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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 16 November 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 16 novembre 2021

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BUILD ONTARIO ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2021
LOI DE 2021 VISANT À PROTÉGER
NOS PROGRÈS ET À BÂTIR L'ONTARIO
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Continuation of debate on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 43, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm pleased to stand in the House to speak to Bill 43, the Build Ontario Act, and to share my time with the member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Speaker, Bill 43 outlines a plan that will drive our province forward to a better future. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted Ontarians in many and different ways, but we are not a province that backs down. During this unprecedented time, we saw Ontarians stepping up and going above and beyond to support one another. It's that Ontario spirit that fuels our government to work and ensure that we continue to provide the building blocks necessary to help Ontarians succeed. Needless to say, Speaker, Bill 43 will do just that.

The Build Ontario Act will continue to make \$51 billion in support available to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, create opportunities and grow a stronger economy that works for everyone. That starts with protecting our progress. We have seen the threat and deadly impact of COVID-19 towards the health of Ontarians and our sectors. Together, the people of Ontario have come a long way, but the job is not done.

To ensure hospitals can continue to provide high-quality patient care, our government is providing hospitals with over \$1.8 billion in 2021-22 to support 3,100 new and additional beds, reduce surgical backlogs and help hospitals to keep pace with patient needs.

Protecting our progress also means protecting our most vulnerable seniors. The number of people in Markham–Unionville who will need long-term care is expected to rise over the next decade. This is true not only for my riding, but for many across. The previous government took nearly 10 years to build just 611 net new beds across the province, compared to the number of long-term-care

facilities, which was 624—not even one bed per one long-term-care facility. That was far short of the 35,000 beds they told the Auditor General they would build. That was unacceptable.

Unlike the previous government, we are a government that puts our words into action. When we say we are committed to fixing the long-term-care sector, we mean it. In fact, yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the groundbreaking ceremony for Mon Sheong's Markham senior campus, alongside the Minister for Seniors and Accessibility and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. This facility will make available 160 new long-term beds for our seniors, and it's one among many other long-term-care projects that our government is supporting across Ontario.

In central Ontario, including the GTA, there are currently 11,820 new and 8,118 upgraded long-term beds under way. We are working on it, but it won't stop here. To address decades of neglect and help those waiting to get into long-term care, Ontario plans to invest an additional \$3.7 billion, beginning in 2024-25, to build an additional 10,000 net new long-term-care beds and upgrade 12,000 existing beds. This would bring total investments up to \$6.4 billion since spring 2019, a historic investment in Ontario.

Speaker, protecting our progress also includes protecting Ontarians. Racism and hate have no place in Ontario, and solutions to address these concerns are needed urgently. But these solutions will not come from the government alone. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, I was honoured to join the minister and my colleagues to announce the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant Program. This program received great support from my riding, and I'm delighted that, in this bill, an investment of nearly \$10 million will be made available, over two years, to help address systematic racism and hate. This includes doubling investments in the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant Program and introducing a new Racialized and Indigenous Support for Entrepreneurs Grant.

Speaker, we are building Ontario. Markham–Unionville is among the fastest growing in the province, with a population growth of 17.8%, well above the Ontario average of 5%. It's a great place to raise a family, and with the York University Markham campus under way, it also makes this riding a great place to study. We have it all. But similar to many ridings, we experience a problem: traffic congestion. At least 52% of Markham–Unionville residents commute outside the riding for employment and 21% spend more than an hour commuting.

Interjection: We've got to build highways.

Mr. Billy Pang: We need to build and enhance our highways; exactly.

That's why I'm proud, Speaker, that we are moving forward with Highway 413, a new 400-series highway and transit corridor across York, Peel, and Halton regions. We are also advancing the Bradford Bypass, the new 16.2-kilometre freeway that will save motorists and trucks more than 60% in travel time. These projects will alleviate traffic congestion and improve the movement of people and goods across the province.

In addition, our government is also focusing on Ontarians who rely on public transit to commute. In fact, 15% of residents in my riding rely on public transit to get to work. We are not forgetting them, Mr. Speaker. We are moving forward with Ontario's bold \$28.5-billion plan for the largest subway expansion in Canadian history, including the Yonge North subway extension. The combined subway project will support more than 16,000 jobs annually during construction, and by 2041, we'll have a total daily ridership of roughly 620,000 people. Speaker, we are moving on all cylinders.

Lastly, we are working for workers. As a government, we want workers to race to the top. As the Premier always says, Ontario is home to the brightest and smartest people in all Canada. And that cannot be further than the truth. We have their backs. This was seen through the Ontario Small Business Support Grant, a program that delivered \$3 billion in unprecedented support to over 110,000 small businesses across the province. In Markham–Unionville, close to 2,000 eligible businesses received support from this program. That is over \$31 million flowing right into my riding to support them through this challenging time.

Our government works hard for the people so when we look at Bill 43, we look forward to the future. It's a plan that focuses on growth, recovery and uplifting every Ontarian.

