess I'm a little bit more optimistic. I'm a little bit more grateful for the hard work that our partners in education have done, dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. I know that we will continue to work very closely with them.

The minister, in particular, has been working with our partners in the education system to ensure that when kids do return to school it's done safely and that parents have

the confidence that the schools that they return to will be safe, while at the same time making sure that we have the resources in place should parents decide not to send their kids back to school. I know that the Minister of Infrastructure has been working to increase broadband across the province. We will be ready because we have been ready, and we will not fail our students. We never have and we never will.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Mushkegowuk—James Bay, the supplementary question.

Mr. Guy Bourgouin: My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Education likes to talk about using virtual resources to keep students engaged. But in northern Ontario, students and teachers don't have access to the technology that makes that happen. Over 120,000 northern Ontarians lack the access to reliable broadband, of which 70% reside in northeastern Ontario. While the Minister of Education speaks of equitable access to education, students on the remote James Bay coast have to carefully use the limited bandwidth shared with health care, public services and households.

To showcase virtual resources while thousands of students in northern Ontario lack the technology to use them is contradictory at best.

Can the Premier explain to students in northern Ontario that do not have access to reliable Internet at home what "equitable access to education" means?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Again, the government House leader.

1130

Hon. Paul Calandra: The member is correct. We want to make sure that students across the province of Ontario have access to the highest-quality education system available. That is something that we've been working on since we came to government.

I know that we have talked constantly about the disparity between urban and rural. It's something that we've been focused on. That's why the Minister of Infrastructure has been working so hard to bring forward a plan that would increase broadband access across the province of Ontario. We get that, Mr. Speaker. That's why the Minister of Energy, for instance, has made sure that we've brought down hydro rates so that people can afford it during this COVID-19 crisis.

We understand; this COVID-19 crisis happened and we are dealing with it. The minister is working very closely with his partners in northern Ontario, with the boards in northern Ontario, to make sure that the students there, whether it's virtually, whether it's through busing, whether it's a return to school, have the best-quality education.

There should be no difference between urban and rural, and that's what this government is focused on—making sure that all kids have the best-quality education.

ASSISTANCE TO FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

I am proud that our government has been actively monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on Ontario's economy and taking action to support our job creators and workers. Ontario's forest industry is critical to the provincial economy and many northern and rural communities, generating over \$18 billion in revenue and supporting approximately 155,000 direct and indirect jobs. This vital role this industry plays is especially evident during the COVID-19 outbreak—providing essential forest products for hygiene, food, and medical supplies, as well as packaging and shipping products.

Can the minister update the House on how our government is supporting this sector, the heart and soul of this great province?

Hon. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the great member from Sarnia—Lambton for that question.

As we safely and gradually reopen the province, our government is doing everything possible to support businesses and protect jobs. We recognize the importance of the forestry sector and the critical economic role that it plays, particularly in northern and rural communities. That's why my ministry moved quickly to ensure that the forestry sector was identified as an essential service.

I recently completed virtual consultations with leaders from the sector. We discussed their issues and concerns as Ontario reopens the economy during the COVID-19 outbreak within guidelines from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We're working with our partners to understand what's needed to protect and support people and our economy as we move forward.

I will have more to say in the supplementary.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear that our forestry sector, with your leadership, is stepping up to the plate and helping Ontarians get through this outbreak. I was not surprised to learn the forestry companies have donated N95 masks to local hospitals and emergency service teams, and even hired new employees to assist in their efforts during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Something I know the people of Ontario and our government are committed to is protecting our environment. We want to be responsible stewards of the land in order to preserve our beautiful, natural environment for generations to come. Wood products are a renewable resource, and the industry works hard to ensure that forests are sustainably managed for the well-being of the ecosystem, our economy and our own enjoyment.

Minister, how are we helping the industry maintain its emphasis on sustainability during this difficult time?

Hon. John Yakabuski: Thank you again to the great member from Sarnia—Lambton.

Our industry stepped up to the plate, and our government is stepping up to the plate as well. They stepped up to the plate, ensuring the sustainability of our forests through reforestation, which is a key principle of Ontario's forest management system.

Our government has made \$3.5 million available to help put protective measures in place for workers who

plant trees this season. This will help the industry expand existing facilities and modify operations to ensure that those helping to renew Ontario forests can work in a safe environment during the COVID-19 outbreak. With these measures, we're also securing the planting of 70 million trees this year in Ontario forests.

During these unprecedented times, our government is committed to supporting the forest industry and the communities that depend on it by protecting forestry workers and ensuring forestry workers' safety.

Thank you. And I hope the opposition will join us in supporting—

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

HOME CARE

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: My question is to the Premier.

There is nothing more important than a family knowing their loved ones are safe while Niagara reopens for the second phase this week.

In St. Catharines, Jennifer's mother is receiving home care. She is concerned that the local for-profit home care provider she has is adhering to weak PPE guidelines and only providing one mask per day for her mom's PSW. That's the same amount of masks that McDonald's offers to their employees for one shift. The same PSW can visit up to 10 homes each day.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: If it was your family member receiving home care from a PSW, would you feel comfortable knowing that their PPE and the same mask was being reused throughout the day while the PSW was visiting multiple residents and different homes? Would you feel comfortable?

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

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

As part of our comprehensive plan to build healthier communities and to end hallway health care, we are modernizing our system of home and community care to bring it into the 21st century.

That being said, we know that the people who are doing these visitations, whether they're nurses, personal support workers or whomever, need to have the appropriate personal protective equipment in order to be able to do that, for their own safety and for the safety of the people they're caring for.

That has been one of the issues that we've been dealing with throughout COVID-19—ensuring a safe and steady supply of PPE. But we've had Ontario companies that have stepped up to the plate to assist us, and they are doing things like manufacturing gowns, hand sanitizer, face masks and everything else in between.

We are supplying amounts to the home and community care suppliers that they need. If they need further supplies they can contact us, and we will send it to them within a day. There should be no necessity for anybody to have to re-wear a mask to many, many people they see in the

community. That is something that we said from the beginning—was to prepare and protect the health and safety of all Ontarians. We're continuing to do so, especially with respect to the provision of PPE for pandemic purposes. We have it in our warehouse—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes our question period for this morning.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 80 relating to allocation of time on Bill 159, An Act to amend various statutes in respect of consumer protection; and Bill 184, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992, the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 and to enact the Ontario Mortgage and Housing Corporation Repeal Act, 2020.

In accordance with the order of the House to this effect, voting will occur in the two members' lobbies for the first time in the history of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Members voting aye, please use the east lobby. Members voting nay, please use the west lobby. As they say in Westminster, ayes to the right, nays to the left. Don't get it wrong.

I will ask members to leave the chamber and proceed to line up along the hallways in the east and west wings, depending upon which lobby you'll be voting in. When I'm informed that the members are ready to commence voting and the lobby clerks are prepared, I will put 30 minutes on the clock and start the division bell ringing. The bell will ring throughout the voting process, and when 30 minutes have elapsed and the bell stops, the vote is ended. The Clerk will then receive the vote results and announce them to me in the usual way.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1209.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 60; the nays are 22.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): This House stands in recess until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1300.

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 (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

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): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2020, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Valerie Quioc Lim): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 171, An Act to enact the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 and make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 171, Loi édictant la Loi de 2020 sur la construction plus rapide de transport en commun et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

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

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2020, the bill is ordered for third reading.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I move that, pursuant to standing order 7(d)(iii), the House shall continue to meet past 6 p.m. until midnight on Tuesday, June 16, 2020; Wednesday, June 17, 2020; Tuesday, June 23, 2020; Wednesday, June 24, 2020; Monday, July 6, 2020; Tuesday, July 7, 2020; Wednesday, July 8, 2020; Monday, July 13, 2020; Tuesday, July 14, 2020; Wednesday, July 15, 2020; Monday, July 20, 2020; Tuesday, July 21, 2020; and Wednesday, July 22, 2020, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Ms. Khanjin has moved government notice of motion number 81. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: "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 (MNR), 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 proudly affix my signature to the petition, and I will deliver it to the Clerk.

MOUNT PLEASANT GROUP OF CEMETERIES

Ms. Jessica Bell: This is a petition called "Keep Mount Pleasant Public by Updating the Legislation.

"Whereas Mount Pleasant Group of Cemeteries (MPGC) was established as a public trust by the Ontario Legislature in the 1800s. The trust was funded 100% by the public, who continue to subsidize it today...;

"Whereas the public's original investment has grown to an approximately \$3-billion asset encompassing 1,222 acres around the" GTA...;

"Whereas the trust operated with public participation for over 150 years until the late 1980s...;

"Whereas both the McGuinty and Wynne governments refused to provide leadership or action, in order to protect the trust by enforcing Ontario legislation, Friends of Toronto" Mount Pleasant "Cemeteries made an application to Superior Court...;

"Whereas, in a shocking decision on May 5, 2020, the Court of Appeal overturned the Ontario Superior Court's decision and 'adapted' the legislation to give the \$3-billion asset to the eight private individuals who had taken over;

"Whereas the appeal court confirmed that the trust was created by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which can re-legislate the trust as it sees fit;

“Whereas our plea to you: ‘Please update the legislation that governs the public trust’” to return Mount Pleasant Cemeteries to public control.

This is signed by one individual due to COVID. However, hundreds of people have signed this petition, and I will be handing these signatures, as well as the petition, to the Clerk.

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas now more than ever, people across Ontario need reliable broadband to work, learn and connect with friends and family; and

“Whereas too many people in our province lack reliable Internet or cellular access—or don’t have any connectivity at all; and

“Whereas the digital divide has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically for rural and northern Ontarians;

“Whereas rural and northern Ontario businesses continue to face challenges accessing the 21st century digital economy which creates a serious economic disadvantage when following the advice of health officials during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“Whereas as Ontario carefully reopens the economy, every region and every community must play a role in attracting jobs and investments to restore economic prosperity to the province; and

“Whereas investing in reliable broadband and cellular service creates greater opportunity for families, farmers and small business owners in rural and remote areas not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but after the pandemic ends;

“Whereas Ontario is investing \$150 million in a new program that, when leveraged with partner funding, has the potential to result in a total investment of \$500 million to improve broadband and cellular coverage service in underserved and unserved communities;

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

“Urge the federal Minister of Infrastructure, the federal Minister of Women and “Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development and the federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to provide Ontario with its fair share of funding through the Universal Broadband Fund and to commit additional funding to the province so that:

“(1) All of Ontario’s underserved and unserved communities can access reliable broadband service;

“(2) Ontario’s rural and northern communities can have the same opportunities for economic growth, recovery and participation in the 21st century digital economy as urban municipalities;

“(3) Ontarians in rural and northern communities can access government services, conduct business and connect with loved ones especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Of course, I affix my signature and I will give it to a page.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Dave Smith: “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:

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“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’ll sign my name to this petition because I fully endorse it.

ANTI-RACISM ACTIVITIES

Ms. Natalia Kusendova: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, on December 29, 2019, five people were maliciously killed at the home of an ultra-Orthodox rabbi during Hanukkah celebrations in Monsey, New York;

“Whereas the horrendous events that took place on December 29, 2019, in Monsey, New York, coincide with an upward trend of instances of egregious acts of anti-Semitic behaviour, including within the province of Ontario;

“Whereas anti-Semitism can manifest in various different ways and cannot be adequately countered if it cannot be properly identified; moreover, anti-Semitism is a multi-faceted problem that requires a multi-faceted solution;

“Whereas the province of Ontario prides itself on being a safe and welcoming place free from religious-based hate;

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

“Proceed as effectively as possible to ensure that all Ontarians are protected from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism by immediately passing Bill 168, the Combating Antisemitism Act, 2019, so that the government of Ontario be guided by the working definition of anti-Semitism and the list of illustrative examples of it, adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance plenary on May 26, 2016, when it interprets acts, regulations and policies designed to protect Ontarians from discrimination and hate amounting to anti-Semitism.”

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

BROADBAND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Vincent Ke: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, now more than ever, people across Ontario need reliable broadband to work, learn and connect with” their “friends and family; and

“Whereas too many people in our province lack reliable Internet or cellular access—or don’t have any connectivity at all; and

“Whereas the digital divide has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially for rural and northern Ontarians; and

“Whereas rural and northern Ontario businesses continue to face challenges accessing the 21st century digital economy which creates a serious economic disadvantage when following the advice of health officials during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

“Whereas, as Ontario carefully reopens the economy, every region and every community must play a role in attracting jobs and investment to restore economic prosperity to the province; and

“Whereas investing in reliable broadband and cellular service creates greater opportunity for families, farmers and small business owners in rural and remote areas not only during the COVID-19 pandemic but after the pandemic ends;

“Whereas Ontario is investing \$150 million in a new program that, when leveraged with partner funding, has the potential to result in a total investment of \$500 million to improve broadband and cellular coverage service in underserved and unserved communities;

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

“Urge the federal Minister of Infrastructure, the federal Minister of Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development and the federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry to provide Ontario with its fair share

of funding through the Universal Broadband Fund and to commit additional funding to the province so that:

“(1) All of Ontario’s underserved and unserved communities can access reliable broadband service;

“(2) Ontario’s rural and northern communities can have the same opportunities for economic growth, recovery and participation in the 21st century digital economy as urban municipalities;

“(3) Ontarians in rural and northern communities can access government services, conduct business and connect with loved ones especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

I support this petition and will sign it and give it to the page.

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 causing 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...;

“(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...;

“(11) Reappointing case management masters is more efficient...;

“(12) Taxpayer dollars are no longer used to pay legal fees for judicial officials removed from office....”

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

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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

Mr. Hardeman moved third 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): Mr. Hardeman has moved third reading of 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.

Leading off the debate, I look to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to begin third reading of Bill 156 and speak in support of the proposed Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020.

Before I begin, I want to thank my two parliamentary assistants, the member from Perth–Wellington and the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, for their hard work and dedication throughout the process of developing this legislation.

Everyone has a right to be safe in the workplace. This is especially true for farmers, whose home and places of work are often the same place. The people of Ontario should also have the assurance that they will continue to have steady access to some of the safest, highest-quality food in the world.

Just as when we first introduced this legislation in the House back in early December, it is essential that we protect our farmers and agri-food workers. Bill 156 aims to strengthen trespass laws to deter trespassers from unlawfully entering agri-food premises; to establish new rules regarding interfering with the transportation of

livestock as well as interacting with animals being transported; and to take steps to improve protection from unauthorized entry into food processing facilities to better protect the province's food supply and maintain Ontario's high standards of biosecurity.

We rely on our farmers and food processors to work hard every day to keep the food supply chain strong and to keep food on the shelves and kitchen tables for the people of Ontario. In order to do that, farmers have to feel safe in their homes and workplaces. People have a right to participate in legal protests, but that right has never included trespassing on farms or interacting with the transportation of livestock.

Unauthorized people who enter a farm are often unaware of the farm's biosecurity protocols. They may unknowingly introduce risks such as disease for both the animals and themselves, as well as create undue stress to the animals they claim to want to protect.

We've heard many concerns from farmers and food processors who are frustrated that not enough is being done to ensure that unauthorized trespassing is addressed. That's why our government has put forward the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020 to create protection for farmers, livestock and Ontario's food supply.

If passed, this bill would protect the food supply chain and farm animals from biosecurity risks, as well as the safety of farmers, their families, their employees and the people responsible for the safe transportation of our livestock.

If passed, the bill would provide the necessary deterrents to trespassers, including:

- increasing the 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 trespassers to pay restitution for damages caused during the trespass; and

- increasing protection for farmers, owners, occupiers or drivers against civil liability from people who were hurt while trespassing, provided that there is no intent to do harm to the trespasser.

Our government has heard the concerns of our farmers. We are committed to food safety and taking action to strengthen protection for the agriculture workers and the integrity of our food system.

Mr. Speaker, from its early development through first and second readings to public hearings to third reading, we have worked hard to ensure that this bill, Bill 156, meets the needs of Ontario's farmers, agri-food processors and the livestock transportation sector.

The world today is a different place from when we started discussing trespass challenges with stakeholders, drafted the bill, introduced it back in December and got it through second reading in early March. The COVID outbreak has reinforced that our home should be a place where we can feel safe. Many people have spent the last two months staying home in an effort to stop the spread

and to protect themselves. I want to commend those people for doing their part.

However, we cannot, on one hand, ask people to stay home and practise social distancing while simultaneously allowing others to enter someone else's private property and put our farmers at risk, to advance their own agenda. The COVID-19 outbreak has reinforced the importance of a steady and reliable food supply, as well as the health and safety of those who feed us. Our government has to do its part to protect the food system.

At the onset of this crisis, our government was quick to declare the entire food supply chain as an essential service, recognizing the critical importance of our farmers who grow our food, the stores working hard to keep their shelves full, and everyone in between. The agri-food sector and the contributions of its workers have been, and continue to be, critical to ensuring the province's food supply chain remains strong.

I want to take a minute to speak directly to all the people who have continued to work over the last few months to ensure that the people of Ontario had the food on the table then, now and in the months to come. To the people working in the sector—the farmers, those in food processing, trucking, and grocery retail—I want to again say thank you. The people of Ontario recognize how important you are, and we all appreciate your efforts.

Mr. Speaker, we owe our front-line agri-food heroes our thanks and a huge debt of gratitude for ensuring Ontario's food supply remains stable at all times. By working together to keep our food supply chain strong, we continue to demonstrate what Premier Ford often talks about: the true Ontario spirit. That value is based on support for one another and ensuring that people are fed and nourished during this unprecedented time.

While we support our agri-food heroes who are going above and beyond during this crisis, it's also imperative that we maintain Ontario's high levels of biosecurity on farms and in processing plants to reduce the risk of any large disease spread. Our government is working diligently to ensure that workers in Ontario's agri-food sector are able to safely conduct their work. We have a duty to support them in their work and ensure that they continue to work safely.

We began a proactive food processing inspection blitz on April 8, 2020. Thus far, we have conducted over 170 inspections at food processing facilities. That's why our government announced last week an expansion of the Agri-Food Workplace Protection Program, committing up to \$15 million to enhance health and safety measures on farms and in food processing facilities. This bill, if passed, would provide farmers and food processing workers with further protection and peace of mind.

I also want to take a moment to talk about our temporary foreign workers and the recent spike in positive COVID-19 cases on some of the farms in southwestern Ontario. I would like to express my condolences to the families of the two migrant workers who have died of COVID-19. I want our farm owners and farm workers to

know that our government is always with you. If you need help, please give us a call, and we will be there.

We would also encourage our farm workers to get proactively tested for the COVID-19. The more information we have about which farms are dealing with the outbreak of this virus, the easier it is for us to make sure that you have the right resources you need to slow the spread. There is no need to be scared about being tested. This is a matter of life and death, and we want to protect as many people as we can.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very committed. I am more committed than ever to support our farmers, food processors, our farm families, and the farm animal transport sector: the front-line heroes who have worked so hard to keep food on our grocery shelves and our kitchen tables throughout this crisis. Part of this commitment is to strongly support for third reading Bill 156. It is not only the right thing to do to protect these essential workers and services in primary agriculture and food processing; it is also the right thing to do for all Ontarians.

Mr. Speaker, as Bill 156 moves through the legislative process, we continue to consult and engage. This has been the cornerstone of our approach to the development of Bill 156. These discussions started last fall, when we held engagement sessions with a wide range of stakeholders, including farmers, livestock commodity groups, general farm organizations, farm operators, processing facilities, livestock transporters, policing representatives and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. They helped us to better understand the challenges that farmers and rural communities are facing, and to begin developing options to enhance protection and help.

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Our consultations continued in February with a series of round table discussions that took us across eastern, central and southwestern Ontario to places like Cornwall, Lindsay, Chesley and Petrolia. Farmers told me they simply did not feel safe in their home anymore. They also told me that they fear for the safety of their workers, animals and, in fact, all Ontarians due to the threat that trespassers pose to their vital food supply.

We heard that in order to continue to feed us and to do a good job at it, the farmers need to feel safe and they need to be able to protect their families, their employees and their animals. Nobody in this province, whether you're in an urban centre or a rural community, would accept being pressured or coerced by others in order to gain entry to their homes or their workplace. That's not an acceptable practice anywhere, and it certainly should not be in rural Ontario.

Since this bill was first introduced, we've heard the opposition raise concerns on the question of citizen's arrest and what farmers should be doing when they confront trespassers. Let's be clear: Bill 156 does not give farmers any extra powers that they currently do not already have when it comes to a citizen's arrest.

Sections 9 and 10 of the Trespass to Property Act outline what the arrest provisions are on private property, including that the owner or occupier of the property can,

if needed, conduct a citizen's arrest of a trespasser and then hand that person over to the police right away.

All section 7 of Bill 156 does is state that when the owner or occupier is in an animal protection zone, they have the same rights as they do anywhere else on the property. We amended section 7 to clarify that those provisions are only applicable if the offender is on your property. We do not condone chasing trespassers down the street or causing them harm.

If an owner or occupier finds a person in or on an animal protection zone that they believe should not be there, they should immediately contact the police for support. Following that, they can also request the person to provide their name and address, request that the person stop what they are doing, and request that the person leave the premises.

The opposition have tried to criticize us for not including calling the police as an option open to farmers. Since everyone in Ontario has a right to contact the police when they feel unsafe or are dealing with trespassers, adding it in this seemed to me to be unnecessary. I also want to stress that a citizen's arrest should only be used as a last resort and only using reasonable force. Again, this is a right that Ontarians already have, and we do not believe in removing rights that people already have. Although the opposition seemed to think otherwise, we do not see why you should not be able to do something in an animal protection zone that you can do everywhere else on the property and everywhere else in the province.

During my consultations, I heard moving stories from farmers and farm organizations. They told us what they are experiencing on the farm, in the food processing facilities and on the road. We listened as they described the stress felt by everyone along the food chain. Farmers have said that it has been a struggle for several years when it comes to people interfering with their livelihood and their livestock. They've seen an escalation in the overall number of trespassers in recent years, as well as the severity of harm that they're causing, including additional stress and anxiety for farm families, employees and animals.