I now want to pass the rest of my time to the member for Peterborough–Kawartha.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): To conclude this portion of the debate, we turn to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Thank you to the member from Markham–Unionville for sharing his time with me.

The fall economic statement is a pretty comprehensive piece of legislation. It touches on a lot of different things, and there's so much in it that we really can't talk about it in 10 or 20; probably not even in the hour lead-off can we actually get everything into it. So I'm going to focus primarily on aspects from the FES that have a direct impact on either the ministries I'm part of or my riding.

I'm going to start talking about the Ring of Fire. Our government is working collaboratively with Marten Falls and Webequie First Nations to develop a transportation corridor into this area. It's not just a road network; this is actually a pathway of prosperity for those First Nations and for all of northern Ontario.

The federal government of Canada has mandated that by 2030, all new passenger vehicles sold in Canada will

be electric vehicles. So we know there is going to be a massive increase in the demand for critical minerals. There's one projection that says that the demand worldwide will go up by 2,000% over the next 20 years.

Every single electric vehicle built right now that is a true passenger vehicle—there are some micromobility vehicles that are a little bit different, but the passenger vehicles—needs cobalt, graphite, lithium, manganese, and the rare earth elements dysprosium and neodymium.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Neodymium, yes. I know that one. That's a big one.

Mr. Dave Smith: Yes. I know that one well. I've got it growing in my backyard, it seems. Or maybe that's from the dogs, that's growing in my backyard.

Let me start with lithium, though. At present, we have a proposal for a mine near Red Lake. Quebec has a lithium mine and Manitoba has lithium mines. They have a deposit near the Cat Lake pegmatite field. Now, you might be saying to yourself, "Why is the parliamentary assistant to northern development, mines, natural resources and forestry and Indigenous affairs talking about Quebec and Manitoba?" Well, the Canadian Shield goes across all of us, and the only difference between Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba are the imaginary lines that we have to divide up those jurisdictions. In fact, the Canadian Shield makes up 61% of Ontario's land mass.

There is lithium in Quebec. There is lithium in Ontario. There is lithium in Manitoba. You can be sure there is more lithium in Ontario than what we see right now because there are more active mines, more active deposits in Quebec and more active deposits in Manitoba than we currently have in Ontario. We know there will be more, because geologically, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba are made of the same thing: with Canadian Shield.

Let's talk about graphite. There's a significant graphite deposit near Saint-Michel-des-Saints in Quebec. We have graphite in Ontario and we have graphite near Thompson, Manitoba. How about cobalt? Interestingly enough, we have a town in Ontario called Cobalt, probably named after the mine that's there.

Where I'm going with this is that Ontario has a vast land mass of Canadian Shield, and it's made up of all of these critical minerals that are needed in the production of electric vehicles. We know there will be an increase in demand by almost 2,000% over the next two decades. With our vast deposits of these minerals, Ontario is well positioned to become the worldwide supplier of green, ethically sourced critical minerals.

Now, there are people who say, "Well, we can get it someplace else." We can, but do they have that green footprint that we do in Ontario? Do they have the ethical workforce? Do they do all of those extra things that we do in Ontario? The answer is no. We're the only jurisdiction in the world—Canada is the only jurisdiction in the world—that combines all of that. At present, critical minerals, minerals in general, the mineral mining industry in Ontario makes up \$13.3 billion, with a "B," of our GDP. Our critical minerals strategy that's part of the FES gives us an opportunity to expand upon that. Why do I want to

expand upon that? There are 72,000 direct and indirect jobs in the mining industry in Ontario. Eighty per cent of everything that Ontario mines procure comes from Ontario. Simply put, Ontario's mining industry promotes a lot of other employment here in Ontario.

Enhancing our critical mineral strategy means that for every mining job we create, we also create 1.7 other jobs in support of the mining industry in Ontario. If the critical mineral strategy did nothing more than promote the mining activities and mining industry that's required to produce zero-emission, renewable green vehicles, that alone would be good for the province of Ontario. But, Speaker, it does more than that. Having a stable, reliable, ethically sourced supply of raw materials needed in the development and building of electric vehicles means manufacturers like Ford and GM have an incentive to expand the footprint here in this province.

If you're a manufacturer and you can get the raw materials, the processed materials and have all of the infrastructure to build what you need to build, you relocate to that jurisdiction. We are positioned to be the world leader in electric vehicle production, in the value-added production of the materials that are needed in it and the raw minerals, raw materials for it. Ontario is well positioned moving forward because of what we're doing with the FES.

I could probably spend my entire time talking about the benefits of critical minerals. It's actually something that I get geeky excited about, and I probably shouldn't. But we can't have everything that comes out of the Ring of Fire and all of that transportation network if we don't have skilled labour to build it. We can't build the long-term-care centres, we can't build the hospitals, we can't build all of that infrastructure without that skilled labour. That's why we're investing an additional \$5 million into the Second Career program. It's also why we're extending the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit. It provides up to \$2,000 for training expenses for workers who are looking to upgrade their skills.

Now, I know you're saying, "Dave, you said that you were going to talk about things from your riding, and all you've talked about are things right now from the ministries that you work with," but guess what? Sir Sandford Fleming College is in my riding and they have a skilled trades and technology centre where you can get an education in carpentry, construction engineering, electrical engineering, HVAC, welding, plumbing, blasting techniques, heavy equipment operator, heavy equipment techniques and resources drilling technicians. These are all things we need. Making it easier for our young adults to go to these schools to get this kind of an education is something that's very valuable.

In my last minute and a half, I want to talk about a personal story on this, because I think it emphasizes what we should be doing as a government to promote the skilled trades. My son will be 24 next month. He's probably going to be mad at me that I mention he's going to be 24 next month. He's completed his undergrad at Trent and he's currently in his final year of a bachelor of education. He

wants to be a primary school teacher, kindergarten in particular.

A number of his friends are skilled trades individuals. Last summer, he was talking to me about it. He's got a friend who right out of high school went off, became an apprentice as a carpenter. He's now got his full ticket as a carpenter. He bought a house last year, he bought a car and he's engaged. Another one of his friends apprenticed to become a plumber, getting paid while he's going to school—moving ahead and put an offer on a house just last week. My son said to me, "Did I take the wrong path?" He looks at where his friends are, guys he went to school with in kindergarten all the way through, where they are financially and where he is financially.

So much emphasis has been put on, "Let's send our brightest and best from high school to university." We're changing that narrative and we're making it easier so that our youth get excited, like I did, about critical minerals, get excited about going into the trades, because it provides long-term, sustainable, career-based jobs that allow you to have that financial flexibility and financial stability for not only you but your family.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): We have time for questions. The first one goes to the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Ms. Judith Monteith-Farrell: In the fall economic statement, as was said before, there was very little for northern Ontario. There's something called Maslow's hierarchy of needs. We have northern autism families that—this government has said, no, they are not getting the services they need. This government has also said no to a much-needed detox proposal for Thunder Bay.

So my question to the other side is, how can you talk about prosperity when you're not meeting the basic needs of safety for people in northern Ontario?

Mr. Dave Smith: I think that there are an awful lot of areas in Ontario where they've been touched by the opioid crisis; they've been touched by mental health and addictions. That's why we've created a ministry for mental health and addictions. That's why we have invested the largest investment in Ontario's history in mental health—\$3.8 billion over 10 years. We have made massive investments in it.

What I'll say to the member opposite: One of the challenges that the people have, one of the things that leads to addiction—and I'm speaking in particular to some of the feedback that I've received from Peggy Shaughnessy on this—is hope: If you don't have hope, you turn to something else. People who get addicted to something, people who use opioids, are looking for one of two things: Either they want to stop feeling, or they want to start feeling something. What I'm talking about is creating that opportunity for so many people to be lifted up so that they have that hope. That is something that feeds those—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Thank you. The member from Whitby has a question.

Mr. Lorne Coe: I want to thank both the member from Peterborough–Kawartha and the member for Markham–Unionville for their participation in today’s debate.

The member from Peterborough–Kawartha spoke well on building opportunities in the skilled trades, Speaker, as he should, because he has a skilled trades centre at Sir Sandford Fleming community college in his riding.

The economic statement talks about the trades providing good jobs to support families and communities and about the province’s investment of \$90.3 million. Would the member from Peterborough–Kawartha talk about the effect of this level of investment in his riding, the difference it’s making for hard-working families in his riding and particular sectors—women and youth.

Mr. Dave Smith: It’s a great opportunity to talk about it.

Having that opportunity to have a career-based lifelong job is something that is going to make such a massive difference to so many people. They’re getting away from that gig economy that we have right now.

I want to touch on one thing in particular: \$1,874 a week—that’s what the average person makes as a skilled tradesperson in mines in Ontario right now. That’s almost \$100,000 a year. When we’re talking to our youth in high schools, when we’re talking to our young women in high schools about what they can do, what’s going to give them that career boost, where they can get a job that is going to last their entire lifetime and provide all the financial security for them, look to the skilled trades, because that is going to make a massive difference for them. They can get away from that gig economy into something that will last them their entire life.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Toronto Centre has a question.

Ms. Suze Morrison: When we saw this Conservative government elected in 2018 and they formed their first cabinet, one of the first things they did was to collapse the ministry responsible for Indigenous affairs into the ministry responsible for mining. What that was was an inherent signal that the only way that this government knew how to conceptualize its relationship with Indigenous people was through the relationship of extracting resources from the land.

When I heard the member get up during his speech and talk about providing supports for Indigenous communities in Ontario, he immediately only began to talk about mining and resource extraction, again confirming that the only way that this government seems to envision its responsibility to treaties and its responsibilities as a treaty partner to Indigenous people is through extraction of resources from the land.