Gone are the days where people would simply protest outside the farm to show their disapproval for animal agriculture, which farmers understood and did not object to. In fact, they still understand and still do not object to peaceful protest on public property. But unfortunately, some of those peaceful protests have been replaced with threats of violence, harassment, intimidation and trespassing.

As parents, the biggest priority is to protect their children and grandchildren who live on the farm. Earlier this year, I met with Jackie Rombouts, both farmer and mayor of Warwick, who told me that she has fears every day that when her young children go out to the barn to check on their livestock or to turn the lights off at the end of the day, they may run into trespassers. That's not how it should be anywhere in Ontario.

The concept of invading private property was a recurring theme I and my colleagues heard during many of

the consultations. Farmers pointed out that most people would not like it if someone went trampling up to their front door or was in their house uninvited, and yet that's exactly what trespassers are doing. They are on private property at someone's home.

Many farmers have told me that they are concerned about the health and safety of trespassers themselves. They don't want anyone hurt on their farms. Trespassers may not be familiar with life on a farm and farm safety. That's why so many in the farming community as a whole said they want to be proactive rather than reactive to address this issue.

We heard from farmers saying that when their way of life is under attack like this, it has an impact on their mental health. They are wondering why animal rights supersede the rights of farmers, their families and their employees to be safe on their property.

We've heard from farmers that our approach will give them a sense of security, because the safety of their families and the welfare of the animals under their care are things that they take very seriously. And they're pleased with our commitment to preserve the integrity of the farm and the food system.

Interestingly, they also told us that they were pleased that the end result is balanced and fair, and that their property and their rights will be protected, but not at the expense of people's right to participate in lawful public protests. Stakeholders appreciate that, Mr. Speaker, because they feel the right to protest is a very important value for our province and our country, and they don't want it to be eroded.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, representing more than 38,000 farm members across the province, told us that they are encouraged by the process that brought this bill in place. They are pleased that the farm community worked on this issue collectively to find solutions alongside my ministry and the Ministry of the Solicitor General as well as the Ministry of the Attorney General.

They are also appreciative of the strong support they received from the municipalities. Nearly 130 municipalities have called on our government to take action on this issue, and I'm proud that our stakeholders and our government worked closely with them on this bill.

Municipalities have also reaffirmed their belief in people's right to protest, but they said they are very concerned when that right infringes on personal and private property and threatens families, employees and the entire value chain. They are very pleased to see government taking action to protect these properties.

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, representing more than 4,000 farm members, also said they were encouraged that farmers would be taken seriously if someone comes to their property uninvited. They are assured that the consequences for trespassing would now be more serious and that the proposed bill would have more teeth than the current legislation, to better protect their family businesses and their homes from the potential harm of unauthorized and uninvited visitors.

The food industry has seen numerous cases over the last number of years where protocols to enter the processing floor have been broken. This has created food safety concerns for the companies and for the general public.

Food and Beverage Ontario told us that it is good news for this industry that the law is being made more robust to prevent anyone from accessing processing floors and potentially creating food safety problems.

The livestock trucking industry told us that it has enough challenges attracting drivers without adding the danger for both the drivers and others caused by those who interfere with the transport of farm animals or try to interact with the farm animals while they're in transport.

Livestock transport operators told us about incidents when people stopped trucks from gaining access to the processing plant. There are cases when they stepped up in front of the transport trucks, creating unsafe conditions for the driver and the animals in transport. In some circumstances, they forcibly opened the cab doors and threatened the driver's safety and the safety of the animals in transit. On occasion, they have interacted or interfered with animals in transport, thereby creating animal health and food safety concerns. The transport industry wants to do their job of delivering animals to the processing plants safely and should not have to deal with this added risk.

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We've also received strong support from municipalities. As I mentioned earlier, nearly 130 municipalities have passed or supported council resolutions that call on the government to strengthen protection for farms and the agri-food premises from the township of Warwick and the municipality of Brockton. Several municipal representatives who participated in our discussion told us that they need this legislation to increase important protection for many farms located within rural municipalities across the province. They felt that the public would be happy about the balance the bill proposes for everyone concerned.

Our proposed bill balances the security of farmers, their families and our food supply while protecting the right for people to participate in legal protests as well as to express their views about animal agriculture. These are serious and complex matters, and they matter to all Ontarians. I'm very proud of the time and effort we put into stakeholder engagement and consultation on this proposed legislation.

From the early days of this proposed legislation taking shape, we recognized the strong need to have clear communications on it. We knew we needed to collaborate closely with individual groups and organizations across the board to truly understand their concerns and the risk of trespassing. It's not something that we have taken lightly; the overwhelming support from our stakeholders is proof of that.

I want to expand a bit on one aspect of protecting the food supply chain, and that is to strengthen biosecurity at farms, processing facilities and during livestock transit. Through our consultation and engagement, we heard multiple times how important it is to protect farm animals from outside contamination, disease and stress.

To draw a parallel, we've learned over the last few months the importance and value of taking a number of measures to stop the spread of COVID-19. For example, physical distancing, frequent hand-washing, using masks and Plexiglas panels as pathogen barriers, and self-isolating when sick are helpful and efficient. Similar principles apply to the protection of animal health. Measures such as effective sanitation, disinfection of farms, restricting entry to farm personnel, changing into dedicated boots and coveralls upon entering, and putting replacement stock in quarantine all help to protect farm animals from contamination and disease.

Ontario farmers have excellent biosecurity practices in place and are working very hard to maintain these protocols and restrict access and to have strict requirements for off-farm visitors and service providers because they know that what's at stake is more than just keeping their animals healthy; it is their very livelihood and their ability to keep feeding people, be they here in Ontario, in another province or abroad. They know that food safety and integrity are essential in maintaining markets for their animals. So if you want to protect our food supply and farmers' livelihood, we must provide strong support for farmers' biosecurity efforts.

During my province-wide tour in February, I heard from several farmers who expressed concerns about how on-farm trespasser incidents and the anxiety of potential trespass incidents had been negatively impacting their mental health. This was reiterated in last week's committee hearings during the presentation of Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton.

Dr. Jones-Bitton is a veterinarian, epidemiologist, professor and director of well-being programming at the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. She has been studying the issue of farm mental health, and, for many years now, has published several articles on the topic. Her work has shown that farmers tend to experience higher levels of stress, mental illness and suicide compared to the rest of the population.

In her presentation, she went on in some detail about the national survey that she and her team conducted on farmers' mental health. She stated that the participants of the survey described the heavy mental strain that farm trespass events had, including personal attacks and an increased sense of fear.

Dr. Jones-Bitton stated, "It is completely reasonable for someone to experience fear and intimidation when strangers, particularly strangers who disagree with your entire way of life, come on to your property, where you and your family live and work.

"Participants also describe safety concerns for their animals. For example, one participant shared, 'We have to lock our barns now because we're afraid of people coming into our barns and doing things to our animals.'

"These participants described fears around people harming and/or causing extreme stress to" farm animals.

"Biosecurity concerns were also described, being associated with trespassing and people entering the barns, ignoring or not being aware of the serious disease risks

that they pose. These participants discuss the biosecurity and food safety risks associated with activists entering their barns or interacting with animals during transport.

“Finally, participants described a need to now be hyper-vigilant and constantly on guard, which compounds their already high levels of stress and adds to their occupational stressors. For example, one participant said, ‘I get jumpy every time someone stops on the road to take a picture of my cows in the field, or an unfamiliar car drives in the laneway. I used to embrace it.’”

Mr. Speaker, mental health is a very serious issue, and it is our duty to ensure our farmers have peace of mind at work and at home, which for a vast majority of farmers is usually the same place. Bill 156 does just that.

Since May 2019, MPPs across the province, including me, have received more than 5,000 letters of support for this bill. The letters primarily focus on concerns over the growing number of trespass incidents, express frustration over charges not being pursued in the judicial system, and call upon the government for assurances of a more rigid process from a prevention as well as an enforcement perspective. We’re addressing those issues in this proposed bill.

The COVID-19 outbreak recent correspondence we’ve received has also stressed how important and connected food security and the food supply chain are. Support for Bill 156 from industry representatives from Ontario dairy, grain, pork, beef, sheep, ag and land use sectors have been resounding and sustained. They said it was a much-needed piece of legislation. We will continue to seek input from those groups and others as we set out to work on regulations.

Industry groups support peaceful protest on public property as a right enjoyed by all Canadian citizens. But when trespassers cross the line between legal and illegal activities, those are instances Bill 156 is trying to address. Every effort has been made and will continue to be made to hear directly from those impacted by trespassing and from other stakeholders as well to ensure legislation that is fair and appropriate. We are striving to address those concerns in a way that is balanced. The bill would not infringe on peoples’ rights to participate in peaceful protest on public property, and those protesters can continue to express their opposition to animal agriculture. The Ontario government supports their right to peaceful and lawful protest and will always protect the right of freedom of expression. It’s very important to say this again: The proposed legislation will not impact the right to participate in legal protests on public property and therefore the right of expression as well. Legal protests are those that do not include trespassing on farms and agri-food businesses or interfering with livestock and transport.

The bill is also not intended to infringe in any way on Indigenous and treaty rights in this province. We took great care when drafting the bill to ensure that Indigenous people engaged in animal farming or agri-businesses are protected against the dangers trespassing represents, while also protecting their treaty rights within Ontario. We met with an Indigenous group who had concerns regarding

perceived impacts of the proposed bill on existing Indigenous and treaty rights to identify possible solutions. The ministry also sent out more than 250 letters to various Indigenous communities within Ontario providing information on Bill 156 and inviting those with questions to contact my office directly. The government is always interested in hearing from and getting the perspective and thoughts of the Indigenous people of Ontario and how any Ontario law may affect their treaty rights. We are thankful for this continued discussion with Indigenous leaders and want to continue to work together in this positive way to develop regulations under the proposed bill, should it pass.

I would also like to take a moment to thank Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald and her leadership council for meeting with me virtually last week to continue our discussion on this legislation and how we can work together to ensure that there are no unintended impacts. We aspire to deliver the ministry’s mandate in the spirit of reconciliation, with respect and awareness of Indigenous culture and tradition.

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We’ve also been clear that this proposed bill will not infringe on the rights of First Nations. To make it clearer, we have put forward an amendment during committee to insert a non-derogation clause into Bill 156, ensuring that this legislation will not infringe on existing Indigenous and treaty rights.

I want to recognize the opposition. They also put forward an amendment to include the clause that clarifies Indigenous and treaty rights. I would like to thank all the committee members for working together to ensure that those rights are protected.

One important thing to remember is that Bill 156 does not apply to crown lands unless a farming operation or other agri-food business with farm animals operates on that land. The proposed legislation only applies to animal protection zones that do not apply to the whole farm.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, after the bill went through a second reading in March, the bill was referred to the Standing Committee on General Government of the Legislative Assembly. We had originally planned to hold these hearings at rural locations in the very communities where on-farm trespassing tends to take place, in south-western and eastern Ontario. We wanted to make it as easy as possible for the individuals who would be most impacted by this legislation to participate in public hearings. That was not possible due to the COVID-19 outbreak, but MPPs were nevertheless able to hear directly from people who are impacted by trespassing, through online hearings.

During the hearings, MPPs heard from 40 presenters over video and received many more written submissions. This allowed Ontario farmers and others to share their experiences with the committee and answer the questions that relate to their own circumstances in their own communities.

I also want to thank everyone who took the time to present and to share their comments. The presenters were diverse, and there were useful comments from all points of view that were shared with the committee members.

I want to provide a few highlights of those hearings that lasted two full and informative days that were attended by my parliamentary assistants, MPPs Pettapiece and Barrett. We received support from several farmers, farm organizations and food businesses who related all the reasons why this bill is important to them.

One of the many presentations that spoke to farmers as responsible stewards was the Dairy Farmers of Ontario's in-depth description of all the work they do to promote and protect animal welfare, including the adoption of, and compliance with, national standards of care for their animals. But it goes beyond that. They have the authority to inspect every dairy farm for animal welfare issues, and believe me, they do use that authority. Their inspections are not complaint-driven; they are true, regular inspections, and they are unannounced.

Food processors also told us how they are forced to comply with the inspections required in their facilities. They welcome these inspections because they build confidence that processors are doing things right, because food safety is critically important to their customers, and they want the public to have confidence that the food supply system is well regulated.

An example was provided by Maple Leaf Foods, where trespassers gained access to an area of their facility. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency sent a letter to Maple Leaf about the potential threat to food safety as a result of this trespass, and Maple Leaf had to make modifications to their facility to help prevent future trespass incidents and further potential food safety issues.

Further, Maple Leaf Foods pointed out that if there is a biosecurity breach, those animals cannot be processed and put into the food supply and would have to be disposed of. They also pointed out that inspectors are present at live-stock facilities at all times when animals there are being processed, ensuring all welfare and safety laws are being upheld.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share a very heartfelt testimony from one committee hearing last week on the dangers of trespassers and their actions on impeding the well-being of farmers and their employees and their animals. This one came from Debbi Conzelmann from King Cole Ducks in Stouffville. She said, "On February 18, at approximately 5:30 a.m., 15 animal rights activists trespassed onto our property and broke into one of our barns while the flock was sleeping. Video footage showed the activists running through the barn shining flashlights into the frightened flock, causing them to stampede, flip over and overcrowd.

"These actions caused undue stress and injury to our ducks and violated essential biosecurity protocols. These activists broke the law. They trespassed onto our property, broke into a barn, stole ducks and caused stress to our flock.

"They hoped to showcase a business that has no regard for animal welfare. Nothing could be further from the truth. Duck farming is our specialty and passion. The well-being of our flocks is of paramount importance to us. In nearly seven decades, we are proud to have had no animal care or animal welfare infractions"—70 years. "We are

intensely proud of our protocols, our animal welfare program and our dedicated, trained staff. Collectively, we have 1,987 years of experience amongst the ownership and staff, who work hard to ensure our birds are well cared for and that best practices are followed.

"We are regulated from four different departments of CFIA, as well as OMAFRA and our company veterinarian. We have been transparent in our practice for years, and we will continue to be proud to share the details of how and why we do what we do.

"The invasion of these activists not only compromised flock health and farm security, but also created a great deal of stress for our staff. People should be able to go to work and know they are safe. Many of our staff live on our farms and after this event felt threatened not only in their workplace, but also in their homes.

"We considered this a personal attack on our family, staff and business. An incident such as this is not over in one day. We now monitor social media to manage the slander and malicious attempts to damage our reputation."

Mrs. Conzelmann went on to say that "for a number of years we've had protesters and peaceful protesters, and we've actually had quite a cordial relationship with them. But this time was different. They were a lot more aggressive. I'd say they were a lot more professional in their approach, and they did things that really went way beyond anything we've ever seen before. I do think it's because they aren't punished with the trespassing law or they haven't been followed through on that. So it makes it easier for them to get away with it."

Mr. Speaker, experiences like Mrs. Conzelmann's and that of her staff at King Cole Ducks is exactly why we need to pass this bill. We have to do a better job protecting our farmers, their families and their animals and everybody in the food supply chain.

Mr. Speaker, I now would like to take an opportunity to discuss a number of myths and misconceptions that were mentioned during the hearings by those who have said that they were opposed to this bill.

For those who believe a definition of "interacting with an animal" is required, I want to point out that if you read this legislation in its entirety, you will find that section 22(g) of the bill provides the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with the authority to prescribe what "interacting" and "interfering" with an animal means, and I fully intend to set this out in regulation should Bill 156 pass.

Some also have concerns that Bill 156 would limit the ability of whistle-blowers to report animal abuse or other issues. This opinion is misleading and is incorrect. Nothing in this bill restricts the ability of a legitimate, bona fide employee to report animal abuse or any other workplace issues. Our government has always been clear that we do not tolerate any form of animal abuse. I urge anyone who suspects animal abuse to call the authorities and report it immediately. In fact, the processors that testified before the committee stated that they want and encourage employees to report any signs of animal abuse, neglect or cruelty that they view in the workplace, because that is not tolerated.

Legitimate employees do not gain consent to enter a farm or processing facility through false pretenses, so it is difficult to see how a legitimate employee wanting to report something that concerns them would be stifled by Bill 156. But I want to say this: Our government is listening. We introduced amendments to allow regulations prescribing the circumstances by which false pretenses operate. If Bill 156 is passed, it will allow me to bring forward regulation to provide any exceptions needed to amend those regulations over time, if required. I want to ensure that the bill provides the right balance: protecting farmers, their families and their animals with the right of freedom of expression.

1400

During the public hearings, two other points became clear. First, there were those who simply do not support or agree with animal agriculture. Some of the presenters even alluded to the idea that there was nothing wrong with trespassing onto a farm. Simply put, they do not support Bill 156 because they do not support animal agriculture. I continue to be concerned about the people who have indicated that they want to continue to trespass and to create more stress for farmers and their families. I hope that they will listen to the information that these actions put animals at risk, and I hope that, if passed, Bill 156 will become a strong deterrent to those actions.

Second, we heard from many people, including law enforcement, that the current Trespass to Property Act was not working for the agriculture sector. Numerous presenters testified how they experienced trespassing first-hand and the current laws were not sufficient. This is not acceptable. Ontario's agriculture community is too important to leave defenceless to those who do not respect private property. It is clear something had to be done, and this government chose to stand up for our agriculture community's rights by introducing Bill 156.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to get back to my earlier point on the whistle-blowers. During last week's hearings, some of the presenters raised concerns about the legislation, stating that consent is void if given under false pretenses. That provision of Bill 156 explains that if you seek to get access to an animal protection zone and it is later revealed that you lied so that you could essentially trespass with the permission of the owner of the farm, that consent is no longer valid because you received permission to enter the property under false pretenses.

During the hearings last week, we heard some of the opposition double down on their opposition to this. The opposition have made it clear that they think there is nothing wrong with somebody lying in order to get access to private property. Let me be clear: Our government and our party believe that Ontario farmers and food processing facilities have a right to know who is coming onto their property and for what reason. We will always stand up for our hard-working and dedicated farmers and we'll always defend their right not to be deceived by those trying to access their barns. We do not—

Interjections.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: That's right. We do not believe that lying to gain access to someone's property is

right. Concerns have been raised about how this may be seen as banning whistle-blowing or undercover journalism. Mr. Speaker, I disagree. I have said it before and I'll say it again: This bill does not put an end to whistle-blowing. If you work on a farm or in a food processing facility and you suspect animal abuse is occurring or you witness something questionable, I encourage you to report it.

The legislation also does not stop a journalist from accessing a farm, nor does it stop a journalist from interviewing a farmer or their employees. We simply ask that when asking for permission to enter someone's private property, tell the truth. If you are a journalist and you would like to see inside someone's barn, tell them that. Ontario's farmers are the nicest and most welcoming people in the province. They are always open to people who want to see how their food is being produced and grown, because they also understand that trust is required between the farmers and the broader public to ensure we know the food processing being done for us is done in the safest way possible and to the highest standards.

To that end, a recent poll conducted by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity showed that 71% of Canadians hold farmers responsible for providing credible information, while only 29% of Canadians hold advocacy groups responsible for that same task. Farmers and food processors also rank highest when asked, "Who in the food system should be trusted?" Canadians also have a very positive general impression of the country's agriculture industry, with numbers increasing from 41% in 2001 to 60% in 2019.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we listened to the people's concerns and we put forward amendments last week to give the ability to define, in the regulations, what is considered to be "false pretense."

Another question that was raised earlier in the committee hearings related to the statute of limitations. This legislation proposes a statute of limitations for two years from when the trespass incident occurs or when evidence of the offence first comes to the attention of the police. There have been incidents in the past where people have trespassed on a farm, taken videos or pictures of what they had seen and done, or in some cases even stolen farm animals, and waited to release the video and images until six months and one day had passed when they were trespassing. This means that the trespasser could no longer be charged with an offence, and we have heard from law enforcement that they do not have the tools to charge trespassers with an offence committed during the trespass act.

If someone does see animal abuse, I want it to be reported immediately so we can take action, not six months later when it's too late to take action. By changing the statute of limitation, we have taken away the incentive for anyone to wait six months before disclosing the abuse. The increased statute of limitation is meant to help both law enforcement have the tools they need to charge people with trespass, as well as other offences related to the trespass incident.

As part of this, we also included an amendment that would hold groups of trespassers charged with the offence jointly and severally liable for damages under a court-ordered restitution. Let's just say, for an example, that there are three people trespassing on a farm together and were convicted of that. During that trespass, one of them opened the gate and let out animals that were harmed or killed. This provision would mean that if all three were found guilty of trespassing, any or all three of them could be held responsible for paying back the cost of damages, not just the one. Obviously, there would always be one that no one would admit it, and they couldn't convict just one.

Another concern raised during the committee involved interacting with farm animals. The opposition introduced amendments to remove reference to interacting with animals, saying that the term was ambiguous. The term "interact" is defined as acting in a way to have an effect on each other. This means that simply taking a picture or waving at a farm animal would not be considered interacting. In any case, the question I have is that, if the NDP feel that the term "interact" is ambiguous, why did they not introduce an amendment that would remove the minister's ability to define what an interaction is with regard to this act?

Through all of this, including our many meetings, round tables, phone conversations and online public hearings that have been held with farmers, commodity groups, accredited farm organizations and livestock transporters, we have learned that each experience is unique and there are many factors that could complicate matters.

Farmers shared personal accounts of very real, challenging circumstances they have experienced and witnessed, and asked me in-depth questions. Last Monday, one of the farmers was brought to tears when speaking about the abuse she and her business and her employees have faced online, as well as on the street, when trying to operate their business. We discussed specific details of the proposed bill, including clarification around animal protection zones, the fines, and the safety of livestock truck operators who often face harassment while on the job.

I'm very impressed by the depth of questioning and the level of interest taken by meeting participants. We took to heart the many valid questions and the points of view that were raised because they helped to properly inform the bill and make sure that it meets the needs of the agriculture sector. Mr. Speaker, the public hearings last week confirmed we are on the right track. Once again, we heard the perspective of those who are directly impacted by trespassing.

The purpose of the bill is to make sure farmers, food processors and livestock transporters are able to continue working safely and productively without fear for their safety or the safety of their families or employees, and to support Ontario's food supply for Ontario's families.