There is nothing in this fall economic statement to address the clean drinking water crisis. That is a human right for Indigenous people in this country and in this province.

My question to you is, will you go back to your government and come back to this House with a funding package to provide clean drinking water for every First Nation in this province?

Mr. Dave Smith: I love the opportunity to stand up and talk about the great work that Minister Rickford has been doing on all of his files, and one of the things that has to be taken into account is—and perhaps the opposition hasn’t considered this because they don’t have people who have a full range of experience and expertise—Minister Rickford has 28 First Nations in his riding. Minister Rickford has a long-standing relationship of working with the Chiefs of Ontario when he was a federal member; now he’s the provincial member. It makes absolute perfect sense for someone who has already built those relationships, for somebody who has that experience in working with that community, for someone who has been a voice for them for years prior to coming to Queen’s Park—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Order, please.

Mr. Dave Smith:—for him to be in that position where he is able to advocate on behalf of them and know exactly what he’s talking about because he has the experience, something that the opposition doesn’t seem to have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Brampton West has a question.

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My friend from Markham–Unionville highlighted the importance of critical infrastructure in our communities, projects like Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass. These projects will not only, Mr. Speaker, reduce traffic congestion, they will create thousands of jobs every year and attract many new businesses to invest in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, not only are we investing in highways, we are investing an unprecedented amount in transit. We’re coming very close to two-way, all-day GO, Hurontario LRT—the projects that were ignored by the previous government for far too long. These are critical infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, that is very important for Ontarians.

My question to the member is, can the member highlight the importance of this critical infrastructure in our communities?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the question. It is very important to expand, repair and build new highways and bridges, create jobs and spur economic growth. Our government has invested approximately \$2.6 billion in funding for 2021-22 in support of the Ontario highways program which features more than 580 construction expansions and rehabilitation projects. As part of the highways program, the government has committed funding to advance the Bradford Bypass and Highway 413.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Ottawa Centre has a question.

Mr. Joel Harden: My question is also for the MPP from Markham–Unionville. I listened to his remarks closely.

Something the member has often talked about—I take his remarks in this vein with great consideration—is the rise of bigotry and racism, and you mentioned that in your comments, about how it’s a priority for you and for the government. We have recently some bad news at home, Speaker. There’s been a rash of anti-Semitic graffiti that’s

been popping up around Ottawa, in Barrhaven and in the Glebe, and our Ottawa courthouse sign was just defaced with anti-Semitic propaganda, so I take the member's point seriously.

But I want to know, clearly, from his perspective, what is the actual plan? Are we going to fund the anti-racism secretariat—as many people here have suggested—so we can get those community leaders the resources they need to do the education, to work with local police authorities, to work in schools? What's the plan? Because I'm seeing the rise in hate too, and I'm very worried about what's harboured in a lot of our neighbours' hearts and how that can end up in violence. We need to get out in front of it to address it.

Mr. Billy Pang: As a first-generation immigrant, I am very passionate about racism. We have to deal with it. Our government is putting an additional investment of \$10 million, to make it available for two years to help address systematic racism. And we also invest to work with different communities, different ethnic age groups and also school boards. We work with all the partners in the community. Through that, we want to address racism. We want Ontario to be a more accepting, more inclusive and more loving province. That's our target.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member for Whitby with a quick one.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes, thank you, Speaker. My question is to the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. You will know, Speaker, that there's a significant investment in building on mental health and addictions investments. One example highlighted is the investments in targeted addictions services and supports, \$32.7 million. Can the member speak about the effect of that investment in his particular riding, where there have been challenges?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): In 15 seconds.

1740

Mr. Dave Smith: Absolutely, I can. One word: MOBYSS. CHMA HKPR is coming out with two mobile mental health and addiction travelling clinics that will cover not just my riding but MPP Piccini's riding and MPP Scott's riding, and it's based in Peterborough.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to be able to rise in this place and debate Bill 43, which is the Build Ontario Act (Budget Measures). I appreciate the latitude that many Speakers have been giving us. We've been discussing the fall economic statement and delving into what the government states are its priorities, talking about what clearly are not, looking at different challenges for communities that, unfortunately, will not be solved by this bill, by this document, by this government's priorities.

First of all, we have been talking a lot on this side of the House about affordability, about what life is like for people across our communities. It is getting harder to afford the life that everybody is working so hard to achieve. The cost of living is going up: auto insurance, hydro bills, child care costs. Side note, and I'll come back to it, Speaker: We're the hold-out. Ontario is the hold-out

for the \$10-a-day child care plan with the feds. We're not seeing life getting easier for people. It's getting harder to get the health care we need, to get our kids the education that they deserve.

I have been sharing voices from my community. I really see it as a privilege, being in this space and getting personal stories from folks. That is an important part of the work that we do here. We are entrusted with people's struggles, with their stories, and I'm very proud and pleased to be able to share some of their voices in this place.

Earlier this week, I read parts of a letter from Amy. I'm going to continue along that vein because when we see in Bill 43 and in the fall economic statement the government talk about a \$15 minimum wage and they celebrate it as though it's enough—I don't know what the exact number for "enough" would be. I know it's going to look different in Toronto or in Thunder Bay or in Oshawa, what a wage would be—at least \$17, but the cost of living is going up.

Amy wrote to us about groceries, and Amy said, "Groceries, clothing, toiletries and rent are too expensive. Fruits and vegetables, clothing, soap and sanitary napkins and shelter are not luxury items...."

"Also, the amount of people accessing services such as food banks has increased. Many people stand out front of food bank services crowding the street. The number continues to increase. Many people are sleeping on the streets...."

"I've attached my grocery receipts. I went to two stores with my buggy, because I don't have a car, walked 15 minutes to the closest stores, bought fruits, nuts, vegetables and other healthy items, walked 15 minutes home to my basement apartment with my heavy buggy and it cost \$75. I have an administrative—pink-collar—job, I live in a bad area, I am a single female and I am just making ends meet." She goes on to say, "Because I don't have a car I cannot drive all over to get the best deals and freshest produce. I was on vacation today therefore the produce was very fresh with lots of items available. Normally when I attend these stores it is at the end of the work day—options are limited and the remaining items are not very fresh."

"This is unreasonable."

Amy is advocating for herself, but really for folks across communities who are just doing their darnedest and cannot make ends meet.

We spoke the other day about affordability, and we've been speaking in this House about the vital need for accessible, affordable child care. I'm grateful today that the government wasn't talking about tax credits, because so many people can't afford it in the first place, if they can find a space—can't afford it up front to then get the money back, and that speaks to just the desperate need for families to have enough even to pay for child care.

This is where I turn back to this letter, which is an email from someone who's a board member at a local non-profit. I read it in its entirety the other day. I'll read just a bit. She said, "We've had staff leave and new hires not accept positions because they didn't have access to affordable or reliable child care. It was cheaper for them to stay home

with their child instead of paying ridiculous fees. Also, with the pandemic, more of our workers have been calling in sick because they have to stay home with a sick child.”

She’s pointing out the fact that the labour shortage—part of that is that the child care costs are so darn high that it’s a disincentive to work. It’s mostly female at this particular workplace, but we’re hearing that across the province. This is a way of keeping women out of the workplace, frankly, and by not addressing it, I think it is a way to keep women out of the workplace. I’ve stood here often and I’ve wondered if that’s part of the motivation. So if the government wants to stand and defend itself, I would hope to hear that, but more than that, we need that action, because the affordability crisis, Speaker, also makes folks more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, makes it more difficult for women to leave safely; all of this is compounded and, I would argue, the government’s responsibility.

I’ve spoken in this place about public education. The government has cut half a billion in base funding to education—disappointing, to say the least. We’ll continue to fight that and fight for awesome classrooms and quality education—unbiased, of course, having come to this place from the classroom and being a public educator.

Speaker, I also want to share about the need to invest in community and social services. They’re not getting what they need. They do the heavy lifting; they’re not treated well by this government. They have stepped up and they have bankrolled the government’s wage commitment. They had to wait months and months beyond what the private contracted service providers got. They got this money from this government to pay their staff, but the not-for-profit folks—I guess they can just wait, eh? That’s something that certainly isn’t fair, but happened. Shareholders are getting their dividends but the not-for-profit community service providers had to forage in the couch cushions to make ends meet and pay their staff.

There’s an article from Oshawa This Week dated November 11. It was penned by James Meloche. He’s the CEO of Community Care Durham. I’ll get on the record here: He said, “Ontarians want to live at home, accepting some of the burdens this may require. They are willing to take that responsibility to live where and how they wish. So why is the government ignoring this wish—or, more specifically, those community organizations whose goal is to help make this wish come true?”

He goes on to say, “The lack of publicly funded home and community care forces people to more costly, less safe institutional care sooner than they wish. Whether it’s the preventable deterioration of health and well-being or the financial burden due to supplementing formal and informal care—families are reaching breaking points. So have we.” This government could be investing and getting a remarkable return on that investment in terms of quality of life and quality of care out in our communities.

Speaker, I have the opportunity to serve the province as the official opposition critic for infrastructure, transportation and highways. I sure wish that I had more time to speak at length. But the government speaks ad nauseam about the 413 and Bradford Bypass, celebrating it and

making it, it would seem, kind of a campaign pledge and a bumper sticker for the upcoming election. You know how I feel about bumper stickers in this place, and maybe a licence plate frame—anyway. But there are communities all over Ontario that need new or improved highways, but those highways are going to be shelved because of the cost of building a couple of billion-dollar roads for the government buddies. Highways should be built for safety and commute times, not politics or making people rich. Politically driven infrastructure is a problem.

These roads will cost \$10 billion, half of the amount budgeted for all highway construction and repair over the next 10 years. These highway plans didn’t exist when the budget was set. That means that the government is cutting other highways to build these ones. The government members should check with their communities and see if their proposed projects are on the chopping block. The NDP doesn’t support the 413 or Bradford Bypass. I’ve been glad to say that in this space many times. I wish that I had more time to get on the record, but, hey, look it up; to the government, check it out.