Food security is something we take for granted the majority of the time. Before mid-March, I would guess that very few Ontarians were concerned about it. We were confident that we could walk into our grocery store at any time and pick up all the food products we needed and

wanted. The COVID-19 outbreak has shown us how important food security is in normal times, as well as in emergency situations. Food security has been top of mind for a lot of people over the last three months. The least we can do is to protect these essential agriculture workers who ensure our food security with basic personal safety at work and at home at all times. We need to avoid becoming complacent about this so farmers, food processors and livestock transporters can keep feeding us, employing Ontarians, contributing to the quality of life in rural Ontario and supporting our provincial economy.

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Ontario's diverse agriculture sector is such a significant economic driver for the province. Our provincial agri-food sector supports more than 837,000 jobs in Ontario. In short, that means that one in eight jobs in this province is tied to agriculture. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of agriculture on our economy, and it would also be difficult to exaggerate its importance to our food supply.

The agri-food sector and the contributions of its workers are critical to ensuring the province's food supply chain remains strong. By working together to keep our food supply chain strong, we continue to demonstrate our true Ontario spirit to support one another and to make sure people are fed and nourished during this unprecedented time. Bill 156 is part of that support.

This is first and foremost about protecting Ontario's food supply and protecting farmers. Following biosecurity protocols is essential to ensure that Ontario has a steady supply of food, and interference in this process puts farmers and food supply at risk. This is especially crucial during a time when farmers and food processor workers are coming to work every day to ensure the integrity of our food supply remains strong. This is an opportunity to come together to protect and support Ontario's farmers and the integrity of our food supply.

I've said it before and I'll say it again: Everyone in Ontario has a right to be safe in their workplace. This is especially true for farmers whose home and work are often the same place. Mr. Speaker, it is more important than ever to protect our food supply chain. It is more important than ever to not only make sure food is available but also safe to eat. If we all want to stand behind Ontario farmers, those who process and transport our food, we move this proposed bill be passed in the Legislature because it directly impacts hard-working individuals and innovative businesses providing us with a safe, reliable food supply and driving the agriculture sector.

Our consultation engagement made for better legislation and we are confident that we have done the best we can for Ontario farmers, food processors and livestock transporters. I ask all members in this House to join us in protecting our farmers and our agri-food heroes, and support Bill 156.

That ends my prepared notes. With that, I want to say thank you, particularly, as I said earlier, to my parliamentary assistants, who helped me with all the consultations that we did.

I also want to thank my critic across the aisle. We did have discussions about a number of the issues. We didn't come to a consensus on all the issues, but it was very helpful to know what we collectively want for our industry. Like they say, sometimes we have a different approach to get places, but it's always helpful to hear all the positions on the different issues and how we can address them.

So I want to say thank you to everyone, and I do heartfully request that everyone in the House, after this debate is through, support this bill. I do believe it will protect the safety of our food and the safety of our farmers, but also bring that peace of mind to our farmers that they can feel safe when they walk from their house to their barn, without being interrupted by people who have no business being there.

With that, I thank everyone and I look forward to any questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to invite the members to ask questions to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in relation to his speech.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I did listen very intently to what the minister had to say. He weaved in and out on the COVID-19 and essential service of the entire food chain and the essential workers. My question is, with the effect that COVID-19 is having on our temporary foreign workers, our migrant workers, I'm wondering why the government hasn't yet made it a point to offer a program to our essential workers, the migrant workers who get sick with COVID-19. Why have you not offered them some kind of wage subsidy, a replacement wage, when they take ill with COVID-19? I know you've spoken eloquently about protecting the sanctity of our food. Would you tell us, please, what you're going to do to protect migrant workers when they come down with COVID-19?

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to reply.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for the question across the aisle. Obviously, that was not an issue that we were dealing with in this bill, but I think it's a very important issue, particularly in the member's riding, where we have one of the larger outbreaks of the COVID-positive tests in recent time.

We have been working with everybody on the ground. In fact, I spoke to the warden of Essex county this morning, and I spoke with the mayor of Windsor on Sunday. We've been working with all the ministries, working together as to how we proceed going forward. Obviously, as the member will know, testing is the number one issue in stopping the spread of this and knowing where the positives are to make sure that they're kept separate from the unaffected people at this time.

We've set up a testing facility in Windsor. Up until Sunday, we had done 700 tests there, but the—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. I appreciate the answer.

Questions for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs? The member for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been listening attentively to the questions, and

we're talking about supporting our farmers in Ontario. I think that one of the first bills that I spoke on when I got elected six years ago was on risk management for our farmers. I learned a lot then and I've been learning a lot now, because being a big city-girl, it's a bit of an eye-opener when you hear of some of the problems that our farmers face and some of the problems that they're made to face that really are so unfortunate and so unnecessary.

What I would ask the minister is: What can you share with the big-city folks in the big urban centres to make them understand just how dangerous this is and why we had to ensure that we're protecting our farmers to the best of our ability in order to keep that food supply chain going?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much again for that question. I think it's a great question.

If everyone understood the challenges that the farming community faces today and what impact that could have on their food, I believe that the vast majority, if not every single person in the urban centre, would want us to do what we're doing to make sure that we did everything we could to make sure that it can't inadvertently be contaminated before they find out about it. I think this is most important. This is about food security, but it's also security of safe food, and that's so important.

I'm sure we've all heard of places where there are outbreaks of something that makes people ill. We want to make sure that that doesn't happen with any Ontario food right from the start of where it's produced. Farmers need to be safe, but we want to make sure that the food they produce stays even safer.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Once again, the member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. I know the minister cares very deeply about the agricultural industry and the people who work there. I just heard him say that testing is very important, and I agree. Well, after you test and you find people positive, you have to self-isolate. Right now, every motel room in Essex county is taken up, so we need a place to self-isolate migrant workers when they test positive. We're working with the city of Windsor on coming up with—maybe St. Clair College as well. But self-isolation takes you out of the workforce.

My question to you is: Would you work with the federal government and other partners to try to come up with a wage subsidy, a wage replacement, for migrant workers who test positive but you want them isolated and not in the workforce? Would you do that, sir?

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for the question. I want to again recognize the challenges that are faced there in Essex county with the present workers. It's not a certain type of worker; it's all workers who are working there. Obviously the biggest number is people who come in just for the work, but there are locals working too who are at the same risk.

The whole issue of the migrant workers is, in fact, a federal issue. The province does not regulate that at all. So I can assure you, we see the problem of not getting things

working, and the challenges in the community are provincial issues. That's why we are working with the federal government to try to answer the questions that you're asking.

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I want to say, when they first came in, we had a two-week isolation period. At that time, through the discussions, we did get the federal government to pay, across Canada, \$50 million to help with the cost of doing that isolation for the first two weeks. I expect we're going to have more discussions with them of how we can carry on to deal with the problem that we presently have.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the minister: Minister, in my riding, I have mink farmers. One of the concerns that I have—and they've shared this with me, and you mentioned this in your speech, specifically as it pertained to trespassing. They've had situations where they've now had to install very expensive cameras to keep these trespassers, these animal activists, as I call them, away from their farms. That is their livelihood. That's how they feed their families. And, of course, they provide a good product for people around the world, actually. With COVID, it has impacted their ability with regard to the markets, and they're struggling right now.

I guess my question to you, Minister, is this: How have the agricultural stakeholders in your riding been affected by these specific trespassers, the ones I call the animal activists? Personally, I think they all want us to become vegetarians and not meat eaters, as I might say.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you for the question. I'm glad you were listening to the presentation, member from Chatham-Kent. I think it's so important. It deals with the part of judges being able to order restitution for damage caused.

Again, I've often said this about this type of trespassing: When they let livestock loose or when they let things out, the activists are making the assumption that somehow these animals are going to go out in the wilderness again and prosper. Most of them are going to perish, with not being looked after, because they were let go.

What I said in my notes is that the restitution that the judge can order can be ordered to everyone, not necessarily if one of them opened the latch. When they do damage, the restitution can be asked of all those who participated in the action.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions to the minister?

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the minister as well for his statements and comments—and how well everyone is listening and paying attention.

Agriculture, I find—being from Sudbury, a lot of our soil is solid rock. We're a mining town. But the region outside has a lot of agriculture, and I try to learn as much as possible. And any opportunity I have to meet with people from farming, I always do. In fact, prior to the COVID shutdown, I was connecting with farmers to see how their operations are run and learn as much as possible.

I completely understand why we don't want somebody creating harm for farmers. In a variety of different ways, you explain it much better than I am. My concern, though, is the part that talks about false pretenses. I know that you value the high standards of farmers and the best standards possible, but I'm worried about workers who notice something going on that isn't following best practices. They want to report it and bring it forward. This law being used against those workers for whistle-blowing in the workplaces they have, saying that they're under false pretenses, no matter how—

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

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: My apologies, but I didn't get the thrust of the question, what we were talking about. Was it about the bill?

Mr. Jamie West: It was about the whistle-blowers, the attack on whistle-blowers—

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Thank you. You can discuss it later.

Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to rise in the House. Before I really get into the debate about Bill 156, I would like to take a moment to talk about—we hear the term “temporary foreign workers.” We hear the term “migrant workers.” I prefer “people.” Vulnerable people, people who actually do the toughest jobs in agriculture—the toughest, bar none—who come from other countries because they want to do what we all want to do: They want to do better for their families, make money for their families.

Why they're so vulnerable is, many of them don't control their own destiny. The people who sponsor them control their destiny. In a case like now, when we're in an outbreak and some of them are reluctant to get tested and—I disagree with the minister on lots of issues, but I agree with him that they need to get tested, and we need to remove every barrier possible, because it's not easy.

We control our own destiny, but if you're a temporary foreign worker and you're sponsored by your employer, you don't, and that's something we all have to realize: how vulnerable those people are. Many of their employers are A1. I'm not saying they're not. But there is a very different relationship when you can't control your own destiny, and you can't quit because you're gone. And I don't mean gone down the road; you're out.

We have to realize—and our condolences from the official opposition to the two of those people and to their families, because they're not going back home. I don't care if it's a federal or a provincial responsibility; it's our responsibility to get those people tested. That's our responsibility, and we have to take that as seriously as possible, because they were young people and they had their whole lives ahead of them. They came to this country, like my parents did, to make their lives better, and they're gone. We have to do everything we can to make sure that that doesn't happen needlessly to others.

As I was driving down here yesterday—we don't drive around as much as we used to. A couple of nights ago at

home we got frost, and for those of you in farming, if you have frost and black muck and you try to grow canola in black muck, you do a lot of swearing, because you are reseeding. It was a beautiful spring. I don't know about the rest of the province, but we had a fantastic spring in Timiskaming–Cochrane—one of the nicest springs we've ever had. Even the big guys were done. Around the May 24 weekend, they were really impressed; they were happy. And then we got frost, and on many of their fields they're starting over again. And that's the nature of farming.

As I was driving down, around Barrie, they were cutting hay. I like cutting hay, especially when—farmers always watch the weather. And the weather is going to be pretty hot and pretty dry for the next couple of days, at least when I was watching the weather. I thought, "That's going to be nice hay." There's nothing that a farmer likes better—a cattle farmer or anybody who has hay, horse farmers especially—there is nothing better in this world when you're a livestock farmer and baling perfect hay. That is a feeling you cannot describe. And that is just a fantastic, fantastic feeling. It has really nothing to do with my speech, but when you see really nice hay, you've just got to comment. Before somebody calls me out of order, I might as well do that.

One other little part I need to—I have an OLIP intern for the first time since I've been elected. I've been elected since 2011, and I've never had an intern. I've never actually applied for an intern. Due to a Clerk who used to be here—Jocelyn—she convinced me. She was the Clerk on a committee that I'm on, and she convinced me to get an OLIP intern. This is Marion Davies's last week. I didn't know what I was going to do with an OLIP intern in my office, because I don't have staff here, and now I don't know what I'm going to do without her. I've just got to say, it has been an incredible experience. It's been not what we were planning on, because she's at home in Toronto and I'm at home in Timiskaming–Cochrane, but we put out a daily bulletin, and that's one of her responsibilities. She has done a fantastic job and I wish her well. I hope she's learned as much from me—I don't think so—as I've learned from her.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, don't sell yourself short, John.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, I like to set the bar low.

First, I'm going to comment that when we were at the committee hearings, and one of the deputants wasn't pro-agriculture, or pro-animal agriculture, I made sure—everyone knows I'm a former dairy farmer and I'm very pro-livestock agriculture. I made sure all the deputants knew it too. But the one deputant thought the fix was in because everyone in that committee had something to do with agriculture, and the minister who wrote it, Minister Hardeman, was related to the agriculture critic, Vanthof—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's it. The fix was in.

Mr. John Vanthof: The fix was in. I had to assure her that, as I've said here before, Minister Hardeman is the reason that I'm NDP, so she had nothing to worry about.

But one thing I've got to say about this, before I really get into the bill: The committee hearings were great. It was

a new—I'm not so sure about the new style of committee hearings that the government is using with the three panelists. I think some of the panelists perhaps feel cheated, because you focus on one or two people. I'm not sure it's really equal for the panelists. But for the members, you have three and you get to pick your favourite one.

But the opinions were so broad, and I listened intently to the minister and, yes, some of those people were very anti-animal agriculture. They were very committed and they were very passionate, as were the farmers. And that's why this issue is so divisive. So now that I've got that out of the way.

I listened to the minister intently. In the end, he said that it's difficult to exaggerate the importance of agriculture to the economy. I fully agree with that and, actually, myself and the ag critic, we wrote a letter last week to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs that agriculture should be one of the areas that is studied with the hearings. We haven't heard back. I think it would be a really good idea because agriculture is very diverse and I'm sure that if that happened, the same ag organizations that support Bill 156 would come to that committee hearing and talk about how the government should actually pony up for their share of risk management. I'm sure they would do that, and maybe that's why they're not having the hearings. But that's what I think.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: The government House leader, I know, is saying that perhaps they'll be happy soon, and it can't be soon enough. It can't be soon enough.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: I really like it when I get heckled by the government House leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Okay. It's all friendly, but stop interrupting him.

Once again, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. And now to Bill 156: I'm going to start by reading the opening statement when the minister first introduced this bill to the House. I'm quoting Minister Hardeman:

"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."

You know what? I fully agree with that statement. The official opposition fully agrees with that statement. I don't have a problem with that statement. And farm trespass is an issue. It has always been an issue, but it's becoming a bigger issue. I'll use the quote from the CEO of King Cole Ducks that the trespassers or the activists seem to be more organized and more "professional," and I don't think she meant "professional" as a compliment. It's different.

The issue on a farm and in our food processing system that trumps all is biosecurity. As long as it can be demonstrated that biosecurity is the reason you're doing something, you have a pretty strong argument. What

biosecurity is from a farmer point of view, and from the whole process, is that you control what comes onto your premises, so if there is an—and now we know a lot about outbreaks with COVID-19, and animals have outbreaks of things. So you know what's there, you know what you're dealing with and you can control it, and hopefully not have it.

There was one deputant who had a very strict biosecure type of pork operation, because hogs can get diseases that are hard to eradicate. She and her family had a very strict protocol, and it was very, very important. She was stressed about animal activists, and rightfully so, because for them, that is a biosecurity threat.

There's also—and it was mentioned by the Minister as well. For farms, for farmers, for their families, it's a very personal issue. When I had a farm, if someone came onto my yard, into my barn, that is, to me and to my family, my personal space. My kids could be there. My spouse could be there. Right? It's an invasion. The only way I can describe it—we have a little camp by a lake, and it was broken into once. Whoever has had a break-in—baling beautiful hay is a special feeling; that kind of invasion is the opposite. It's a terrible feeling. It's indescribable, but if you've ever felt it, that's what farmers feel. That takes a toll on their mental well-being.

I'm also going to quote from one of the presenters at the hearing: Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton. She is a veterinarian, epidemiologist and professor and director of well-being programming at the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph. I don't want to paraphrase, because I just don't want to do that:

“I have been studying farmer mental health for the past five years. My team and I have published several articles on the topic of farmer stress, depression, anxiety, burnout and resilience....

“Despite not specifically asking any questions about animal activism, it was raised by some of our research participants in both the national survey and one-on-one interviews. In these instances, there was a strong sense of attack and vilification of farmers. Several farmers shared stories of personal attacks that they and members of their family had experienced. They reported being called things like”—and I say this in quotations—“a ‘rapist,’ ‘shill,’ ‘murderer’ and ‘baby killer.’ We have heard stories of farm families experiencing the devastation of a barn fire and having protesters in their laneway calling them murderers while they are dealing with the tragedy. We have heard stories of farmers being goaded and provoked for a response. One farmer told us about how his name, photo and farm location was shared among an animal activist organization's global networks....

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“Finally, participants described a need to now be hyper-vigilant and constantly on guard, which compounds their already high levels of stress and adds to their occupational stressors. For example, one participant said, ‘I get jumpy every time someone stops on the road to take a picture of my cows in the field, or an unfamiliar car drives in the laneway. I used to embrace it.’

“Another shared, ‘It's a whole other level of stress, because you never quite know when it's going to happen and you never know what's going to come up, and you never kind of—even Facebook, it's like: Who's going to say something next? I just don't need this. With everything, I just don't need this.’”

That's pretty chilling, when you think that farmers are—larger farms have employees, but generally, farming is a fairly solitary, family-type occupation. That's pretty tough stuff.

Farmers have expressed, and the minister said it, and we have, in our talks to farmers and to farm organizations—farmers are very, very upset about trespassing. It was actually in the hearings. The MPP for Peterborough—Kawartha brought up that the NDP had said, “Well, we don't need a new law, because we have a law.” Yes, we do have a trespassing law. We do have a trespassing law on the books, but it's obvious that it's not working, or it's not being enforced, so we need to find out why and perhaps this part of the bill is going to fix that. I'm going to make it very clear: We do not believe that—there are laws in the books for trespassing, and if they want to make the fines stronger and you want to have the trespassers pay restitution, we don't have a problem with that. We have never had a problem with that.

Actually, the funny part—no, odd—the odd part: In hearings, we asked a few people, “Why aren't you currently being protected, and how would you be better protected?” One of the people we asked was the CEO of King Cole Ducks, Debbi Conzelmann. I'm going to read the question I asked and her response:

“I'd like to start with Debbi. I was at King Cole Ducks with the OFA field day a couple years ago. I really appreciated the tour. It's interesting, what happened. To me, that was an example of trespassing”—and that's what happened at their farm, when people came and broke into the barn—“obviously, so why isn't the province going after them for trespassing under the current legislation? Or have they told you?” I thought—and maybe it's not the province—the police—but still. Why aren't people using the current legislation?

And her reply—this is Debbi Conzelmann: “I believe that they're not finished with the charges yet. It's the police that lay the charges”—she's correct—“and certainly trespassing was one of the options for them. But I feel like what I got from the police officer was that because it was provincial versus federal, it was kind of like extra work to go through two different processes, so they were going with the one that had more options, more charges affiliated with it. That's the feedback I had.” So there were three federal charges laid but no provincial charges.

But the ironic part is that I also asked one of the animal activists, an avowed animal activist, Jenny McQueen, the same question, and her response was, “Yes. I filmed myself inside a pig barn as I was undertaking open rescue”—I might not agree with that, but I am just reading what she said—“so I'm completely clear and honest ... about my actions. I reported to the OSPCA, to the fire authority, to the Electrical Safety Authority, the very next

day all the terrible, terrible things that I witnessed. Then the police came about six months later, banging on my house at 6 a.m. in the morning, put me in handcuffs, and the charge was break and enter. Through the extremely slow Ontario justice system, eventually, my lawyers and the crown were talking and they dropped the charges.

“I would have really preferred the charges not to be dropped; I wanted a time in court. I wanted to put this industry on trial. What I’ve seen inside, the public needs to see.”

Even the activists don’t think the law works. The part about trespassing—I don’t think there’s an argument. For someone to say that the official opposition supports people breaking onto farms is absolutely not true. We do not support trespassing.

If obviously the legislation as it is now—perhaps it’s not strong enough, perhaps the fines aren’t high enough, perhaps the police are too busy, perhaps the courts are too clogged; those things won’t be solved by this legislation. They might be, but this legislation is a deterrent. So if there are other issues that are causing the problem, like clogged courts or police with too many other things on their minds, it might not solve it. That is a concern.

But that’s not what the farmers are hearing. They’re hearing that this is the answer to their problems, and in part it might be, but I’m going to lay out in a few minutes how it might actually increase their problems. I’m going to be up front. The farm groups all support this. I respect their opinion. I have talked to them about it and I respect their opinion. That is their opinion. That’s why we have a democracy: They have an opinion; I respect it. I don’t share the opinion on some of those parts, and I think, at the end of the day, as some farm groups in the States have done, they might very much regret their enthusiastic backing of this bill.

It starts with the title of the bill. It conveys a message: the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. I just said it: Basically the government thinks that the deterrent is enough because they really haven’t said anything about the court system or policing. That stays the same. So it’s the deterrent.

The Jenny McQueens—I’m not sure that they’re going to be deterred. I actually think that they are going to be more motivated. Not the college kids, but the people who really are out to destroy animal agriculture I think are not going to be deterred. They basically said as much at the hearings.

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That brings me to citizen’s arrest. Again, I’d like to put on the record: the NDP is not opposed to citizen’s arrest. That is on the federal statute. We are not opposed to citizen’s arrest; not at all. Citizen’s arrest has been on the books for a long time, but the people that farmers are facing now aren’t the same as they were 15 years ago. They are organized and well trained, and they truly—I don’t share their views, but they’re passionate about their views.

This bill seems to promote citizen’s arrest as an option. I think it should be a last resort, and we probably agree on

that. But that’s not the way the bill reads, because the bill is the “security from trespass” act and protecting the food supply. If it said “higher fines for trespassing,” farmers would understand, but that’s not what it says.

What we are very concerned about—we don’t want to prohibit citizen’s arrest, but the government is looking at what could actually happen on these farms when you have farmers who are, as Dr. Jones-Bitton—the minister and I both read her quotes about how farmers feel: “I get jumpy every time someone stops in the road” and “you never know what’s going to” happen next. When these people are faced with an organized protest group who is out to push their buttons just far enough, then what is “reasonable force” going to be, in the heat of the moment?