The Ontario Society of Professional Engineers have given warning. They have made their position known. They have said, “The Ontario government should develop and use standard, evidence-based project evaluation tools.” It should be based on science and evidence. They have a searing piece that they have written.

1750

The local communities are calling for an impact assessment. They’re very concerned about what it looks like in their communities and what it could look like. We all just received that recently, a press release from them. The community is concerned. Farmers: We’ve heard lots of talk about what farmers feel. Peggy Brekveld is a farmer in Thunder Bay and president of the OFA. Again, she is looking to alternatives here and says, “Whether you live in the city or live in the country, you eat. And the question isn’t whether that food comes from a farmer—it’s where that farmer is.” Farmers need land to farm, Speaker.

I’m out of time but I have an hour’s worth of information to get on the record, so I’m looking forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Well, we don’t have an hour for questions and comments, but we do have 10 minutes. The first question goes to the member from Barrie–Innisfil.

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: The member opposite talks a lot about transit and what have you, and I just want to ask her about choice when it comes to transit for people to get to work. A lot of people want different choices and different opportunities to get to work. A lot of people don’t have the luxury of transit. She may know that in my riding—part of the riding I’m lucky to represent, Innisfil—Ubers are a method of public transportation. It works quite well. We have a share system, and it’s less expensive for municipalities because they don’t have to lay out the bus routes. Because we’re different communities that are in different spaces, it’s tough to get the bus in. So this has got really

good uptake, and they also receive gas tax funding for this initiative.

There are many other areas across the province that are exploring such initiatives, so I just wanted to ask her what her opinion is on choice and the choices that we're offering in the fall economic statement.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Choice is an interesting way of spinning this. You know, the government also has choices. There's a 2014 government-commissioned report that came out in an FOI that laid out a number of alternatives. This is a government that has doubled down. They are digging their heels in about the Bradford Bypass. There were suggestions about improving interchanges, adding specialized trucking lanes on some existing roads or creating HOV lanes on the 400, but none of those are being considered. So there are choices that the government could be making, but they've been hidden, right? It had to come out with an FOI.

So the government can spin "choice," but you're not going to leave anybody any choice when the 400 and the 404 are complete parking lots. By the government's own reports and colour-coded maps that they've got on their websites, you'll see everything to a crawl. No one will have a choice then.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I really enjoyed the presentation from the member from Oshawa. I want to inform her that I met up with the leadership group at St. Joseph's hospital in Elliot Lake a couple of weeks ago. We talked about some of the challenges that they're facing. One of them is proper staffing: making sure everything is covered, the availability. The vacancies that they have there with professional individuals that they're needing—they're looking at roughly about 15 to 20 individuals that they have openings for.

Now, having said all of that, do you want to know what their biggest challenge was, Speaker? It's actually finding housing for these professionals that are coming to the community, because there are no houses available. There are no affordable apartments that are available. My question that I ask the member is, wouldn't a housing strategy have been beneficial within the context of this fall economic statement? Because we have the availability, we have those jobs there for individuals, but we have no houses.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Actually, the member and I each earlier read petitions on affordable housing. It doesn't matter where people live in Ontario, across our ridings, they're desperate to have a place to live, whether it's a matter of trying to afford a new home, imagining one day that they could afford a new home, trying to get a condo or paying rent. We have folks in Oshawa that are sleeping rough and are desperate to find housing. While we have agencies that are working to house them, that is coupled, unfortunately, in our community and across others with the need to address mental health and addictions.

It's a complicated situation across the province. What we don't see is leadership from this government. We see piecemeal announcements; we don't see the strategy. So, to the member's question: Lord, yes, we need a strategy—an appropriate strategy. The NDP actually has a great plan, Speaker. Feel free to check it out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her speech earlier. You specifically said you oppose the Bradford Bypass, and I just wanted to ask you—because I hear so many times the members opposite talk about how important it is to listen to the local people. All of the communities, all of the municipalities on the route of the Bradford Bypass are 100% supportive of that, including the farmers in the Holland Marsh, who want to see it. You're talking about farmers. You talk about local. Why would you oppose something that the local people, the local municipalities have clearly said is needed? This is to connect those two arteries—not to widen them, but to connect them. Why would you not support our government in building a very, very necessary highway improvement project?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I really appreciate the question. I have some local voices to share, and I didn't have the chance, so I appreciate the member giving me that opportunity.

"Local Citizen Groups Request Federal Government to Conduct Impact Assessment on Bradford Bypass Project" was a piece that we were all sent. Bill Foster from Forbid Roads over Green Spaces, or FROGS, said:

"Every time we meet new people who are curious about the bypass, we're reminded of how little information about this highway has been shared with the public. The more people know, the more they don't like it. No one likes gridlock, but this idea that the only way to deal with it is a highway that recent estimates suggest could cost over \$2 billion is ludicrous. This highway isn't a done deal despite what the road signs say. It's time for people to ask serious questions and get informed before it's too late." That's from the community.