What I am worried about and what the official opposition worries about—this isn’t what the bill hinges on. When you’re in opposition and you see a train a-comin’, you should go, “Wait a second. Do you see the light there in the tunnel? That’s a train.” There’s a train coming here, and what could very well happen is that the first person who gets charged under this won’t be charged under the trespass act; they’ll be charged under the federal Criminal Code for assault. And we’re just looking the other way.

When I brought it up, one of the parliamentary secretaries asked Keith Currie, president of the OFA, about citizen’s arrest. I believe that Keith also said it should be a last resort—I’m not quoting, but I think that’s what he—I can find it. And we were talking about training, and, “Yeah, they should have professional people training.” There’s no mention of training people in this bill on how to deal with this. There’s not a dime in this bill. So people—the true, passionate people who are doing these things now—are not going to be deterred. We might have very heated things happening on farms partly caused by this bill, which seems to give farmers more power than they actually have.

The minister totally disagrees with me. He believes that the deterrent is going to be everything. We can agree to disagree on that. On this one, I truly hope I’m dead wrong.

Hon. Ernie Hardeman: I can grant you that wish.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would be careful with that, Minister Hardeman. I really would be careful with that.

I’m not the only person who has some problems with citizen’s arrest. Someone we both quoted, Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton—I asked her if she felt that the people she’d just described would be capable of identifying what “reasonable force” is, and she gave me a very good answer. I was incredibly impressed with her presentation. Her answer was this: “I’m not a medical doctor”—correct—“so I’m not going to comment on anybody’s mental stability.” Good. “Certainly, what I have heard from farmers is more fear, that they’re afraid for their families. They’re afraid for themselves. They’re afraid for their animals.

“I think the idea of a citizen’s arrest is somewhat absurd. If I was a farmer and had a group of people come onto my farm, am I going to feel confident enough to start a citizen’s arrest? I think that puts an absolutely huge

amount of pressure on farmers to respond in a way that, frankly, isn't their responsibility."

I agree with them. But there's nothing in this bill that changes how fast the police are going to come or if they're going to come. There's nothing in this bill for this. There's only a deterrent after the fact, after they go to court. But that's not the way farmers are reading this bill.

Another person on citizen's arrest—the minister described her situation as well. Sentineal Carriages runs a horse-drawn carriage in Niagara Falls, and they are having an awful time with people who are opposed to their use of animals. When I asked her the same question—would she feel comfortable with a citizen's arrest?—Ms. Laura Sentineal said: "Absolutely not. The people we are dealing with quite often carry handcuffs and who knows what else. We have been warned that we have to stay away, that we cannot antagonize. We have, in a weird, roundabout sense, been the problem in looking for justice and equality. Would you have your 20-year-old daughter try to do a citizen's arrest on some 40-year-old guy with a handcuffs, and, who knows, maybe a knife or a stun gun? Absolutely not."

That's not me saying this. Ms. Sentineal knows what she's up against, but a lot of people don't.

The last presentation we had that really talked about a citizen's arrest was Chief RoseAnne Archibald. First Nations, rightfully, are concerned regarding citizen's arrests. They have some serious issues regarding their treatment not only by law enforcement gone wrong but by citizen's arrests, or by aggression from agriculture in other provinces. The name Colten Boushie comes to mind. They have some serious concerns.

This bill is going to pass today. You have a majority—or tomorrow or whenever it goes. But if there's one thing—well, there are a few things you need to do, but there needs to be training provided for the safety of everyone. You can disagree with me, Minister, but people are going to get hurt because of this. They read a lot more into this than a simple deterrent, and that is a problem. For someone, when it hits the news—the Ontario Farmer or the Toronto Star—or when someone's badly hurt or killed, it's going to be an issue here again, and it's going to be a much bigger issue for that family.

Are we opposed to trespassing? Yes. Actually, we wish we had more time on this bill because perhaps the trespassing part could have been made stronger. Perhaps, when Ms. Sentineal was making her presentation and—I can't remember the other lady's name; I apologize. They were talking about how their kids felt threatened at school because they were farmers. We should maybe, with the federal government, be looking at harassment legislation, seeing how that could be applied, because there are issues that need to be addressed. There are huge issues that need to be addressed. But again, I cannot stress this strongly enough: We do not disagree with strong trespassing—actual trespassing legislation. Again, biosecurity: if you can justify it with management of biosecurity, protection of biosecurity, protection of farm and family. But biosecurity is number one.

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Interestingly, I reread all the Hansard on this, and every example—and many of the members brought forward heartbreaking, relevant examples of trespass on farm. All of them would have been covered under the first part, under the trespass part, under the increased fines—all of them.

The second part, which we have real difficulty with, the false pretenses part: I agree with the minister that if someone lies on a resumé, that is offensive and is an issue. But the fact is that the false pretenses part has very little to do with biosecurity. If I hire someone on my farm, whether he or she lied on their resumé or not, and I train them from my biosecurity protocols, and they follow my biosecurity protocols and they take a picture and they leave the farm but they've never broken my biosecurity protocols, that has absolutely nothing to do with biosecurity. If they get fired or they get censured because they broke my biosecurity protocols, that's a different story.

But the false pretenses part has nothing to do, in most cases, with biosecurity. What it has to do with is the control of information. Be it bad information or good information, the false pretenses part is about controlling information. We're worried about that because farmers need protection from trespassing and processors need protection from trespassing, but I'm not sure that they need to protect or control their information because, by far and large, farmers have a good story to tell. What this does is it kind of says they have something to hide.

As I'm saying in my speech here, I made it very clear to all the animal rights people where I stood. I asked the CEO of Animal Justice, Ms. Camille Labchuk, what she thought. I explained what I felt—and Camille Labchuk actually has been quoted sometimes by government members, because she helped with PAWS. She said, "I think you're right, that this bill actually does a disservice to farmers." She's talking about the false pretenses. "Here's what's going to happen: The bill is going to be challenged in court. We know exactly how these cases are going to play out because they have in the States over the course of the last decade or so. Every time there's an appearance in that court case, the issue goes back into the news, and television stations play footage of undercover investigations that have shown those bad apple farmers, that have shown stuff that's untoward happening to animals on farms, and the entire farm industry gets tarred with that brush. I know that by the end of litigation in many of the US ag gag states"—I dislike that term, but legislation that tries to control information from agriculture is called "ag gag"—"farmers are actually begging the government to give up the fight, to stop, because it was so bad for their reputations that these issues kept getting raised in the news.

"I'm concerned that the bill has been spoken of exclusively about trespass and biosecurity and a lot of farmers don't even appreciate the negative effects this would have on them."

I would agree with that, because it's downplayed by the government. That's their role. And we will be likely

vilified for voting against this bill—by the way, we’re voting against this bill. We voted for it on second reading, saying that there were parts of it that needed to be done but that parts of it needed to be fixed, and they’re not getting fixed. So, yes, we’re voting against it in third reading. We will be vilified, but I don’t think that farmers truly appreciate what’s going to happen.

I asked this question to every farm group: What do you think? Do we need the whole bill? A few of them—one I thought was really interesting.

Let me back up for a second. One of the issues with false pretenses is—again, I want to preface this. This would never happen, on 99.9% of the operations. But one of the issues is that if you get hired, even if you’re not getting hired on false pretenses, you’ve worked there for a while and you see something that you believe is not right—and actually, when people think it’s only got to do with animals, that’s not true. Anything in a livestock protection zone: it can be labour law; it can be safety; it can be anything.

You go to your manager or to the owner and say, “Well, that’s not right, I’m going to see if I can report that,” and you will get a nudge—you could—saying, “Well, you know what? You report that, and I’m going to say that you were hired under false pretenses.” He might lose, but someone who is making 18 bucks or 20 bucks an hour can’t afford that risk and is going to go look for another job or keep their mouth shut.

When we asked that question to Norm Beal, the president of Food and Beverage Ontario—Norm is a great guy. Norm says, “But they have due process.” Well, when you’re making 18 bucks or 20 bucks an hour—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There’s no access.

Mr. John Vanthof: Yes, you don’t have access to due process.

But what was interesting was another question we asked him: What was his view on the constitutional problem? Because this will be a constitutional problem. And he said, “Well, I don’t really have an issue on that. But, you know, lawyers get involved, and you know lawyers. Lawyers cost a lot of money.” Well, what happened to due process? And I’m not saying that it’s going to happen, but it could. That’s the issue.

Another issue that I found incredibly interesting, and it’s funny how sometimes you know something but you don’t put two and two together. Let’s see if I can—I’ve actually got notes here, which is kind of strange for me. So there was quite a bit of confusion over the PAWS Act, because Humane Canada said that the PAWS Act didn’t apply to farm animals. Many of the farm groups—and I’ve heard many of the MPPs say, “Oh, the PAWS Act—we don’t really need anything else because the PAWS Act will cover it.” So I looked it up:

“(2) Subsection (1) does not apply in respect of an activity regarding agricultural animal care, management or husbandry carried on in accordance with the reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry, unless the standards of

care or administrative requirements expressly provide that they apply to that activity.”

So, actually, as long as it’s what the associations agree to, PAWS doesn’t cover it. I’m not going to talk about it, but there are activities that—and it was talked about; you can look it up in hearings—one activity specifically that you can do in a barn, and if you do it outside a barn, you would be charged. So again, there is that part of the bill that is seeming to be anti-whistle-blower, because when you put in legislation that puts in—and we talked about barriers for migrant workers to get tested. When you put in legislation something that could cause barriers for people to identify problems, that’s anti-whistle-blower. For me to say that, that’s a farmer and his opinion as ag critic for the NDP.

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I’d like to quote—and she also spoke—Jodi Lazare; she’s an assistant professor at Dalhousie University, Schulich School of Law: “For false pretenses—the difficulty here is that the provision dictates what someone is and is not allowed to say. It targets a particular message, a misrepresentation, and says that you cannot say this. That’s a clear violation of freedom of expression. But more significant, perhaps, is the effect of the prohibition, which is, of course, as you heard several times today, that it limits the ability of undercover journalists”—and we’ll get to that—“for example, or undercover whistle-blowing employees to share information with the public to ensure that Canadian consumers understand the consequences of their purchasing choices and to ensure that the public can make informed choices about what they buy, what they eat and what they support.”

Again, I understand where farmers are coming from, and I kind of understand where the government is coming from, but it’s as if they’re putting this poison pill, this anti-whistle-blower poison pill, in an otherwise acceptable piece of legislation. This legislation has been—I’ve got the list here somewhere—defeated in several states. Similar legislation was defeated in North Carolina this week.

This legislation is a lightning rod. Because it’s seen as unconstitutional, it will be challenged in court, very likely, and it will be a lightning rod for animal activists and for fundraising. By throwing this poison pill in, you are going to bring fury on farmers like they have never seen, for no real reason. Every example that has been brought forward in this House and every example I’ve read in the paper can all be dealt with with the first part of the act.

The animal rights people brought cases about how they—and there are bad actors in every profession. I quote the Premier all the time when he said that a few days ago in question period. But they quote the bad actors they have found, and I’m not going to do that. I haven’t seen an article where biosecurity was damaged by an undercover journalist. Find me that article. Find me that. No one here has mentioned it, and the farmers I’ve talked to—that’s not their biggest concern. Their biggest concern is the trespassers who are at their gate. And that’s something that we can deal with.

First of all, I'd also like to read something from the Canadian Association of Journalists. They also presented, and they're also concerned about this legislation because this legislation is anti-investigative journalism. Not everybody here is a fan of the CBC, but from the CBC's journalistic standards and practices: "When the investigation bears on illegal or anti-social behaviour or abuse of trust and the gathering of information of public interest, the journalist may need to infiltrate an organization to get first-hand information." Except in Ontario, where it's going to be illegal. I added that. But that is a problem.

Again, it's just me saying this, but this is going to go to court. There's a chance that the farm community will lose the whole legislation, but what they're going to lose even more is—the vast majority of farmers believe they have nothing to hide, and they don't. And the vast majority of protesters have nothing to hide. But it's pretty hard to say that you have nothing to hide when you're getting dragged to court for trying to hide something that you're not trying to hide. If you lose that, you're going to lose a lot of respect.

Livestock farmers are in a battle with animal activists or people who do not believe in animal agriculture—and they have every right to that view. They're in a battle for the hearts and minds of consumers.

What I thought was really interesting was, on the night of the second hearings, I turned on the TV—I don't watch much TV—and Maple Leaf was advertising their new hamburger, the 50/50. You don't have to feel as guilty because it's only half meat. Maple Leaf made a presentation—and I don't blame them; they're seeing the truck coming down the road. It's a huge issue.

So they say, "Vanthof doesn't know what he's talking about"—and most people don't think I do.

This is a letter from February 6, 2019, to the Honourable Doug Downey and Minister Hardeman:

"Dear Ministers....

"We the undersigned Canadian law professors and constitutional and criminal law experts write to express our concerns with Bill 156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2019 ('Bill 156'). Aspects of the bill would infringe individuals' rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and therefore violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms....

"Bill 156 increases fines for trespassing on agricultural property. In an effort to muzzle employee whistle-blowers, it also makes it an offence to gain access to a farm under 'false pretenses.' Owners of farm property are given significant powers to arrest individuals on their property. The bill also restricts individuals' ability to peacefully gather on public property near trucks transporting animals to slaughter.

"In the United States, courts have struck down laws similar to section 4(6) of Bill 156 on the basis that laws restricting or prohibiting whistle-blowing activities on farms violate the First Amendment right to free speech. These laws are commonly known as 'agricultural gag (ag gag) laws.' For instance, the US District Court in Utah found misrepresentations made to gain access to an

agricultural facility can be protected under the First Amendment and a law prohibiting access to such facilities under 'false pretenses' was overly broad and therefore unconstitutional...."

I'd also like to read the names of the people who signed the letter—because one of the members of the committee, when we were talking about whether it would be challenged constitutionally, said something about how the bowels of the government would make sure that wouldn't happen.

This letter was signed by:

—Richard Moon, professor at the University of Windsor faculty of law;

—Peter Sankoff, professor and associate dean, faculty development, University of Alberta faculty of law;

—A. Wayne MacKay, professor emeritus of law, Dalhousie University Schulich School of Law;

—Cheryl Milne, executive director, David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights, University of Toronto faculty of law;

—Don Stuart, emeritus professor, Queen's University faculty of law;

—Jodi Lazare, whom I've already quoted, assistant professor, Dalhousie University Schulich School of Law;

—Angela Fernandez, associate professor, University of Toronto faculty of law and department of history; and

—Emmett Macfarlane, associate professor and associate chair of graduate studies, University of Waterloo department of political science.

And there are 40 of them.

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This isn't just the NDP trying to cause trouble; this is a serious issue. There is a very good chance that this will be challenged in court and a pretty good chance it's going to lose. At the end of the day, do you know what's going to happen? It gets challenged in court; it loses; it's not going to hurt the government. Do you know why? Because the government is going to go to the farming community and say, "Well, at least we tried. At least the Premier tried," and the government can just wash its hands of it.

But the farming community will be left with the damage: the damage to their reputation, the damage to their markets, and with an invigorated fundraising animal activist group in Ontario. And I respect their views; I don't share them, but I respect their views.

There's something about poking a hornet's nest when you don't need to.

I don't understand why you're doing that and why you're not being up front with farmers. Farmers are feeling pressured. They want something to be done about active trespass. They want it; they need it. They don't need to be a bystander in a court challenge between people challenging the Constitution and what the government has done because, last time I checked, you've lost a few of those. There were windfarms and bats. It's not that, just because the government says that—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That it's so.

Mr. John Vanthof: —that it's so.

Farmers are all about taking risks, but farmers usually assess what the risks are. In this case, they are trusting that the government has assessed all the risks that are being taken on their behalf, and we don't believe that you have. You're willing to take this risk on their behalf, and that is a big problem for them. That is why we are going to vote against this bill. We believe that the trespassing act—the trespassing part should be strengthened, but we don't believe that that poison pill should be the thing in there that is going to risk farmers' futures.

It would be much better if this bill didn't leave any cracks for anybody to criticize and go after animal agriculture. You're basically leaving a ladder. You're leaving a ladder for people to go over the wall and not telling farmers that you're doing it, and that is not the feeling of freshly baled hay; that's the feeling of being invaded. Farmers are going to wonder what hit them when this gets challenged. If it loses in court, they're going to wonder why they ever believed you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We've listened intently for the past hour to this official opposition's critic for agriculture, food and rural affairs in response to this bill.

Now we'll have 10 minutes to pose questions back and forth. I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

The member talked about the whistle-blower provisions, I understand that there were some amendments made at committee to strengthen that provision. I also found it interesting in his speech that he talked about how farmers were supportive of the bill and farm groups were supportive of the bill but the NDP weren't supportive of the bill. All of these groups, all of the commodities, all of the people who are in the industry should forget about everything and just listen to the NDP, because Big Brother over there knows what's best. It's part of the Jekyll-and-Hyde that we always talk about with the NDP: Say one thing in public and do something else in private.

But he also spent some time talking about process, so I think that's fair game on this, Mr. Speaker. I want to ask the member a very serious question, and I hope he will give a very serious answer to this question: Does the member believe that a committee Chair of this Legislature, in exercising their duties, should act in a non-partisan way when exercising those duties? Yes or no?

Mr. John Vanthof: I am not sure what that question has to do with my speech.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): All right, all right, we're not going to go—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Answer the question.

Mr. John Vanthof: But I am going to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Excuse me. We're not going to have the cross-aisle banter. We have an opportunity to pose a question; we have an opportunity for an answer. And then we move on to another question and another answer.

I'll turn to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. If you choose to answer the question that was posed to you, then back to you, sir.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. I will respond to the part that has something to do with my speech. I fully declared that farm groups were solidly in favour of this bill, and I respect that. I have a different view. The NDP has a different view. We fully believe in the trespassing part of the bill and don't believe in the poison-pill anti-whistle-blower part of the bill. Do you know what? I might be on the wrong side of this vote, but I'd rather be on the wrong side of the vote than on the wrong side of history on this one.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I want to thank the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for the debate and for his work as critic. I also want to take the opportunity, because he reminded me, to talk about the importance of the OLIP intern program. We had Meaghan Irons in our office, and she was amazing, especially during COVID and working from home. She did some amazing work. Thank you, John, for reminding us about the great OLIP program.

The question I have has to do with the whistle-blower program because, as you said several times, there are concerns in this bill with whistle-blower protection. I think that one of the most important things to do as a politician is resist that urge to tell people what they want to hear instead of telling them what they need to hear.

Do you want to expand on whistle-blower protection and why it's troublesome in the bill?

Mr. John Vanthof: Whistle-blower protection is important because often people who are inside an organization can identify issues that you are not going to identify regardless of how strong your inspection process is. Anything you can do to encourage people to come forward freely actually makes your organization stronger.

But when you introduce legislation, whether it's the intent of the legislation or not—I can't judge whether the intent of the legislation is to be anti-whistle-blower, but the actual legislation appears to be, and that's the problem. If it creates a barrier or a perceived barrier, then you are trying to control information, and that is not acceptable.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Again, I want to get back to the question I just asked, because the member spent the first 10 minutes of his speech talking about committees and the process of committees. He talked about the standing committee on finance. I remind the House that it was the opposition that wanted only one month in total and that the standing committee on finance was approved by unanimous consent.

But I want to ask him again directly, and I hope he will give this House a direct answer: Do you believe that the Chairs of the standing committees of this Legislature, in fulfilling their duties to this Legislature and to all members of this House, should act in a fashion that is non-partisan? Or should the Chairs of committees be partisan? Again,

should they be non-partisan in exercising their duties, yes or no? And if you've been given advice to the opposite, I wish you would let us hear what that advice is.

Mr. John Vanthof: Again, the part about process I talked about was that I sent a letter to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs regarding agriculture. I would be happy if the committee discussed agriculture.

I want to talk about what farmers—

Hon. Paul Calandra: Do you even know the letter you signed your name to earlier today?

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Government House leader come to order, please.

Mr. John Vanthof: I took the opportunity to hopefully get farmers the ability to depute at the SCOFEA committee to talk about how they have been impacted by COVID. I stand by that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further questions? The member for University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker. Thank you also to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for your excellent speech. It's always interesting hearing about your experience as a farmer and the value of agriculture to Ontario.

I was also interested in hearing your summary of some of the concerns that came up during the witness committee process, including concerns raised by RoseAnne Archibald, concerns about the court challenge that this bill could face, the very real challenges that farmers face, just to make a living, and more.

This is my question to you: What amendments did you introduce in order to improve Bill 156?

Mr. John Vanthof: One of the amendments that we introduced—several we withdrew, because they were the same—was about “interact,” because we disagree with the minister regarding “interact.” It's too vague. We actually did it because when you're dealing with a trespass situation or if you interfere with an animal, that's pretty obvious. “Interact” is much more vague.

The minister also said he has the opportunity to make it more—it's up to him. Well, it should be in the legislation. We shouldn't have the minister, after, deciding what is interaction and what isn't.

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

Hon. Paul Calandra: Very directly to the member opposite, Mr. Speaker: Does the member agree that committee Chairs of this Legislature should act in a non-partisan fashion, yes or no?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's interesting that the government House leader continues in that vein when I actually want to talk about how farmers could be impacted by trespassing.

The reason we sent the letter to SCOFEA was to get more visibility for the concerns that farmers are facing, and that the agriculture sector is facing, with COVID-19. And anything I can do to bring to light the concerns of

farmers and food processors in Ontario, I'm happy to do it.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I appreciated the comments made in regard to the whistle-blower provision. I guess my question would be along this line: You said in your speech, and I think we all agree, that there is a real issue when it comes to trespassing, and we need to deal with those issues. With that, we're in agreement. It's why, as you said, we voted for this bill at second reading.

However, the whistle-blower provision brings it up to another level. It really infringes on people's rights under the Constitution and their ability to be able to find out what's going on.

You said in your speech at one point that there is a role for people—that's how we often find out what's going on—by having people doing investigations, such as CBC and others. I'm wondering if you can comment on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, you have 28 seconds.

Mr. John Vanthof: As an example of a whistle-blower and investigative journalism: Fiera Foods. In 2017, the Star went into Fiera Foods. Fiera Foods was using temp workers. Temp workers don't have the same rights as permanent workers. At that point, two people died; now five people have died at Fiera Foods. That was identified by a whistle-blower, not by the Ministry of Labour.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The government House leader has raised a point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Pursuant to standing order 7(e), I'm rising to indicate to the House that tonight's evening meeting is no longer required.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's great to be back. We haven't seen each other for, what, six months now, I guess, or more—something like that. I haven't been able to travel down to your part of the country to see any relatives, and they're maybe grateful for that, I guess. I don't know. Anyway, it's good to see you again.

I'm certainly happy to join in this debate on third reading of Bill 156. Before I begin, I would like to take a moment, like the minister before me, to thank our agri-food heroes for working tirelessly around the clock during these unprecedented times to ensure Ontario's food supply remains stable and strong.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Official opposition, come to order, please.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: As the minister has mentioned, the outbreak of COVID-19 has reinforced the importance of a constant and dependable food supply and the health and safety of the people who feed us.

Right away, our government declared the food supply chain an essential service, highlighting the importance of all of those, from farmers and food processors to grocery stores, who are working hard to keep the shelves stocked.

Our agri-food industry came together and worked together to maintain a strong food supply while also adapting to the changes needed to ensure the safety of their employees.

To the farmers, those in food processing, trucking and grocery retail, your efforts have not gone unnoticed, and the people of Ontario thank you and appreciate your efforts.

I know Minister Hardeman would agree with me in saying that we have all appreciated our colleagues in the Legislature taking part in round table discussions. In February of this year, the minister came to my riding of Perth–Wellington for a round table discussion in Stratford. Nearly 40 local farmers came out to share their stories of feeling angry and violated by trespassers on their farms and their homes. They stayed long after the round table was over, just to keep talking and sharing their stories of being in fear for their livestock and the impact it had on their livelihood and mental health. We heard many concerns from farmers who were frustrated that not enough was being done to ensure that unauthorized trespassing is addressed.

I am very proud to be part of the progress of this proposed bill. It has been a pleasure to work alongside my colleagues at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It's not every day that we get to be part of such an important grassroots initiative to address challenges that impact so many individuals and businesses. I continue to consider being part of this effort a great responsibility and a great honour.

In this case, the reason for our action came from the groundswell of concern relayed by farmers, municipalities and livestock transportation representatives. We heard from rural companies, the Mutual Insurance Association and many others that have growing concern about this situation. It could not and must not be ignored.

Mr. Speaker, a number of municipalities that have passed or supported council resolutions that call on the government to strengthen protections of these targeted operations has grown to nearly 130. The county of Perth, the town of Minto and the township of Perth South in my riding have all signed on to this. This is significant.

We have described some of the incidents that have taken place over recent months to provide context for the situations that Ontario farmers are dealing with. I think it's worth mentioning them again because they're at the origin of Bill 156.

Trespassers have entered farm properties with no regard for a farmer's well-being or provincial food safety protocols. On February 18, 2020, a large group gathered near King Cole Ducks, a business that had been operating for 27 years. Some people entered one of the barns and caged up about 30 birds and stole them from the premises. The incident resulted in York Regional Police closing a stretch of roadway on Warden Avenue in Whitchurch-Stouffville. But it doesn't end there. During public hearing proceedings, we heard from King Cole Ducks that these people broke into barns in the night, shining flashlights at the birds, which caused them to stampede and turn over, harming many of the animals the trespassers claimed to be

interested in protecting. It also unnerved many employees, some of whom lived on the farm property.

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In other instances, some individuals even harassed farm owners. One farmer in my riding of Perth–Wellington who attended a round table discussion in Stratford on Bill 156 shared how his wife noticed a strange car at the end of their laneway. Fearful of who could be coming to their farm where their two small children also resided, she immediately caused her husband to investigate. Imagine her fear if one time she would be alone on a remote farm with her children while a strange car approached her. Nobody deserves to live with that kind of fear.

Livestock transportation companies have reported individuals stepping out in front of moving trucks. Speaker, not long ago I used to drive a truck. I know firsthand the risk that is involved when people are interfering with operators, their trucks and the livestock they are transporting. I also know how hard it is to stop quickly or be able to see all the protesters when they surround a truck. Mr. Speaker, one of these livestock trucks that I used to drive can weigh up to 46,000 kilograms. That's 46 tonnes. If you step in front of one of these things while it is moving and it hits you, you're going to lose; the truck isn't. So we are trying to protect the protesters too with this type of legislation. It's to keep them away from equipment.

I would also like to state: When you reach into one of these livestock trailers—you might have noticed, Mr. Speaker, if you have ever seen one of these trailers, that they have holes punched in the sides of them, and they're about four inches or five inches wide and eight inches or 10 inches high. That's to keep air coming into the trailers for the livestock. It keeps fresh air coming in.

We have reports of people sticking their arms in there to water a pig or water an animal. That's probably one of the worst things you can do, because if that animal moves quickly one way or the other, you could end up hurting yourself—broken arm, bruise, whatever else. And I've seen that happen—people sticking their arms into livestock trailers and getting injured because they want to pet an animal or do something with that animal. That's a very dangerous situation that needs to be addressed. Their actions don't just put the operator's well-being in jeopardy and they don't just put the animals at risk; they're putting their own lives in harm's way.

Susan Fitzgerald, the executive director of the Ontario Livestock Transportation Alliance, shared their appreciation of this bill: "Our operators care very deeply for the well-being of the animals they transport, and are grateful for the Ontario government's efforts to improve the safety around transporting livestock, as well as other measures that will improve our working conditions."

Speaker, when I was hauling livestock—and I've driven all different kinds of trucks over 30 years. Most of it had to do with when companies would get busy in the spring and the fall hauling fertilizer, grains or whatever else, and most of it had to do with livestock. I've hauled cattle from Quebec; I've taken hogs out there. I went to the United States—went out west to bring yearlings back.

One of the responsibilities I had was to make sure anything I put on that truck was in good shape, was healthy and was not injured. That was part of my responsibility, other than making sure we weren't overloaded. That was one of the important conditions of my employ, that I did not bring injured animals back or load injured animals when I was trucking. And if I had any problem with their conditions, I had the authority to refuse to put them on the truck until they were looked after by either a veterinarian or somebody who was qualified to do that.

Also, when we were taking animals to the United States, we had to go to a veterinarian. If we were going to the United States, the veterinarian would be on the American side of the border. He had to check all these livestock over to make sure there were no animals that were hurt or in distress. And if there was, then he turned us around and made us come into Canada again. He would not accept the load.

The same when I was bringing cattle back from the United States: We'd stop at the Canadian side, and he would check the load to make sure there were no animals that were injured or had been hurt. If he saw that, he could do the same thing. We had to look after that animal and make sure that it was being treated properly. Fortunately, I never had to do that. But there have been occasions when this happens. Other than the person, the driver, who is tasked with loading these animals and making sure they're okay, there is also the veterinarians and the inspection staff that made sure the animals were treated properly and that they were safe to transport to wherever they had to go.

It's hard enough to get a good driver these days, with all these things going on at the processing facilities with people wanting to stop them from doing their work, especially with livestock, because you need to know how to handle livestock. Not just anybody can do this job. I don't know whether I'd want to be doing that today, with what's going on at some of these processing plants. I don't know whether I'd want to be in the livestock business. Other incidents include people blocking the entrances to farms and processing facilities.

I want to take a moment to speak to the mental health strains trespassers cause to farmers and the truckers responsible for the safe transportation of livestock. The COVID-19 virus is hitting them hard. They've had to shift the way they work and ensure their employees have the proper PPE to continue working safely. They've got to worry about walking on their farms uninvited and scaring their children and scaring their families. It's giving them a lot of anxiety as to who they should allow and who they shouldn't allow onto their farms. Some of these people can be legitimate visitors; in fact, most of them are, I'm sure. But there's still the thing in the back of your mind that you've got somebody there with an agenda, and that's adding more stress to our farming community. We have heard several stories about farmers who are really suffering from mental issues over this.

Last week, during our public hearings on Bill 156, Dr. Andria Jones-Bitton, who has been studying farmer mental health for the last five years, presented to the

committee. What she shared was alarming and spoke even more to the importance of this bill.

Dr. Jones-Bitton said, "What I have heard from farmers is more fear, that they're afraid for their families. They're afraid for themselves. They're afraid for their animals...."

"Farmers are feeling as if their entire way of life is under attack. This isn't an occupation; this is a family history, a family legacy. Many of these farms go back generations. There's a real sense of personal honour and a code of ethics in caring for animals."

Dr. Jones-Bitton also shared how "there's a lot of misleading anti-agriculture campaigns out there that are based on lies," and farmers "are really feeling that they're under attack." She has heard "stories of kids now in rural areas being some of the only farm kids in the schools, and they're getting picked on. They're getting called names like 'murderer,' 'animal abuser'"—it just boggles the mind.

Not only does farm trespassing cause incredible strain on our farmers and their families, but it can also cause undue stress on the animals themselves, as well as pose a risk of introducing diseases or other contaminants to the animals. I want to stress this again: These actions ultimately pose a risk to Ontario's food supply.

Mr. Speaker, this proposed bill will go a long way to protect farmers, their families and their animals, the individuals who handle their safe transport and employees in food processing plants. With this bill, we are sending a message that protection of farms from such actions is a priority.

Crispin Colvin, a board member of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, spoke at our public hearing last week on the impacts that trespassing on farms can have on biosecurity. He said that disease is "one of the greatest threats to livestock. Farm staff who are in direct contact with animals do not visit other farms unless they adhere to the strict biosecurity protocols. This includes different clothing and footwear...."

"This is why trespass creates a great risk—a risk to livestock and the biosecurity of the farm upon which the trespass takes place.... Movements between farms and properties can introduce new disease, and that impacts the farm operation. Without observing biosecurity protocols, animal health is at risk as well as the safety and security of the food supply."

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He went on to say how "biosecurity is taken very seriously by the livestock industry. Simply because you cannot see inside a building does not mean that animals are stressed or in distress, and it doesn't justify breaking and entering and trespassing."

The minister mentioned earlier that the number of letters that the ministry and MPPs across the province received has grown to more than 5,000 in support of Bill 156. In these letters, farmers have expressed their concerns with the increased rate of trespass they are documenting. They have concerns for the safety of their families, their employees and the livestock they care for.

The current legislation, the federal Criminal Code of Canada and the provincial Trespass to Property Act, do not address the unique risks that trespassing on farms in an agricultural food facility presents. There are challenges in the current legislative framework. These challenges have made it difficult to prosecute these agri-food trespassing cases. For example, under the Criminal Code of Canada, it can be difficult to prove that an individual had the intention to commit an indictable offence when breaking and entering. Trespassers can also tailor their actions so as to avoid charges under the Criminal Code of Canada, and this cannot happen under Bill 156.

The Trespass to Property Act does not capture agri-food transportation. Bill 156 would address these challenges by requiring explicit consent for someone to enter an animal protection zone, which includes animal enclosures such as a barn. The current trespass-to-property legislation does not include escalating penalties or aggravating factors to deter repeat offenders from trespassing, whereas our proposed bill includes these aspects. The proposed bill would also allow courts to order restitution for farm owners and drivers who have suffered damages, which can include items such as loss of livestock due to disease infection or economic loss due to contamination.

Our proposed bill will strengthen the existing legislative framework for agri-food trespassing. It also aims to deter trespass activity and provide more tools to effectively prosecute and convict offenders. And to emphasize again, this bill does not change the fact that trespassing is illegal in Ontario. Rather, this bill is aimed at addressing the unique issues that trespassing can create for the livestock agri-food sector and the ultimate goal of deterring individuals from trespassing in the first place.

If passed, Bill 156 would target specific areas by creating animal protection zones on farms, processing facilities and other prescribed premises. It will provide greater deterrence to trespass, including escalating fines of up to \$15,000 for a first offence and up to \$25,000 for subsequent offences, compared to a \$10,000 maximum fine under the Trespass to Property Act. It will also allow the court to issue a restitution order for any injury, loss or damages suffered as a result of the offence, such as a loss of livestock to stress or disease or a loss of food due to potential contamination from health and safety protocols not being followed.

The bill will increase safety around livestock transport trucks by prohibiting, for example, the stopping or obstructing of a motor vehicle that is transporting farm animals, and will prohibit interacting with those farm animals. It will make it easier to prosecute trespass, for example, by requiring that a person shall have explicit prior consent before entering an animal protection zone. It will protect the health and safety and welfare of animals by reducing the risk of animals being exposed to stress and disease by trespassers. And it will establish additional offences to address risks specific to agri-food premises and livestock transport.

As Minister Hardeman said before: Earlier this year, he travelled across the province holding round tables to get a

better understanding of how Ontarians felt about our legislation. Several of our colleagues from the Legislature have been part of these discussions, and we appreciate their participation and are interested in hearing from constituents directly. They see that we are standing with them to do something to address the difficult circumstances they often face. We—

The Acting Chair (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you, sir.

We've listened to the member from Perth–Wellington for 20 minutes, and now we'll have 10 minutes to pose questions to what we've just listened to.

I turn to the member from Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Earlier, when the official opposition brought up legitimate issues around the constitutionality of Bill 156 and cited a legal letter that had 38 legal experts give their opinion about the problems with this bill, members of the government laughed and scoffed.

My question to the member for Perth–Wellington: Does he think it's appropriate to respond to a legitimate concern of 38 legal experts on a piece of legislation that could infringe the rights of Ontarians by laughing and scoffing?

The Acting Chair (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you for the question, member from Brampton East.

I think there are more than 38 lawyers in Ontario, so there would probably be a bunch more who would not share the same opinion as you did.

We have designed this bill to be specific to three things: processing, trespassing at farms, and interfering with livestock transportation. These are things that have been asked for over a period of time by farmers because of what's going on with animal rights activists and the fear that it has placed on farm families in the country.

I think you would be in agreement with me, sir, that if you saw strangers in your neighbourhood and they kept driving up and down the road—because of these trespass issues, because of the people who want to come onto your farm and disrupt your way of life, you would have a fear there. We are trying to address that situation and we believe Bill 156 does that.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the legal experts the member talked about was one of the presenters. We questioned her during committee about her lobbying the federal government to stop subsidies for farmers in Ontario. These subsidies were for COVID-19 PPE. Do you think it's appropriate that a legal expert stands up to the federal government and says, "You should not give any money to farmers in Ontario for PPE for COVID-19"?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

Yes, this is one of the things that came up, and this is the way farm activists work. They do not want you raising farm animals, period. They will go to whatever measure it takes to stop you from raising farm animals. This is a perfect example of how far they go. How dare they

jeopardize the safety of people in this province for their own cause? This is absolutely ridiculous. I remember when this came up during committee, and I just couldn't get over how she would put farm families or people involved in the food processing industry in this province in jeopardy for her own cause of stopping them from raising animals and processing animals in this province.

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Rightly so, the member from Perth–Wellington identified that there are more than 38 lawyers in Ontario. But possibly the member opposite did not read the letter which is signed by professors from a variety of legal institutes across Ontario and Canada: Professor Richard Moon, University of Windsor; Professor Wayne MacKay, Dalhousie; Professor Don Stuart, Queen's. These are legal experts and minds across Canada and Ontario who have come together and said that this piece of legislation is likely to be unconstitutional and struck down.

My question to the member for Perth–Wellington: Why does he believe in wasting taxpayer dollars by putting forward bad legislation that will ultimately cost us all more money?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: To the member for Brampton East: Because I don't like wasting people's lives in their businesses, and that's exactly what's going on in the agriculture industry right now. These people are frightened that they're going to have their livelihood disrupted, and they're frightened for their families. That's why I'm fighting for them, sir, which the NDP is not doing right now.

I think the farmers of this province should stand up and look at the party opposite and say, "These people do not want to stand up for us and they're citing all these things, that this could happen and that could happen."

Let's get the bill passed. Let's get the job done. Let's protect our food industry.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further questions? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I had one of those visits from the Minister of Agriculture to my riding. We met with many farmers and business people, and they expressed their support and their concerns and why they needed a bill like Bill 156.

When you talked about being involved in the transportation of livestock, it got me thinking back a long time ago—I won't say how many years. It was another life, a long time ago. I was involved with a local businessman in my community of Sarnia–Lambton and he called me. I was between jobs; I was laid off at the time. He called me and asked me if I could truck some cattle with him from the border. It made me think about that because, at the time, we had to wait for the veterinarian to release them, so we didn't leave until the middle of the night and then drove and transported these cattle.

Maybe you could just add a little bit about—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Maybe not. Maybe you ran out of time to pose that question. You have no response to no question.

We'll go to further questions. Member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: To the member from Perth–Wellington: If you truly want to fight for farmers, your job is not just to pass bills for the sake of passing bills. Your job is to pass bills that will actually come into effect and will not be challenged, and not be challenged in a court of law. So my question to you and my question to the government is as such: Do you believe that you have a sacred duty to put forth good legislation and if so, why are you backing a bill that will lead to challenges and cost to taxpayers?

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you for the question to the member from Brampton East. Does the member know for certain that this is going to be challenged in court? I don't know that. I don't think he knows that either. To me, this is a scare tactic put out by the NDP and some of these people who do not want animals raised in this province. So I don't know whether this is going to happen or not.

We have farm businesses and organizations in the province: the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers, National Farmers Union. All these people are behind us that we need to get this done, and this is what we're going to do. We need to stop what's going on in the country. "I don't care if you don't want to eat the products of animals. That doesn't matter to me. That isn't the issue here. But let me make my living because I do want to do that"—that's all the farmers are asking. They're trying to raise a product that the people of Ontario want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Mississauga–Lakeshore.

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: These last three months, I've been lucky to receive 77,000 pounds of chicken from Sure Good Foods, and I was able to give this chicken all out to food banks and our front-line workers.

I want to ask the member from Perth–Wellington what he's heard from farmers over this Bill 156.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you for the question. Nothing but support, surely, for this bill. I haven't heard any of the concerns that have been raised by the opposition here. They want us to get this bill passed. The president of the OFA, Keith Currie, said that this is a well-balanced bill, in his opinion. Get it done. Get it so that we can start enforcing these things.

We need to stop the fear that is out in the rural communities over trespassing, the fear they have for their families, the fear they have for their farms. We do not need another disease or any diseases going through our animals like we've had in the past, and a lot of it has come from other countries and has been spread different ways. We don't need that to happen in this province at this point, especially when we see what COVID-19 has done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for a quick question and a quick answer. The member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Very quickly: The member from Perth–Wellington stated, “How do we know that this issue will have constitutional problems?” Well, in this Legislative Assembly, we look to experts to give us advice on how our laws will play out. That’s the very purpose of having committees, that’s the very purpose of turning to these experts. We can also look to America, where 29 states in the US have attempted this kind of legislation, and 17 of these attempts have failed because they’ve been deemed as unconstitutional.

My question to the member from Perth–Wellington: Have you read this letter from 38 legal experts? And if so, why do you continue to support a piece of legislation that is likely to be unconstitutional, as it has been found in other states in America to already be against their Constitution?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Perth–Wellington has 18 seconds to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I will give you 5,000 reasons for that, and they are the letters of support we got for this legislation. That’s a lot more letters than the 38 you’re talking about.

I am not going to back down. People consider themselves legal experts and say, “This may happen.” We don’t know this; neither do you. And we need to stand up for the agriculture community—

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

Mr. Gurratan Singh: As I made my way to Queen’s Park this morning, it dawned on me just to reflect on how crazy 2020 has been. I was just reflecting as I was making my way here about the immense amount of struggle we’ve already had to face in this province: thinking of COVID-19 and how it’s put those who are already at the margins, some of the most vulnerable Ontarians, and further pushed them across the margins. It put them in very tough situations, where we’ve seen lives being lost to those who should be enjoying their senior years of life.

I was thinking and reflecting about how we’ve seen COVID-19 disproportionately impacting racialized Ontarians and disproportionately impacting people who have low incomes.

I then started to think about what we’re seeing south of the border and how, through the senseless death of George Floyd, we have seen a rallying cry against injustice. We’ve seen people across the world inspired by an unjust death to fight for justice.

As I was making my way to Queen’s Park and entering, I felt this weight upon my shoulders, a weight that felt so real the closer I got. It reminded me as I walked in that this is the weight of our responsibility as MPPs, our responsibility as lawmakers, our responsibility that what we see across the world and what we see in Ontario, these vast, these immense struggles that we face—that the laws that

are passed in this assembly can work to make life easier for folks or work to make life tougher.

We have a duty as MPPs. We have an immense duty. We have a sacred duty to put forth legislation that helps people, that makes life easier for those who are facing often some of the toughest circumstances.

When I think about that duty and I think of how we can make sure that we are acting to the best of our ability, the best of our ability is to make sure we fight to create good laws. We are lawmakers. In the same way you go to a baker who will make you good bread, or you go to a builder to make you a structure that is sound and built on a strong foundation, our job is to make laws that similarly can withstand the test of challenges; that can withstand the test of being criticized; that can withstand the test of this crucible of discussion that occurs through the legislative process, the committee process, through this whole collective of understanding how good laws are made.

If you make bad laws, you ultimately put the burden upon everyday folks, because the cost of challenging these laws, the cost of the judicial process, is a cost that taxpayers will have to pay. Beyond that, when we think about what the purpose of our laws—we don’t pass laws for merely getting a round of applause in this assembly. We should be passing laws to help folks. We should be passing laws to make sure that the hope that we want, that the ideals that we hold within our mind of how to create a better province, a more just province, a more equitable province, will actually be realized. And that is not done by putting forth bad legislation. That is not done by not being thoughtful in our work. That is not done by not listening to experts.

In February, when I first spoke to this piece of legislation, we said, as the official opposition, that experts across the board have brought forth real, tangible charter concerns: concerns around freedom of expression; concerns around the rights that are held to be sacrosanct, the highest protections we have in this province, our charter, that this piece of legislation could infringe upon that.

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Instead of taking in these criticisms, instead of actually going forward and implementing these criticisms, the government disregarded it. And what are we left with? We’re left with a piece of legislation that has been decried due to the fact that it will not do what the government purports it will. It’s actually not going to help out farmers, because to help out farmers, you have to put forth a bill that will actually withstand the test of the courts. You do farmers a disservice by putting forth bad legislation. Ultimately, you’re going to have the taxpayers bear the cost of challenges, and also that lack of protection to farmers.