Also, "This year, councils in Barrie, Innisfil and Georgina have declined to pass motions supporting the province's move to fast-track the highway, a marked difference from their years of unequivocal support." That's from the Star.

And, as I said, Peggy Brekveld from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture is a farmer who's on record—

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

Mr. Joel Harden: I always enjoy listening to my friend from Oshawa hold forth in this place. I know she cares deeply about finding safe ways for moms and dads, for people to get to work, to get back home and to do all the important things in their lives.

I wanted to give the member an opportunity, because we've seen, sadly, previously in this place, provincial public assets turned into toll roads. That is not something

that is very popular amongst people who I talk to—community nurses, community PSWs who get out there to work with people in the member’s riding, up the Ottawa Valley from where I am in downtown Ottawa. Why is that not a direction we want this government to follow, and why is that not a progressive choice?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the member’s question. I wanted to talk a little bit about tolls. Being in the Durham region, with the 412 and the 418, this government—excuse me, pre-government the members promised to remove the tolls. My bill went to committee. I’ll be happy to reintroduce it, but go ahead and take them off any time. The conditions for removing tolls from highways shouldn’t be that the minister lives in the riding. I’ll be a minister one day, but I can’t take the tolls off.

So I would ask that the government be fair in their practices, because the President of the Treasury Board—in his statement, which we were all sent, the only place where it says “toll-free” is the English and French inquiry hotline. There’s nothing about removing the tolls. It seems like it was a last-minute addition. I’m dying to know when that decision was made. And all these projections about how much time will be saved and whatnot: Was that done before or after the tolls were taken off?

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

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: As we all know, mental health is health, and the pandemic has had a significant impact on front-line health care workers’ mental health, which is why our government is investing to continue the rapid access to mental health and addictions support for health care and long-term health care workers. Why are the opposition and the opposite members so opposed to supporting the mental health and well-being of Ontario’s front-line workers?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I don’t even understand the question. We stand day after day in this House talking about front-line workers. The government sort of puts the sticker on and says that they thank them, but they don’t support them. They aren’t getting what they need. We are hearing from nurses regularly. Here on the front lawn, nurses are asking for supports, and this government—it’s like they throw their hands over their ears and just kind of sing in a different direction, again with a “thank you” refrain. “Thank you” does not support any front-line worker. They do have mental health challenges. This government is not investing enough. We’re not seeing a comprehensive strategy. We’re not seeing what people are asking for.

1800

And the pressures put on people because of affordability, safety, all of this insecurity in our community: That could be addressed with housing, with doing away with this low-wage fascination that the government has. All of their policies are low-wage-based. That is applying unbelievable pressure to people across communities, and that is affecting their mental health. So it’s not just after the fact; it’s prevent it in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): And that’s all the time we have this afternoon for debate on this matter. Right now it’s time for private members’ public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

CHANGE OF NAME AMENDMENT ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CHANGEMENT DE NOM

Miss Mitas moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 39, An Act to amend the Change of Name Act /
Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le changement de nom.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101, the member will have up to 12 minutes to state her case in this matter. I return to the member for Scarborough Centre.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Speaker, it is my distinct privilege to stand in this House today to present the Change of Name Amendment Act, 2021. Last year, the Alberta Legislature passed an amendment to their Vital Statistics Act, receiving royal assent in July. The amendment’s purpose was very simple: to ban convicted sex offenders from obtaining a legal name change. Brought forward by Minister Nate Glubish, Bill 28 made it harder for sex abusers to obfuscate their past actions and to hide their true identities.

I am proud to rise today as part of the Ontario government to introduce this bill for the second time. It is my sincere belief that this legislation is something that should be mirrored across all provinces.

As we all know, people change their names for a variety of reasons. Whether it’s to recognize a change of name in marriage formally or to use an anglicized version of one’s name, name changes are relatively common across our country. In most cases, they’re reflective of how an individual wishes to be perceived by society. It is, in the majority of cases, a happy transition and a sign of an individual’s desire to belong and appear as who they truly are. Allowing for legal name changes is, of course, the right thing to do in any civilized society.

However, it should be noted that there are risks. There are those who will attempt to use a legal name change to obscure themselves and hide. Whether as a consequence of fraud and deceit previously committed, or to carry out deceitful acts in the future, some individuals will seek to take advantage of rights and privileges in order to inflict harm on others. This is one of the key reasons why the extant legislation in Ontario is so robust, and why the application process is equally as exhaustive: The right to change one’s name must not be abused.

If passed, the Change of Name Amendment Act will strengthen our government's zero-tolerance approach to sexual assault, as well as our commitment to survivors, their families and the groups that support them. Our government takes sexual assault seriously, and will do whatever it takes to provide additional supports and protections to Ontarians.