Now let’s look at the root of why this bill is problematic. I have referenced it before and I will reference it again—as many folks have. When we talk about legal opinions, when we talk about experts coming together, it’s meant to be a powerful sign when we see 38 professors of law schools—they’re not all professors, but 38 experts

including professors from a variety of law schools coming together and coming to a position to say, "There are constitutional issues with your piece of law."

Further, we see that south of the border, where we're seeing similar types of legislation come forward, they have been challenged and they have been struck down, because in the American context they found it to be unconstitutional there. This is really compelling evidence.

The argument is made of how do you know if something is unconstitutional or something is going to be unconstitutional? The argument was made by a government member. Well, the way our process works is, you listen to experts. You take these committees and you incorporate these concerns, so it doesn't have to get there. The best sign we have to know whether a piece of legislation is going to be criticized and challenged or passed and implemented is the opinions of experts. It's looking at similar jurisprudence and how it's been played out in different jurisdictions, and that's what we're looking to right now.

This is not a whim. This is not a feeling. This is not a purely emotional position. This is the exact opposite. This is looking at what those who know best in this field feel and know upon analyzing and examining the law before them and looking at similar case studies across North America. We see a very clear picture, something that's going to hurt our collective rights and freedoms. I will say "collective rights and freedoms," and I'll say something more: our responsibility, because whistle-blowing is a responsibility that we all have. If we want to look towards great achievements and towards justice that have happened across North America, it has happened because of those brave souls who challenged, often, the status quo; who spoke when others wanted them to be quiet; who spoke loud, courageously and justly against injustice. And that's precisely what we have here.

We have a situation where whistle-blowers must be protected. Whistle-blowers uphold democracy. Whistle-blowers collectively help us all, because the stronger our democracy is—whether you are a protester or whether you are a farmer, whether you're on either side of this argument, democracy uplifts us all. We have a responsibility to do whatever it takes to uphold that democracy, to ensure that individuals have the processes available to them to speak truth to power. When you limit that, when you threaten that very crucial role of those truth seekers and when you jeopardize their ability to speak truth, you don't just do those who disagree with you a disservice. You don't just do a disservice to the official opposition. You don't just do a disservice to those who don't like your position. You hurt us all, because we all rely on the truth, we all rely on the courage and we all rely on the strength of those who speak truth to power.

I will not look at whistle-blowing purely as a right. We know it's a right. We know we should have the freedom of expression. This is what the charter has enshrined and protects. But don't look at it as just a right, look at it as a responsibility. If you want to live in a society that has rights and freedoms afforded to all, then you need to be in

a context where those individuals can express those rights, and a limit to those rights should be something we look at very seriously. Our civil liberties, our ability to be free agents, our ability to speak out, to act without fear of being held down or facing a penalty, are truly a cornerstone of our democracy. The fact that we can have protesters come and speak out and people can have that voice, that's an important strength that people have, and that's an important right and responsibility that we need to encourage and foster. When we have pieces of legislation that threaten that right, in any area and any context, that is problematic.

There's a very important quote that often is cited: "I disapprove of what you're saying, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it." That is what strengthens democracy. Either side of us, whether official opposition or government, should hold this right truly in our hearts and ensure it is protected, irrespective of who attacks it, because our democracy is stronger because of it.

When we look further to why this piece of legislation is problematic, we need to understand that our Constitution, our charter, is what makes Canada so special. Our ability to practise our faith fully, our ability to be who we are, to say the thoughts that allow us to speak out against injustice or fight for a better province or nation, that's truly what makes Ontario and Canada special. To threaten that sets us all back collectively.

We've spoken to the fact that 38 legal experts have spoken against this piece of legislation. We've also seen 27 states in America have had this kind of legislation come forward, and in around the number of 17 states have already struck this down. That is an important number to look at. That is an important area to start from, to say that if you want to do right by your constituents or if you want to do right by the people of Ontario, then do right by making good laws. Do right by looking at what you're actually trying to put forward and ensuring that that's being realized.

We've seen legal experts speak against this, we've seen a variety of states where this kind of legislation has been struck down, but let's also look at our responsibility as MPPs beyond that. One of the very important parts is that we have a moral and fiduciary responsibility to the people of Ontario. A part of that is ensuring that the actions we take are done thoughtfully, are done responsibly. We have the luxury of first reading, second reading, committee and this debate now. The government has so many opportunities to say, "All right, these are real criticisms coming forward, and if I don't do anything now, then the end result of it is going to be further cost, further backlog." It's important to look at that. We have a system that's already backlogged. Our court system is already terribly backlogged. We have court dates across the board being set further and further, and this kind of challenge is only going to burden a system that's already overburdened. That's another area of further strain you're putting upon our province.

This is a piece of legislation that infringes upon our collective rights. Whoever is an Ontarian, a Canadian, enjoys these rights. When you have criticisms that come

forward, the government should not respond by laughing or scoffing at accusations of being unconstitutional. If you are confident in your piece of legislation, then speak to those criticisms; speak to that position which is contrary to yours. Don't laugh it off. You have a really important responsibility as government. To laugh off something from 38 legal experts is irresponsible. It is wrong. It is truly something which is not a position or an action that government should take. You have a duty to every single Ontarian. If there are people who are criticizing your law, and you're confident, then speak to it. Take it head-on. But when you just cast it to the side as, "Ah, these are just individuals"—that's problematic, because these are the mechanisms, these are the ways that right now we can speak to how to build a better province.

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We've spoken a lot about the rights that we collectively enjoy. We've spoken a lot about the importance of our charter, the importance of whistle-blowing. We've talked about how this is a responsibility that we all hold, and that as legislators, as members of this assembly, as MPPs, we have a duty to create laws that are well thought out. And when we don't do it, we've seen the impact of it.

This is a government which has already, in many other circumstances, continually not heeded the criticisms of experts. Look to your own record, and you will see that when we have the government already fighting challenges against midwives, against businesses over the cancellation of green contracts, against teachers—this is a clear indication of what happens.

I don't know what else the government wants to see. You have your own personal case studies of what has happened when you put forth unconstitutional pieces of legislation, through the court challenges you're faced with right now. You've seen how similar pieces of legislation played out in different parts of America. And you have legal experts, right now, demonstrating to you the problems of your piece of legislation. If you dismiss all of these factors, then you need to look at yourself in the mirror and say, "What do I turn to to see truth?" Who are you turning to when you look towards the constitutionality of this piece of legislation?

I'm not going to speak about the intention of the government, whether they want to help or whether they want to hurt. That's something the government is going to have to deal with. But I can speak to what we know of, and what we know of is what's before us. If someone is waving a big flag and saying, "Hey, watch out, danger," you're going down the wrong path. You have a duty to uphold it. You have a duty to look at this issue directly and very clearly and say, "Yes, we are going to analyze it," and then respond to us.

This is all on the record. This is Hansard.

I don't see the government looking at this letter and saying, "Yes, I agree that 38 experts have said that Bill 156 is going to hurt section 2(b) of the charter, but this is our argument on why it's not." I don't hear the government saying that at all. I don't see the government turning to law, jurisprudence, other experts, and saying, "No, we are

correct in our assertion. This piece of legislation has been well thought out, and this is our contrary opinion." Instead, we see the government scoffing, laughing and throwing to the side these criticisms, and I think it actually shows a weakness in your position.

Have you read the letter? Have you seen the position put forward? Have you looked at it objectively? Have you looked at it with the eyes of a lawyer? I know you have many lawyers in your caucus. Have your legal members read this piece of legislation? Based on the conversation, I'm not hearing that argument coming forth from the government, and I'm led to the belief that you're not looking at the criticisms, that you're not looking at the other side. Anyone who doesn't look at the other side in any argument is bound to fall into a pitfall, and I think that's the direction this government is going in right now with respect to Bill 156.

Whistle-blowers have been champions of truth and justice across our province, our country and this world. They have a role which has upheld democracy, which has spoken truth to power, which has brought justice to those who are oppressed, which has helped people in need. If the government, having known the threat to this right that this bill puts forward, continues to choose to push, to ram, this piece of legislation forward, then the ultimate result will be injustice. The ultimate result will be a province which is not lifted up. It won't be a province in which the people you purport to support will ultimately enjoy greater freedoms or protections. If anything, you're going to collectively hurt us all.

So I implore the government: Listen to the experts. Listen to those who advise you and can advise you on the strengths or weaknesses of your bill. Look to other jurisdictions. Look to other areas that have implemented this and have had this kind of legislation struck down. Do your job. Your job is to be a lawmaker. Your job is to make good laws. Take this responsibility with a lot of vigour, with strength. Take this responsibility understanding that it's sacred. That is how you will do a service to all people of this province, and that's how we will build a better, more just and more equitable province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We'll now have 10 minutes of questions and comments. We'll go to the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I thank my honourable colleague for his presentation. We know that most of these farmers work and live in their homes. My colleague alluded to the fact that we're lawmakers here, of course, many times.

I want to ask him this question. The contributions of farmers in the last few months have probably been noticed by everybody, more so than ever. In particular, when we go to the grocery stores, when we look at those shelves, it's all because of the hard work of our farmers here. I want to ask my colleague across: When it comes to just feeling safe at home, knowing that most of these farmers and their families and their children live where they work, when it comes to trespassing, how do you justify having them not feel as safe as other families, including yours or mine?

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I think it's very abundantly clear that we must protect farmers. Farmers are a crucial part of

our province. But you know how you protect farmers? By putting forth laws that will come into effect and won't be challenged in courts. That's how you protect farmers. That's how you uphold your responsibility to farmers: by actually not passing legislation for points, but passing legislation that will actually come into effect. And that's why we're speaking so passionately. That's why the member, Mr. John Vanthof, speaks so passionately about farmers. He himself is a farmer, and he sees the pitfalls in your piece of legislation.

We are proud supporters of farmers on this side of the aisle. In the official opposition, we are proud supporters of farmers. So you should be a proud supporter and put forth legislation that protects them, not things that will be challenged in courts.

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I wanted to say how much I enjoyed the comments of the member from Brampton East today. I listened very intently and found it very useful and informative. Thank you. Of course, we're all familiar with the legislation. We've all discussed the legislation. But not all of us were present in the committee meetings. It was useful.

I also want to quickly say: There's an assumption sometimes that those of us who come from cities or represent city ridings don't understand farming. I grew up on a farm, and many of us are just one generation away from farming. We support, in my community, a lot of farmers, and we support agriculture as an industry.

But what I wanted to ask the member is: Why would the government bring forward legislation that is really so faulty, that is going to fall apart? Maybe you could speak a little bit more to the court challenges that the members opposite have faced on other poor decisions and bad legislation, and how that's really going to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Response? Member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you very much for the question. This is a really important question, actually. What we've seen is a track record by this government to disregard legal experts, to challenge the charter time and time again, to often threaten the use of the notwithstanding clause in Ontario, something that is, by convention, never done. We have seen a clear pattern by this government to trod upon the charter and to disregard legal experts.

Their intention I can't speak to, but I can speak to the facts: currently dealing with court issues with regard to midwives, with teachers, court challenges around green energy contracts being ripped up. That is not true to your position as lawmakers and that is not true to our duty as lawmakers.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I was just listening intently to the member from Brampton East's comments. I'm a little bit confused. So my question to the member is: When was the last time you actually stepped on a farm? Because I've stepped on several farms, very recently, actually. I've been

on Bekings Poultry Farm. I've been to Shouldice. I've been to Abby Hill Farms. I've been to Schouten. I've been to the Acres. There are farms in my riding, and I've been going since before I even got elected, so I can understand how the farm industry works.

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When was the last time you actually stepped foot on a farm to understand the day-to-day process of what it is that farmers do and how they treat their animals?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: That's not an issue at all with respect to what we're talking about right now, but I'll answer the member's question because the member's clearly trying to—it's kind of like a gotcha question. Well, let me tell you about those gotcha questions.

I go to farms all the time. I love farms. Farms are fantastic. I go to Downey's Farm in Caledon. I can name farms—Singh Farm.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Carleton, come to order, please.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: I can name farms across the board if they want me to. That's how this party likes to distract. Let me—

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Answer my question, yes or no.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Carleton, the second time, come to order.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Brampton East is a riding that has a vibrant group of individuals who are descended from farmers. Guess what? My parents are farmers. My parents spent their entire lives farming.

I'll tell you what: My riding has a huge amount of farmers, people who invest and are vibrant in their contribution to the province. I love farms. I love farmers. One of the best places to get local produce—I get it from my local farmers' market, and I'm very sad that, because of COVID-19, they're not in the same position right now.

But this is what the government wants to do: distract from the fact of their unconstitutional—

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

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: While we're doing the our-farms-are-better-than-your-farms thing—let me just be clear—both my grandmothers grew up on farms. I love farms, too. I go to farms all the time, but that is not the point here.

The member from Timiskaming-Cochrane was so clear. The whole point in trying to make the legislation good legislation is to protect farmers. We want to protect farmers. As the member from Brampton East has been saying, we want to protect farmers, but we're concerned about the parts of the legislation that are raising concerns among members of the public.

I was very moved by the member's concerns for Indigenous people and the way they are looking at this legislation, particularly in the light of what occurred to Colten Boushie—not just to him but in the criminal justice

system, and I wonder if the member could expand on those concerns and his views of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member from Brampton East.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you very much. It's important to outline—I've said it before and I'll say it again—that in Ontario, in Canada, we have really immense issues with systemic racism with regard to racialized Canadians, with regard to Indigenous communities. We have an issue with institutional racism and that's something that we need to recognize. We have a history of it. Our province and our nation are built upon it, and we need to work to deconstruct it. And in every motion and every action we take, we must challenge this injustice, we must challenge systemic racism and we must challenge any form of oppression that subjugates people irrespective of their background or irrespective of their origins. We must fight for liberty for all but also acknowledge the disproportionate amount of oppression that is felt by racialized, Black and Indigenous communities.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: We're debating today the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. The member from Brampton East spoke very passionately and said the famous quote, "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Basically, the bill is not about stopping people from criticizing or speaking out; it's to stop people from physically trespassing onto people's private property, their private homes, their places of work and where they ensure the safety of their animals, livestock and their equipment.

I would ask why you decided to focus on people's rights to speak, because I don't think that this is infringing on any rights to criticize their free speech.

Mr. Gurratan Singh: Thank you very much. Just to give the member opposite a bit of context, this Bill 161 has within it a huge provision prohibiting whistle-blowers, and that's the point that has been raised time and time again by members of the official opposition of a huge problem with this piece of legislation. The fact is, there's a variety of aspects within this bill, but we have one part of the bill that is directly—the 38 legal experts, when they spoke to it, spoke largely to this issue around whistle-blowing.

So when you take this bill, you take the bill as a whole. We put forward this amendment to the government. We said, "Hey, this is the problem." We brought this issue forward, but the government chose not to listen. So it's largely at your feet. You can choose to keep parts that are not being challenged as being unconstitutional and remove that which is unconstitutional. But you've decided not to. You've decided to put both forward, and so we have to reject things that are going to hurt our charter rights.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I support the purpose of Bill 156 to protect the property and safety of farmers, their families and workers. As a matter of fact, Speaker, I voted in favour of this section of the bill at committee. But to overreach in

the pursuit of this purpose, as the government has done with Bill 156, will only serve to undermine this purpose of the bill which we all hope to achieve.

This has been proven true over and over again in the United States, where so-called ag gag bills have been struck down by the courts. As a matter of fact, just last Friday, North Carolina became the fifth state in the US to strike down such a bill.

Charter challenges to Bill 156 are inevitable. These high-profile court challenges will make Ontario the epicentre of animal rights activism and journalists fighting to protect the rights of free expression, free assembly and investigative journalism.

A research team at UBC has shown how such battles undermine confidence and trust in support for farmers and farming. At a time when we need to strengthen public confidence in local food and farming, the government's overreach will undermine confidence in Ontario farming.

Many US farmers who initially supported such bills have now come out against them. Chuck Jolley, a respected rancher from the great state of Kansas and president of the Meat Industry Hall of Fame, has described ag gag laws: "What you're really doing is handing an issue to the anti-ag people and saying, 'Yeah, I've got something to hide and I've got laws to protect me.'" Speaker, those laws haven't worked, and Ontario farmers have nothing to hide.

I grew up on a farm. I've spent my whole life marketing and promoting Ontario food and farmers. My successful local food campaigns were built on the premise that if we tell people the story of Ontario food and farmers, people will support them. Bill 156 undermines this.

Speaker, a number of constitutional lawyers and law professors warned the committee that Bill 156 will face a charter challenge. The false pretense provisions in sections 4 and 5 violate section 2 of the charter, according to legal experts, infringing on people's rights to the freedom of expression and the freedom of peaceful assembly.

In addition, both the Canadian Association of Journalists and Canadian Journalists for Free Expression told committee members that Bill 156 will criminalize investigative journalism. Think of that, Speaker: criminalizing investigative journalism. Think of the essential undercover investigations from news organizations such as CBC's Marketplace revealing the horrific conditions in long-term-care homes. Bill 156 would make CBC journalistic standards for undercover reporting illegal in animal protection zones.

Bill 156 could also criminalize undercover investigations into workplace safety at food processing plants, such as the one the Toronto Star did to expose unsafe conditions at Fiera Foods.

Bill 156 also puts a chill on the ability of employees to report an animal abuse issue. Humane Canada raised this concern, because a worker witnessing some sort of abuse might be reluctant to report it out of fear of being charged under the false pretenses provisions of Bill 156. This will undermine the ability to investigate animal abuse under the PAWS Act, which I support.

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We need stronger trespass laws, and we need stronger enforcement of those laws on Ontario farms. But we can do this without violating people's charter rights and criminalizing investigative journalism. We can do it while maintaining the public's trust and confidence in Ontario food and farmers. I put forward amendments to strike this balance at committee and, while I appreciate the government voting in favour of amendments I put forward to respect Indigenous rights, I am disappointed that the government voted down amendments to protect the bill from a charter challenge.

I understand why some of my farm friends are in support of this bill. No one wants to feel unsafe at home or in their workplace. As a matter of fact, I just received an email from a friend of mine who testified in support of the bill at committee and was harassed afterwards online. That's unacceptable, Speaker. But Ontario farmers and processors deserve a bill that provides these sorts of protections that will ultimately withstand a charter challenge, and ultimately then benefit farmers, not hurt them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Time for questions.

Mr. Dave Smith: I appreciate the speech that you gave, member from Guelph. You were in committee. You heard some of the things said. You've touted the legal experts who wrote the letter. One of those legal experts presented at committee and admitted that she lobbied the federal government to not give COVID-19 support to certain farmers, and those supports were to pay for PPE. Do you agree with that legal opinion that she put forward? If you don't, then why should we believe her other legal opinions?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: To my colleague opposite: There's a difference between providing a legal opinion and providing a political opinion. I disagree with this particular person's political opinion that PPE funding shouldn't go to farmers. That's a political opinion. I disagree with that political opinion. It doesn't mean I'm not going to respect that particular lawyer's legal opinion on the constitutionality of Bill 156, where this lawyer and 44 others signed a letter outlining the constitutional problems with this bill.

In addition, we had legal professors come to committee, outlining the constitutional problems under section 2, specifically, of the charter that this bill likely results in. The legal battles that are going to result from this bill I believe will hurt farmers and undermine the purpose of the bill.

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

Mr. Jamie West: I thank the member opposite for his comments. Recently, we had someone who previously worked in the legal profession, and we have someone who came from a farm. I think it's a good opportunity to talk about what we've been saying again and again about the importance of protecting farmers and feeling safe in their home, but also protecting farmers from legal challenges

and other constitutional challenges and the damage that does to their profession and the perception people have of hard-working farmers. Is that something that you can maybe comment on and try to explain?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate the member's question. What I would say is that I had really hoped that we would have all-party support for this bill, because what I heard from some of the official opposition members and what people heard from me is that we recognize that trespass laws are broken in Ontario when it comes to protecting farmers and processing facilities. I think all of us could have agreed on a bill that increased fines, which this bill does. I think most of us support that. I think all of us would support increasing law enforcement, maybe providing more resources to law enforcement to enforce the law. But the charter challenge that will result from this bill will undermine confidence in farming. We had UBC professors present such research, but I've also read a lot of other research from a variety of researchers across North America that has shown how this type of legislation actually undermines confidence in farming at a time when we need to increase confidence in farming.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: To the member from Guelph: We had a presenter come in who's part of this group of lawyers who wrote this letter who demonstrated in committee she had a distinct bias against some farmers. Does the member from Guelph not think that someone who admitted to having a bias against farmers would not have a bias when it comes to legislation for farmers?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you to my colleague for the question. Here's the bottom line, Speaker: We had numerous lawyers, 45 lawyers, submit a letter. We had law professors submit a letter. We had researchers who have done research into how this type of legislation has been struck down in the United States and then had a negative effect on the perception of farmers, unfortunately. This isn't just one legal opinion. This is numerous legal opinions.

In addition to the lawyers, we had organizations representing journalists talk about the constitutionality problems of this law, particularly as it relates to whistleblower protections and investigative journalism.

The member can try to disparage the reputation or the credibility of one particular witness; that's fair enough. But the overwhelming number of other legal opinions—

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

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to the speaker opposite for his points. I think he echoed a lot of the comments that were made by the member from Brampton East as well as the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane in the sense that this bill, which is titled "protecting farmers"—and I'm glad we had committee. I'm glad people were able to come in and actually speak their minds, because there were a lot of positives and negatives, and that's what democracy should be.

My question is, when you hear feedback, when you have amendments, when you have good amendments, why didn't the government make these amendments that would have actually protected farmers in every way possible, especially in the constitutional sense that the member from Brampton East so eloquently pointed out?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Thank you to the member for the question. I certainly can't pretend to understand what the government's thinking is on this, to be honest with you. I wish I knew, because, again, I supported and voted in favour of the purpose of this bill, spoke in favour of the purpose of this bill. I would have loved to work with the government to work out a way to produce a bill that would protect farmers and food processors, that would strengthen trespass laws, increase fines for trespassing, but do it in a way that protects people's charter rights and protects farmers from a charter challenge. Why we were unable to ultimately reach that balance—and I feel like a number of the amendments I put forward would have reached that balance—you'll have to ask the members opposite in the next round of questions.

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

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to ask the member about the whistle-blower component of it, and I think that's the part that our members have pointed out as well, talking about the constitutional rights of every citizen, but also farmers. What the member from Sudbury pointed out—such an important point—was: Are we actually protecting the farmers? Are we making laws that are actually going to be held up in the courts? I want to hear the member's point of view on that.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, I'm deeply concerned about the way in which this bill violates whistle-blower protections. We did hear from Humane Canada, which is the humane societies, essentially. They were strong proponents of the PAWS Act, which the government passed and I believe we all voted for, if I'm not mistaken. But they came to committee and they were concerned that a worker who works at a facility, is gainfully employed, been there for a year or two, they see some sort of animal abuse for the first time in two years and they report that animal abuse. You could even argue they have a duty to report that animal abuse under the PAWS Act. But they could be charged potentially as that being false pretenses, that maybe somehow they lied in their application, or somehow they got hired under some nefarious way. And so it would put a chill on that type of whistle-blowing, which I think is absolutely critical to a functioning democracy.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I wanted to thank the member for his statement today. It's great to have you on the Standing Committee on General Government. The government also loves working with you too.

My question for you is: You mention a lot about your experience in agriculture and how you come from a farming family. I would just be interested to know, from

the farmers in your area, and maybe also from your parents—do your parents, who have a farming background, believe that someone should be able to lie in order to get access to their property and livestock? What would your parents or the farmers in your riding think?

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I appreciate that. I just want to say that no farmer I know and nobody, I believe, in this Legislature believes in unlawful trespassing on farms. But I want to read to you the journalistic standards of the CBC. I want to quote: "When the investigation bears on illegal or anti-social behaviour or abuse of trust and the gathering of information of public interest, the journalist may need to infiltrate an organization to get first-hand information." That's journalistic standards. That's what a democracy is based on: the ability to inform the public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Further debate? I recognize the member from Hastings-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair there today.

First, today, though, what I would like to do is offer an editorial observation. At a time when we're still in the midst of the most significant health crisis in the history of Ontario and Canada, in our life-and-death battle, literally, against COVID-19, it's difficult to understand the rationale of those who want to excuse anybody, at any time, to meddle with or interfere or harm any part of our food supply. Yet that is exactly what the few but vocal critics of Bill 156 are advocating for.

I will remind the Legislature, through the Speaker—and I'm thankful for the members of the opposition at this point, when we received all-party support at second reading. I'm certainly hoping they will be as charitable when the third reading comes around.

But how deep is the opposition now? After the testimony that I heard, it appears shallow in many ways. For such important legislation to be obstructed just because some speakers are playing to a sliver of activist contrarians they hope to gain as supporters—shameful. And not only that, but it's just bad politics in a time of serious pain in this province in every sector, including agriculture, which currently has crops that it can't find workers to either plant or even harvest.

But of course, professional agitators have to earn their agitating funding. Their funding depends on how many people they can upset and how much they can engage the protest movement to keep their credentials of obstruction up to date—apparently, no matter the harm, the cause or the law broken or the immorality of their mission.

I will note before proceeding that as the Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on General Government, I listened intently, with many of my colleagues, to many, many hours of Zoom meetings on this bill, with many witnesses of different persuasion. With respect for all members on this committee, both government and opposition, I did hear and I will admit that no member made sense in advocating for breaking the law and trespassing. For that, I'm appreciative.

Now, in another lifetime, in addition to serving a lifetime in business, I also served as an investigator in the Ontario Provincial Police. One of my main responsibilities was to carry out investigations of theft, vandalism, break-and-enter. All of them literally included trespassing, and it was never okay, because at that time, there was always a victim. It was never okay that a mother was home alone with her children, who were traumatized by prowlers, as we heard directly in committee.

It was never okay that vehicles in apartment garages were broken open and emptied of valuables or just loose change saved to feed the parking meter for the day. That's not okay. It was never okay that hunters ignored "no trespassing" signs and fired their guns on or beside pasture lands under the guise of supposedly deer hunting. That's not okay.

What is trespassing, though? It is a wilful act against the rights of another person, one carried out in most cases under false pretenses, with deceit and/or disrespect for anyone other than the perpetrator's self-interest, despite the howling claims that we hear after he or she is caught.

Yet I can tell you that every victim of a personal crime knows what it's like to have one's personal space invaded. Let us remember that most farms are also the homes of these people, where they do business, where they raise a family, and they grow or cultivate food for all of us. Can you imagine your home, your house, all of a sudden entered illegally? Would you tolerate that? Well, invasion of personal space is a crime, and I can tell you that it sticks with the victims—I can tell you that personally—even if they're physically unhurt. The criminals don't really care who or how they harm, in many, many cases.

The critics who casually dismiss trespassing because they or their thoughts are singularly more important than the trauma that they inflict on farmers and their families—I really believe that they're trying to mislead the public on this issue. It's a false, false statement; false intent. They clearly do not care that there are long-standing and successful safety protocols in place for our primary food producers, who are now to be protected even further by Bill 156.

I almost casually would say of these same protesters: Are they the same people today who don't wash their hands, who ignore supermarket lines and arrows, or sneeze and cough in crowded areas? That's simply not acceptable. Well, neither are their actions. It's time for responsible actions, and I'm sorry if I did trample on some of their sensitivity, but that's the reality, folks.

The real reality is, no one is talking about food safety and biosecurity except the farming community—that's how importantly critical it is in this time—and the people who work with them, to keep our food supply safe because, you know something? Farmers know safety protocols inside and out. That's their job. That's their responsibility. That's their passion. These animals are very important to them. They know that their livelihoods depend on the good health and the freedom from disease that these animals show to buyers, to various government inspectors and, of course, to consumers.

We all know that dairy farmers have extremely valuable herds of cows and/or goats. Beef farmers: once again, significant capital investment in facilities geared to keeping their bovines fed and warm and safe from disease, away from predators such as coyotes and wolves. And, of course, our poultry and chicken farmers, who are required by legislation, as we've seen, to build temperature- and fresh-air-controlled barns and to meet rigorous guidelines of which I will even speak in more depth later on in my comments today.

We all recognize that swine and poultry are extremely sensitive to viruses—extremely sensitive to viruses. One intrusion, as we've seen, can cause the destruction of hundreds, even thousands, of animals or birds.

But these critics simply do not care about trespassing legislation, some of which, as we know, is older than the province itself. Nor do they appear to care that one of the responsibilities of farmers is to keep four-legged predators away from their animals and birds. Sometimes this does require animal help in the form of dogs, and we've even seen donkeys—there isn't a wolf who likes a donkey—but sometimes using barbed wire or electrified fences or other means to keep people safe, but also to keep vehicles safe from them, so that they're not going to be going onto our highways or back roads and a vehicle running into them.

So it's sad, then, to see a few two-legged misguided humans who believe otherwise and who believe that their actions supersede human and public safety, that two wrongs make a right, who threaten livestock with their wrongdoings and believe their illegal acts are justified.

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Yes, it's the lives of more than the flock or herd here that are at stake. All of these farmers, as we know, work every day, every minute of every day, many, many long hours—it's not an eight-hour day, being a farmer—to keep their flocks and herds safe from attack by predators and, as I said, also safe from diseases and illnesses that can destroy a farmer's life or livelihood in one fell swoop and really threaten our food supply.

That's why all of these operations, under today's regulatory control, have strict limited access and tight requirements on all people, enabled by health protocols, to enter their premises. So, yes, all kinds of activities—changes of clothes, hot water showers. There are many, many restrictions, of course, in place—and now on those even quarantined in a similar matter under COVID-19. We see that milk truck drivers are restricted in their access. Their milk tanker trucks are carefully washed daily. The routes are carefully considered so they don't introduce problems or even spread them further.

The owners and the employees on farms—pork farms and poultry farms—submit to the kind of cleaning that surgeons in some hospitals would admire and respect. I've seen it first-hand, Mr. Speaker. They have special sprays after they've changed their footwear, they have special protective clothing, and they wear masks. Literally, the hygiene is nothing short of incredible because, as we know, as I mentioned earlier, pigs and fowl are very

sensitive to infections and are treated in most cases, as they should be, like a valuable treasure, which they are.

I was in the farm machinery business and implementation business at one time and know first-hand that service providers such as veterinarians are all subject to these tough protocols. Trespassers are not. They follow no guidelines or rules, except their own conscience, which in this case I say is severely misguided. Their respect for animals and other humans stops at the farm gate or as they surreptitiously crawl on their bellies through fields and forests. I know that might sound insane, but yes, it actually has happened and does happen—how shameful is that—because they’ve been caught doing it. Or as they storm farm properties and vehicles, confident in the knowledge that, of course, they’re always right. But as we know, they’re not.

Trespassers on farms have been responsible for all of the things that Bill 156 will now protect. That’s the *raison d’être* for this bill. They, due to their actions, are causing us to respond in a manner that deserves the respect of this House and certainly provides the results for our farmers. That is not just a simple academic thesis, because self-righteous trespassers have been caught in barns; breaking into food storage areas; and damaging locked gates and cages, which protect animals from predators and occasionally even from each other as well. They’ve been caught—caught outright—interfering with farm animal transportation, putting the animals, the drivers, the handlers and themselves at risk. They’ve been caught providing false ID, showing the devious and premeditated planning that goes into their illegal actions. That’s why Bill 156 will establish and enforce animal protection zones.

They have also been caught on fraud, getting access to barns, yards and plants by providing false witness as to their person and their intent; for example, in pretending to be a food inspector. Bill 156 will void any consent for access granted under false pretenses, as it should, and it will make all visitors to a farm, processing facility or related conveyance of their responsibility to provide legitimate proof on the spot that consent was granted for their presence.

Bill 156 will increase fines for trespass on food production properties and make the trespasser financially liable for damages to property. You say, “What?” Well, I say, “Finally, a level of accountability.” Nothing is just free in life, with unfettered damages; they just acted willy-nilly. They’re going to have to pay the price now. It’s no wonder the perpetrators and their shallow supporters were upset; now they’re finally going to be held accountable. Finally, Bill 156 gives our food processors what they’ve always deserved: financial restitution; immunity from damage claims; and increased time limitations to press charges, from six months to two years.

All farm animals enjoy something priceless because of their value to farmers, to the public. What do animals give? To supply nourishment for us, they give their life. But they’re given the opportunity, under good husbandry, to live, to live well, to enjoy their life. We all talk about the value of life, but too often it’s just lip service. Well,

farmers make farm lives happen and work 24/7 to keep those lives healthy.

Farmers aren’t alone now. The modern-day farm isn’t what we’d expect out of an 1840s vignette, when Ontario was called Canada West. Back then, farmers were on their own. The local doctor might know how to use horse liniment, saw bones, do basic animal doctoring, but he was no veterinarian, and he might never have visited a farm in that capacity. Back then, farmers were more or less on their own, with their families, to keep animals healthy and fed, so that, correspondingly, they would be healthy and fed. The responsibility was still there, but not the means. Today, that 1840s farmhouse might still serve as the family farm hub, but a lot of things have changed. There are a lot of visitors to every farm, and they perform a lot of functions and roles. That’s why a bad farmer can’t hide bad practices—not in today’s world, where trespassers claim it’s their right to police as animal vigilantes. It’s not acceptable.

Consider this: On an average farm, Monday might be the building inspector—does the roof leak, are the beams solid, does the manure tank meet structural standards?

Tuesday might be when the local health unit drops in, unannounced, with a list of things to be checked: temperatures on the coolers, sanitation for the animals, has there been a proper flow and hygiene, are masks worn, are clothes changed, are there clean showers for the personnel so that diseases can’t enter or leave the premises, are there too many insects—and it goes on and on.

On Wednesday morning, it might be the farm inspector—John, I think you could well recognize that—and on Wednesday afternoon, it could be the electrical inspector.

Of course, there are livestock inspectors and insurance inspectors and environment inspectors, and the list goes on and on. There are always inspectors upon inspectors coming by, usually unannounced.

There is a true level of multiple levels of accountability. So it’s really challenging and almost impossible to hide animal abuse and substandard facilities from all these professionals in today’s world. This isn’t the 1840s. The veterinarian is a specialist now. The peer pressure from their colleagues is incredible for farmers caring for their flocks and their herds. No right-thinking operator condones bad operators. That’s why the many inspection regimes exist—to protect the farmers, their farms and the public.

What’s often missed in this swirl of self-righteous activism is that everyone has a right to a safe workplace. It’s especially true for farmers, where home and work are often one and the same.

The people of Ontario, though, should also have the assurance that they will continue to have steady access to some of the safest, highest-quality food in the world.

We rely on our farmers and the food processors to work hard every day to keep our food supply chain strong, to keep food on store shelves and kitchen tables for the people of Ontario. It’s essential that we protect them.

Do people have the right to participate in legal protests? Absolutely. But this does not include trespassing on farms or interfering with the transportation of livestock.

We've heard many concerns from farmers who are frustrated that there's not enough to ensure that unauthorized trespassing is addressed. That's why we have put this bill forward—to create protections for farmers, livestock and Ontario's food supply.

If passed, this legislation would provide the necessary deterrents: fines of \$15,000 for a first offence and \$25,000 for subsequent offences—no more slaps on the wrist; no more meaningless legislation. It allows the courts to consider aggravating factors when determining the appropriate fine—and that's the point: It's left to the courts to determine. It allows the courts to issue a restitution order, requiring the trespasser to pay restitution for damages caused. It increases protection for our farmers, for owners, drivers—civil liability. As well, it protects people who are visiting, given the responsibility that they have—demonstrating, of course, that there was no intent for harm to the trespasser or the farmer.

Our government has heard the concerns of farmers. We're committed to food safety. As I said, this is first and foremost about protecting Ontario's food supply and about protecting farmers.

1710

Following biosecurity protocols is essential to ensure that Ontario has a steady supply of safe food. Interference in this process simply puts farmers and our food supply at risk—especially crucial during this time when farmers and food processors are coming in to work every day, as we've seen, during this crisis to ensure that the integrity of our food supply remains strong.

So yes, we've consulted widely, heard many round table meetings with various stakeholders. I know that a few months ago, pre-COVID, I participated in a round table directly with the Minister of Agriculture and a group of farmers in my riding, hearing first-hand—first-hand—the challenges and problems they face. We heard story after story about the threats, damages and risk to animals, farmers and their families created by trespassers. It was compelling to hear these unscripted, first-person accounts of what they face and of the fear that they face daily as they go about their simple farm chores. It was clear that something needed to be done. That's why Bill 156 is here today before us, because we have a responsibility as a government to listen to the people and to act on their behalf.

I can tell you that over 130 municipalities have supported our council resolutions. We've received hundreds of letters on this. Let me summarize my remarks by saying that support for Bill 156—a piece of legislation that's long overdue for the protection of our food supply and for the protection of the people who work daily to provide it to us.

As we have witnessed this spring, our food supply and our agri-food growers worked and processed, indeed. They provide essential services, and Bill 156 treats them as essential, which they are. Thanks from the bottom of

our hearts to all of those producers. As we've seen on many, many signs today, if you ate today, thank a farmer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): And our thanks to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington for his contributions for the past 20 minutes. We now have up to 10 minutes for questions and responses. I turn to the member from University–Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you for the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington for your presentation. I listened carefully.

When I was listening to members speak about what came up in committee, one thing really struck me, and that was comments raised by the head of the Chiefs of Ontario, RoseAnne Archibald, and her concern that we do not want a situation when we have another Colten Boushie, someone who was killed unfairly and wrongly in a situation on a farm. What is this government going to do to make sure we don't have a repeat of that kind of instance?

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I thank the honourable member for that question. Quite frankly, it clearly illustrates the purpose of this Legislature. The comments put forward by Chief Archibald were very important. The government has recognized that, and in respect for opposition members who have supported the comments as well, the government has accepted and recognized all of the comments by Chief Archibald and they are included as amendments into this legislation.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: During committee, we heard from a number of different people who talked about how important it was for them to gain access to farm properties so they could see things. A number of them believed and outright said that it was their right to be able to go onto farm property, that they couldn't hold their protest on public property out front; they had to gain access to the farm to protest.

If it wasn't the farm, if it was someone's home, would it be acceptable for anyone to just trespass on because they thought it was their right to protest on your personal property?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I thank the member for Peterborough, my neighbouring member, for that question. I can recall many, many years ago, when I was involved in the legal profession, I got some great advice from a senior officer. At that point, he said, "Recognize that a man's home is his castle." The primacy of your own residence is incredibly important for the preservation and safety of society itself.

On most occasions, these farms are their home too. It's their private residence. Quite frankly, nobody has the right to intrude on someone else's property uninvited. And yet, on the other hand, I can say that I don't know a farmer who wouldn't welcome people onto their land and/or property. They're proud of what they have, to see what they have, to tell their story about what they are producing, the value of it to man and society. Quite frankly, from first-hand

knowledge of the people who I have dealt with over all of these many, many years in the agricultural community, they're not only deserving of that credit but were thankful for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. And if the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington could put his earpiece down as opposed to holding it by the mike, as it does cause feedback which drives people in the booth a little bit crazy. Thank you.

Further questions?

Mr. Jamie West: I also want to thank the member for Hastings–Lennox and Addington. I really listened intently to everything you said. I thought you made a great argument about trespassing. I think we 100% agree and have said several times on this side about the importance of protecting farmers from trespassing.

I think the difficulty we have with supporting this is the legal and charter challenges. What we have here is what you'd call a “yes, and” conversation: yes, we have to protect people from trespassing; and how do we do it without causing legal and charter challenges that cause difficulties for farmers? Because we want to protect farmers all the way around. That's my question to you.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I thank the member for that question. It almost illustrates a little lack of awareness of the responsibilities of governance. I recognize that the member is a member of the opposition and maybe at some point would hope to be a member of the government. I can appreciate that. But I can assure you, from having served in government many times, the government does not unilaterally decide that this is what's going to happen. Governments have access to huge batteries of legal advisers who, on each and every piece of legislation, go through it time and time again, and not just once or twice. So to suggest that the government just put forward legislation without any legal advice and would just leave it subject to a simple challenge—quite frankly, governments depend on the legal advice that they have. That, of course, is why they have, I would almost suggest to say, almost, maybe, too many on staff. But I'll leave that for another occasion for people to discuss because I don't want to insult the legal—

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's very enjoyable to listen to the very passionate speech from the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington. I've mentioned before in previous comments that I've always lived in big cities, and so I really admire people—it's not an easy life, certainly, to live in rural Ontario and to manage a farm. I'm just imagining what I was told by the Solicitor General when I was first elected. She spoke about people just coming to have a picnic on private property. They saw a big field and they said, “Ah, we'll pull our car over,” and then they would leave all their litter. So it's this type of complete disregard for private property.

A farm isn't just private property. It's a working, a functioning, a factory, equipment—with liability, with live animals, and with pets and children. What I would ask

the member is: Is there any concern when people come onto the property, if there's a family pet, that that dog, maybe, would attack people? Have there been concerns raised on that?

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

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I thank the member—and yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll toss the mike aside.

Yes, we've all seen situations—or maybe I shouldn't say that we all have seen, because many in this House might not have seen or had the opportunity to be on farms to see where people come in. I don't even say that they wilfully trespass, but sometimes they're just unaware of the realities of the responsibilities that the agricultural community has. A simple fence might not appear to be a problem, but if an animal gets out and then strikes a car and people get hurt or killed or maimed—that would be just one small example. But you can have cross-breeding take place. You can have a poultry operation that if someone were to just walk in, unannounced, as a guest, they can do hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of damage just simply with the intrusion of viruses. There's literally hundreds of potential opportunities for contamination and/or for dangers—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I listened to the member from Hastings–Lennox and Addington's comments on this legislation. I have to say that I still am deeply concerned about the restrictions around whistle-blowers.

1720

Earlier today, we heard references to Fiera Foods and the kind of really important investigative journalism and whistle-blowing that literally, hopefully, one day will save lives, if we can actually make sure that these stories get out. The member opposite has, I'm sure, worked with Crime Stoppers and other organizations like that. These are important organizations. They do important work. Really, this is what whistle-blowers do. I wonder if the member opposite has considered those issues.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I thank the member for that. As a matter of fact, I'm a strong advocate for whistle-blowers. I've seen them do a tremendous amount of good. But two wrongs don't make a right. A whistle-blower should also go through regular channels. As an example, if you want to go into some particular area, whether you're an official and/or if you're an investigative reporter—a reporter could ask for a warrant. A service operator could ask for a warrant. They could ask for an inspection with any multitude of agencies that deal with that. You don't have to break a law to protect a law. I think that's a simple matter of reality.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member across the way, I think what was clear listening to both sides of the House is that both parties agree on the idea that we need to deal with trespassers. That's something that we all agree on, and I think our critic and others have pointed it out. The issue here is that of whistle-blowers. Part of the system and

how we find out if something is wrong is for somebody to come forward. So I just want to ask, as somebody—as it was raised earlier—who has worked with a type of organization, Crime Stoppers, do you not think that whistle-blowers can actually help make sure that the industry is operating the way that it should? Because 99% of them do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, you have 20 seconds to answer, the member from Hastings—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: I think I've already responded to this question. Whistle-blowers play a role, but you cannot break the law to enforce the law. In this particular case, whistle-blowers have plenty of opportunities to, I suppose, relay information, to ask questions, to ascertain, to go to various departments and agencies to seek that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Haldimand—Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Chair. Give me a second. I appreciate the opportunity—I didn't realize it was coming up so soon. The opportunity in this case is to address the legislation before us, the Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act. I'm very proud to be part of Ernie Hardeman's team, along with our parliamentary assistant, Randy Pettapiece, and be part of these efforts to deliver real protection to Ontario farm families from the risks and the dangers of trespassing. I'm very pleased that the bill has passed through second reading. We've had public hearings and we're now into third reading debate.

As I say, I've supported this approach from the outset. I have a farm background. I've also had a number of jobs in the food processing industry as well. I sincerely believe we've taken and made every effort to listen to people and listen to stakeholders in crafting this bill, and we've all heard from people in our ridings and right across the province. I feel we've learned a great deal, and I heard this time and again when we were going through several days of public hearings. I think that MPPs on all sides recognize that some complex issues can come up. At minimum, I think we all agree—very, very interesting stuff. We felt it was equally important that our colleagues in the Legislature participate and learn from the stakeholders and what they said during these public hearings. There's really no substitution for hearing directly from people and hearing about their experiences, whether it's in person or online, virtually, as we discovered last week during the hearings.

We share a common goal. It's to implement legislation that will provide that balance that we're striving for in our deliberations, in crafting this legislation yet to be passed—a balance between, obviously, the rights of people to participate in lawful process and the rights of Ontario farm families to feel safe in their businesses, on their farms and in their homes.

People in Ontario support farmers. They support the great work that farmers do. They bring hundreds and hundreds of home-grown products to our tables. Really, through this legislation and certainly what has occurred over the last three, going on four, months—I guess the first

case of COVID was on January 25—we've come to appreciate the essential work of agri-business and those in the business: our farmers and those who truck the product around the province. We depend on them for our food, for our fibre. We want to support them in any way we can to better enable them to continue to do their good work. One way to support them is to have legislation that provides added protection for their safety and the safety of their animals. It's especially true during the coronavirus outbreak. You'll hardly find a person who hasn't wondered if they will be able to find products on the grocery store shelves.

Throughout this pandemic, this entire province has relied on farmers to ensure that, despite all the difficulties, the dangers, there is food on the table. The life of a farmer is hard enough, and farmers, as have many others, have been particularly hard hit by what has been going on over the last three or four months. They have to take safety precautions just like anybody else, but like all essential workers, farmers do not have the liberty to self-isolate. They do not have the liberty to stop working. The work of a farmer is never done.

Ontario's agri-food industry has dealt with a number of problems—most recently and in particular, labour-intensive agriculture is dealing with labour shortages, problems with processing capacity and difficulties in getting product to market.

I'd like to read an excerpt that was submitted by Dairy Farmers of Ontario to our committee process: "We want to emphasize Bill 156 affords the same protections from trespass for farmers and food processing facilities that is afforded to other businesses. Bill 156 merely explicitly codifies the current, existing rights with respect to trespass." I agree with that statement. It simply means that farmers should have the exact same right as anyone else in going about their business.

If our province is ready to stand with essential workers, it should be ready to stand with its farmers and with those who process its food. Unfortunately, there are people in the province of Ontario who do not feel this way. While we respect the right of anyone to make their voice heard and to express their views, for some of those people, doing so—protesting—requires putting farmers, food processors, food safety and oftentimes farm animals themselves at risk. That's the primary reason we are bringing forward Bill 156.

I'd like to quote in part from another written submission to the committee. It's from Food and Beverage Ontario: "Many of these people are exposed to the same kind of risks that our other front-line heroes are experiencing. Their selfless commitment to provide safe and healthy food for Ontario families should and must be celebrated. There has not been a time since the Second World War that the potential risk to our food supply has been greater. Your government realized that food security across the full value chain was critical to avoid a secondary health crisis and you acted quickly to recognize our sector as a key essential workplace. The introduction of Bill 156 is a similar acknowledgment, and an understanding that food

security in Ontario is tremendously important to keeping all of us healthy.”

1730

For anyone, the thought of strangers showing up on your property or in your house is frightening, and for Ontario farmers, that fear is a story all too real for them and their families every day in this province. Farmers live in fear that trespassers will enter their property and cause unknown harm to them, their families, their farm animals and their livelihood. In the past couple of months, we’ve had the opportunity to hear from many of these farmers and food processors and others who have been impacted by trespassing, and I’m sad to say that even during this outbreak, many farmers continue to face these exact same problems.

A case in point—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Opposition members, I’m having trouble hearing. Thank you.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Just a point I would like to make: During the last two months—I own a farm—I’ve been burglarized twice. My vehicle, right in front of my front door—and I live out in the sticks. There are no streetlights, of course. It was organized: a crew, one vehicle, and probably three people went through my car and spread everything all over. I didn’t really notice it at first because I have everything spread all over my car anyway. That’s the nature of a lot of MPPs’ cars. I will say, I do clean out my car every year or so, whether it needs it or not. So that’s a bit of an intrusion—not that I’m worried about my car. They didn’t steal the car, and down my way, you don’t drive a car you can’t afford to walk away from. It’s one of the rules, if you see some of my vehicles.

It was only a month later—I’m in partnership with a commercial beekeeper; we’ve got about a million bees. Again, right in front of our house, lo and behold—and this caught me off guard. This was organized. There is a market for stolen bees. A truck came across the back field, just at the right time, just before we seeded, when it was dry—we’ve had a wet spring—and walked off with about 100,000 bees, and maybe four to six queens, which are valuable. That’s the business that he’s in.

So just in the last two months: trespassers twice on my property. We lost value—completely oblivious to it, and it’s unfortunate that we now have a lot more—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I’m sorry to interrupt. The member from Timmins and the member from University–Rosedale: About 10 times today I was going to bring you to order. I haven’t done so, but I’m telling you now: Knock it off so I can hear what’s going on here. Thank you very much.

I return now to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Our farmers, our food businesses work hard to look after their animals, to look after the quality and the safety of our food.

I’ve grown up with livestock—hogs, chickens. We had broilers and laying hens. I had a hatching egg flock. We

had sheep, Shropshires—it’s a breed that’s kind of oblivious now—and we milked cows.

I also worked in the food business. I worked for Coca-Cola. I do drink Diet Pepsi, as a lot of people know, but I did work for Coca-Cola. I worked for American Can, I worked for Culverhouse Canning, and I worked for the Norfolk fruit growers.

I feel that this kind of legislation is very important. During my career in farming and agri-business, very rarely was I aware of an intrusion, somebody breaking in or any of my co-workers showing up with a falsified resumé to try and do something to the company. When you work for somebody, you’re loyal to that brand. You ride for that brand—certainly the organizations that I’ve worked for. In all of those enterprises that I worked for and a number farms, including our own farm, you learn procedures; you learn policies. It’s almost unsaid how to do things, partly for the safety of everybody and just to make sure you make a bit of money as well. So we all follow procedures to prevent, in this case, particularly, the spread of disease, the spread of pests on agricultural premises. These processes are really key to successful agriculture—procedures that are followed everywhere, really, where you find livestock, to keep the animals healthy and to keep the food safe.

We’ve all become savvier in understanding the rules of stopping the spread of diseases over the last little while. I would venture to say that most of the people in Ontario now know the basic steps to follow to prevent the spread of coronavirus and to protect themselves. For many farmers, these kinds of principles are inherent in the nature of their work. It’s part of the day-to-day regimen. You can summarize it with the words “biosecurity protocols”—very important for their operations and very important for the health of their animals.

Their farm business depends on those principles and protocols being followed to the letter. For example, you go to great lengths to quarantine animals, if they’re sick, to protect the rest of the herd or the flock. You take great care not to introduce contamination in the barns. You wash your hands. You change, washing your boots and your clothes. You don’t visit other farms that that are involved in the same livestock commodity, and you don’t let anybody else enter the barn without following proper biosecurity protocol.

The last hog barn I was in, a modern hog barn in my riding, you show up at the front of the barn and there’s a large side window, like a takeout window, where you report in, where business can be done and, if need be, where you have to enter the barn. I was invited to enter, so I went around to the side. I had to take all my clothes off and have a hot shower, and then they gave me a fresh set of clothes. When the family and their associated workers enter the barn, they spend all day in the barn rather than going through that shower process a couple of times a day. They have a full-size kitchen right in the barn, just to give you the extent of how crucial it is to not have interlopers or foreign antibodies or people coming into an operation like that.

You know, I always think about our hospitals. I've gone in and out of hospitals and long-term-care facilities over the years. You don't take your clothes off; you don't have a shower. The biosecurity on a hog farm at the entrances is far superior to any of our hospitals or long-term-care facilities. That's how important it is to not have unauthorized people kicking around.

I've got another quote here, from the dairy farmers:

"Delivering safe and quality food is of critical importance to Ontario's food supply chain and to Ontarians' confidence in the high quality of food that they consume.

"One thing that the COVID-19 pandemic has made clear is that Canadians are, not surprisingly, reliant on a safe, secure, consistent supply chain. Instilling confidence that our food supply chain has not been tampered with; that strict biosecurity measures are in place to protect Canadians must be of the highest priority."

Again, we should always remember that trespassing is not just one action or a form of protest. It can have far-reaching and very serious consequences for farmers, for their animals and for our supply chain.

Our farmers care deeply about their animals that they raise, and the province has laws to protect those animals. There is no place for mistreatment of animals in Ontario. Our government has a zero tolerance for animal abuse in the province of Ontario. As we would recall recently, that's why we passed tough new legislation, the PAWS legislation, the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act.

PAWS now gives Ontario the toughest penalties in Canada for people convicted of animal abuse. Provincial PAWS inspectors are the people best suited to investigate and best suited to protect the welfare of farm animals in Ontario when abuse is suspected. They're trained. They know the importance of following the biosecurity protocols I was talking about. They know what to look for in terms of animal abuse, and as well, they know how to behave around animals. By and large, trespassers do not have this kind of training; they do not have these skills.

1740

We heard on committee that investigative journalists should have the right to go into processing facilities and to go into livestock operations, it was argued, to fulfill the need to keep an eye on things. Well, we have government for a reason. We have trained government inspectors, most recently under this PAWS legislation, to do that kind of work.

Speaker, I've been given the hook, and I would like to wrap up at this point. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Let the record show that it wasn't the Speaker who gave you the hook.

We now have time for 10 minutes of questions and responses. The member for University-Rosedale.

Ms. Jessica Bell: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, also, to the MPP for Haldimand-Norfolk for your presentation. It was useful that you raised the value of inspectors and their role in making sure our farms meet the standards that they need to meet.

I do want to address some of the concerns that we have around the whistle-blowing legislation in Bill 156 and how it limits the ability of whistle-blowers to do what they need to do to keep our workplaces safe. What comes to mind is that situation at Fiera Foods, where a Toronto Star reporter went and worked at Fiera Foods to identify some of the workplace abuses that were happening there. It also brings to mind the need to make sure that there are no disease outbreaks in farms. What steps is your government going to take to protect whistle-blowers?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Our society—certainly, in more recent decades, major corporations, who maybe have made mistakes by not respecting the principle of whistle-blowing and have paid the price, have paid the price financially. As in our society and our corporate world, and with respect to our government, we respect the right for a valid, competent, rational legal system of whistle-blowing to bring out information that may not be available anywhere else. In this case—and I think of the PAWS legislation, which, from my understanding, was certainly very well received down my way and certainly very well received by the horse people. We have government for a reason. We have people who can come in and also—

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, to the honourable member from Haldimand-Norfolk: There was talk about trespassing. Of course, down in my riding, I've had issues with trespassers on hog farms, trespassers on beef farms, trespassers even on mink farms, and I talked about that earlier as well. The activists, I believe, are really pushing their own agenda here regarding trespassing laws in the province. Do people have a right to protest? The answer to that is yes, they do, but not when it infringes upon the health and safety of a farmer's home, a farmer's family's safety. That's just not right.

My question to the honourable member from Haldimand-Norfolk is simply this: Regarding trespassing, what does this bill do that was not covered under the Trespass to Property Act? Could you elaborate on that for me just a bit more, please?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Gosh, that's a little specific, the question. Thank you, colleague.

We do have the Trespass to Property Act. I'm not a lawyer, but the principles behind that go way back. I don't know. I think yesterday was the anniversary of the Magna Carta: June 15, 1215. The basic—

Interjection: You remember that?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I do remember that very well. The basic tenets of our parliamentary democracy and, obviously, the right of the individual to not have the king's men come in on the property—and that gets into that whole debate of warrantless entry. In this case, by extension, I would assume that also prevents anybody else from having the right of entering one's castle or one's property.

This does go beyond the Trespass to Property Act, with certain specific—

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

Ms. Marit Stiles: I listened with interest to the comments by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk on Bill 156. I was reflecting, in the discussion about whistle-blowers, on comments made earlier by one of the other government members—that whistle-blowers are okay as long as they go through proper channels. And just now, I heard the member say, with respect to the rights of whistle-blowers, “That’s great. We approve of a whistle-blower system.”

It’s not a system. The entire point of a whistle-blower is that it’s somebody, often a worker, who just says, “I saw something really bad go down here, and it’s going to mean that the food we’re providing is going to be unsafe, or that workers are going to be hurt or killed on the job.” That’s what it is.

So I wonder—and I’m repeating, to some extent, the question that my colleague just asked—what is this government going to do to protect whistle-blowers?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We discussed this earlier. I understand that there are the protections for whistle-blowers—and partly defended in the court of public opinion, from what corporations have learned over the last several decades. But under this legislation, it would not be legal to be a whistle-blower under false pretenses, to have a plan to get hired on at a food processing plant, an abattoir—provincially inspected or federally inspected—not with the intent of making a career out of cutting meat, for example, but to look for abuse.

Quite honestly—and I think society backs us on this—you should not get a job by false pretenses; you should not get a job by telling a lie.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I’m going to read something that was from a constituent of mine. She’s a dairy farmer, and she was talking about Bill 156. She said, “So you see, this new bill is not meant to eliminate the importance of protecting animals who are not properly cared for ... or to hide unethical farming practices. It is not meant to silence the rights of those who wish to speak out against the perceived injustices of an animal(s). It is meant to provide some security to the food chain. I would think that during this time in our history one would see just how important that truly is in light of how we are seeing the speed of transmission of how illnesses can move. Biosecurity ... simply means that animals can be susceptible to many outside influences and so we keep them in the safest housing based on the species.”

Would you agree with that statement?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: With respect to Dairy Farmers of Ontario—and I actually quoted several submissions from Dairy Farmers of Ontario. I have great respect for that very sophisticated organization. They do their research.

Dairy farmers know their animals. We milked dual-purpose Shorthorns—that was years ago; you can tell by

the name of that breed. If you do not look after your animals, you have problems with calving, you obviously have problems with milk production and you have problems with injury. Heaven forbid if someone else comes in who doesn’t know your herd. Floors can be slippery with manure, so if a stranger walks in, a cow would maybe jump or kick and perhaps injure itself. If there’s a stranger outside, the herd might come over out of curiosity and walk through an electric fence. They could be out on the road—

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

Mr. Guy Bourgoin: I want to thank the member for his presentation.

My question is—and my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, our critic, touched on it a little bit, but I haven’t heard very much this afternoon. It’s regarding how things can degenerate very quickly and police officers are not always at the doorstep. My question to the member is that, should things go south quickly and something serious—as we’ve seen in recent weeks, it can turn out pretty ugly. Should a situation like this happen, are farmers aware? And how does your plan protect them in a situation like this?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Many farms are isolated, but my neighbours are half a mile away. I have a number of personal experiences of interlopers on the farm, going way back when, of things we cannot do now, and this legislation tempers that. The principle of citizen’s arrest remains and is inculcated into part of this legislation, but this legislation also tempers that considerably so, as our former officer would know, where things don’t get out of hand.

I’ve conducted a citizen’s arrest; my wife has conducted a citizen’s arrest. I don’t advise it unless you’re very kind of laid-back and skilful, because things can go the wrong way. This legislation puts a lot of work on that and ensures that a citizen’s arrest does not get out of hand. You don’t chase somebody off the farm, for example.

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

Mr. Hardeman has moved third reading of 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. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, unless I receive a deferral slip—

Interjection: Ah, there you go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The bells will not ring.

Ms. Doly Begum: You’ve got two of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I’ve got two of them. Okay. I have a deferral slip, first from the government, which says to the Speaker from Lorne Coe, the chief government whip: “Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I respectfully request that the vote on third reading of 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 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, June 17, 2020."

And I have one from Teresa Armstrong, chief whip, official opposition: "Pursuant to standing order 30(h), I request that the vote on G156, Security from Trespass and Protecting Food Safety Act, 2020, be deferred."

So the vote will be deferred until—it doesn't say tomorrow, but at some point when deferred votes are next up in front of the House.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): I'm looking at the clock. I don't think there's any further business, unless somebody jumps up and says, "Further debate." Orders of the day?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): No further business. Therefore, this House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1753.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker
Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Valerie Quioic Lim, William Short
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Anand, Deepak (PC) | Mississauga—Malton | |
| Andrew, Jill (NDP) | Toronto—St. Paul's | |
| Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP) | London—Fanshawe | |
| Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC) | Wellington—Halton Hills | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| Arthur, Ian (NDP) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Baber, Roman (PC) | York Centre / York-Centre | |
| Babikian, Aris (PC) | Scarborough—Agincourt | |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia—Lambton | |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand—Norfolk | |
| Begum, Doly (NDP) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | |
| Bell, Jessica (NDP) | University—Rosedale | |
| Berns-McGown, Rima (NDP) | Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York | |
| Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC) | Pickering—Uxbridge | President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor |
| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Blais, Stephen (LIB) | Orléans | |
| Bouma, Will (PC) | Brantford—Brant | |
| Bourgouin, Guy (NDP) | Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James | |
| Burch, Jeff (NDP) | Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre | |
| Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC) | Markham—Stouffville | Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC) | Scarborough North / Scarborough-Nord | Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité |
| Cho, Stan (PC) | Willowdale | |
| Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC) | Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Coe, Lorne (PC) | Whitby | |
| Collard, Lucille (LIB) | Ottawa—Vanier | |
| Coteau, Michael (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Crawford, Stephen (PC) | Oakville | |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC) | Mississauga—Lakeshore | |
| Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte | Attorney General / Procureur général |
| Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille |
| Elliott, Hon. / L'hon. Christine (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé |
| Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC) | Nipissing | Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce |
| Fee, Amy (PC) | Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler | |
| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Waterloo | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|--|
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | |
| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC) | Kanata—Carleton | Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Ghamari, Goldie (PC) | Carleton | |
| Gill, Parm (PC) | Milton | |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gravelle, Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Hardeman, Hon. / L'hon. Ernie (PC) | Oxford | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Harden, Joel (NDP) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Harris, Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | |
| Hassan, Faisal (NDP) | York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston | |
| Hatfield, Percy (NDP) | Windsor—Tecumseh | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Hillier, Randy (IND) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Hogarth, Christine (PC) | Etobicoke—Lakeshore | |
| Horwath, Andrea (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle |
| Hunter, Mitzie (LIB) | Scarborough—Guildwood | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Solicitor General / Solliciteure générale |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Karahalios, Belinda C. (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | |
| Ke, Vincent (PC) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord | |
| Khanjin, Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Kramp, Daryl (PC) | Hastings—Lennox and Addington | |
| Kusendova, Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga- Centre | |
| Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| MacLeod, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa (PC) | Nepean | Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries / ministre des Industries du patrimoine, du sport, du tourisme et de la culture |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | |
| Mantha, Michael (NDP) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| Martow, Gila (PC) | Thornhill | |
| McDonell, Jim (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | |
| McKenna, Jane (PC) | Burlington | |
| McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC) | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences |
| Miller, Norman (PC) | Parry Sound—Muskoka | |
| Miller, Paul (NDP) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | |
| Mitas, Christina Maria (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough- Centre | |
| Monteith-Farrell, Judith (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | |
| Morrison, Suze (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
| Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC) | York—Simcoe | Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Natyshak, Taras (NDP) | Essex | |
| Nicholls, Rick (PC) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président |
| Oosterhoff, Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | |
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| Park, Lindsey (PC) | Durham | |
| Parsa, Michael (PC) | Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill | |
| Pettapiece, Randy (PC) | Perth—Wellington | |
| Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC) | Ajax | Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |
| Piccini, David (PC) | Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud | |
| Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) | Humber River—Black Creek | |
| Rasheed, Kaleed (PC) | Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | |
| Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC) | Kenora—Rainy River | Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines / Ministre de l'Énergie, du Développement du Nord et des Mines Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones |
| Roberts, Jeremy (PC) | Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa- Ouest—Nepean | |
| Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités |
| Sabawy, Sheref (PC) | Mississauga—Erin Mills | |
| Sandhu, Amarjot (PC) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC) | Brampton South / Brampton-Sud | Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associé délégué au dossier des Petites Entreprises et de la Réduction des formalités administratives Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Schreiner, Mike (GRN) | Guelph | |
| 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 | |
| Stiles, Marit (NDP) | Davenport | |
| Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | Associate Minister of Transportation (GTA) / Ministre associée des Transports (RGT) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto—Danforth | |
| Tangri, Nina (PC) | Mississauga—Streetsville | |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain | |
| Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC) | Scarborough—Rouge Park | |
| Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC) | Huron—Bruce | Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs |
| Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC) | Vaughan—Woodbridge | Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille |
| Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC) | Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington | |
| Vanthof, John (NDP) | Timiskaming—Cochrane | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |

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

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Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chair / Président: John Vanthof
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Will Bouma, Lorne Coe
Rudy Cuzzetto, Robin Martin
Taras Natyshak, Rick Nicholls
Billy Pang, Amanda Simard
Marit Stiles, Nina Tangri
John Vanthof
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Roman Baber
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Roman Baber, Will Bouma
Lucille Collard, Parm Gill
Natalia Kusendova, Suze Morrison
Lindsey Park, Gurratan Singh
Nina Tangri, Effie J. Triantafilopoulos
Kevin Yarde
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Kaleed Rasheed
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vijay Thanigasalam
Rima Berns-McGown, Michael Coteau
Faisal Hassan, Logan Kanapathi
Jim McDonell, Christina Maria Mitas
Sam Oosterhoff, Kaleed Rasheed
Sara Singh, Donna Skelly
Vijay Thanigasalam
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Présidente: Catherine Fife
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Deepak Anand, Jill Andrew
Toby Barrett, Stan Cho
Stephen Crawford, Catherine Fife
John Fraser, France Gélinas
Christine Hogarth, Norman Miller
Michael Parsa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

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

Chair / Président: Deepak Anand
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Will Bouma
Deepak Anand, Toby Barrett
Stephen Blais, Will Bouma
Stephen Crawford, Laura Mae Lindo
Gila Martow, Paul Miller
Billy Pang, Dave Smith
Jamie West
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Isaiah Thorning

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

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