I believe I speak for all members here today when I say that there can be no tolerance for sexual assault, that there are no mitigating circumstances for sexual abusers and that legislation and sentencing must always be stringent in these cases. It is our shared duty as legislators to stand up for survivors of sexual assault, just as it is our shared duty to stand up to those who would commit such acts, with strong legislation.

Sexual assault is a truly heinous crime. It is a crime that is all the more despicable when one is aware of the patterns of predation. Abusers seek out and target the vulnerable. They target those who cannot fight back and they will intimidate their victims into silence. As a society, we rightly vilify those who commit such acts, and our Criminal Code reflects our shared abhorrence.

To sexually assault another human being is a violating deed, not only physically, but psychologically and emotionally. Sexual assault can have profound implications beyond the initial attack. The effects of sexual assault can linger for years. Sexual assault survivors routinely report feelings of shame and guilt, an unimaginably unfair and unbearable burden to carry. Worse still, a sense of self-blame often occurs, where survivors engage in a terrible exercise of second-guessing themselves, expressing self-doubt, tracing and retracing of steps, and re-examining of decisions.

Many survivors struggle to regain feelings of independence and safety. Some survivors struggle with intimacy. It is also common for survivors to experience difficulty in their relationships as the emotional and psychological trauma wreaks havoc on their family lives. Many survivors require ongoing counselling to combat the effects of PTSD. Some might need physical therapy to treat their wounds. Tragically, some are not survivors at all and are callously left for dead by their attackers.

This is what happened to Christopher Stephenson, an 11-year-old boy from Brampton, Ontario. On June 17, 1988, 11-year-old Christopher was kidnapped at knife-point from a Brampton mall. He was sexually assaulted and he was murdered. During the investigation, police discovered that Christopher's killer was a multiple-times convicted sex offender. At that time there was no provincial sex offenders registry. There was no way of tracking sex offenders' movements and there was no method of ensuring that they could not hide their past.

His father, Jim, and his mother, Anna, heartbroken with grief, nevertheless campaigned vigorously to create a provincial sex offenders registry. After years of advocacy, Christopher's Law was passed in 2001, creating Ontario's first sexual assault registry 13 years later. It was a victory for survivors. What's more, it was also an essential and much overdue piece of legislation in this province.

If passed, the Change of Name Amendment Act will provide an additional layer of protection to children and vulnerable Ontarians. This act will deny convicted sex offenders the legal right to change their name. By making this change we close off a loophole in our laws that provide sex offenders with a potential avenue of anonymity.

I want to be clear: Our current laws are strong. As things stand, those with a criminal record check are required to go through another criminal record check when seeking a legal change of name, as well as fingerprinting. Additionally, while there are some exceptions, most who change their names must register these details with the Ontario Gazette. While these safeguards are welcome and intelligent, we can do better. We all know we can do better.

The truth is that while changes of name are indeed published in the Ontario Gazette, this is not a publication that the general public here in Ontario tends to read, much less one that most Ontarians even know exists. And while all of these safeguards exist, the truth of the matter is that it is still currently possible for convicted sex offenders to change their names here in Ontario, and then they can go on and reoffend.

As things stand, there remains this opportunity for them to distance themselves from their crimes, to distance themselves from the consequences and to distance themselves from the repercussions that their victims face every day. This is unacceptable. Sex offenders must be held accountable and our communities must be protected.

It is important to remember that recidivism among sex offenders remains an ongoing problem as well. Considering the violating nature of sexual offences, recidivism cannot be ignored. Those most likely to reoffend are abusers of young boys, with a 15-year recidivism rate of 35%. That's one in three who are reoffending, and these are the numbers for the ones who are being caught, and we know not everyone is caught.

It should also be noted that StatsCan's data for Ontario on rates of reported cases of sexual assault show a significant increase in recent years. From the years 2014 through 2018, there is a notable upwards trend, amounting to just under a 19% increase in reported cases. Do bear in mind, again, that these are just reported numbers. While there is some debate regarding the real number of sexual assaults that occur each year in Ontario and across Canada, it is inevitable that the actual numbers are significantly higher than the reported numbers. This is inevitable because we all know that for a myriad of reasons many sexual assaults go unreported.

Rates, percentages and numbers aside, the reality is that sexual assaults happen and that some abusers reoffend. Despite our best efforts as legislators, the best efforts of the judicial system and the penal system as protectors and rehabilitators, we still face this problem. Therefore, we must do everything we can to reduce its impact. This is our responsibility.

I will read a statement now from one of our community stakeholders. Janet Handy is the executive director of the

Kristen French Child Advocacy Centre in Niagara, and offered this feedback on our proposed bill:

“I believe that any measures that get us closer to proactively supporting the long-term mental health and safety of victims and survivors of childhood sexual assault is critical. The journey back to oneself from abuse can be a long one, and this legislation is one more tool for communities to protect the vulnerable as they take that journey. It ensures that perpetrators remain accountable for their actions and victims/survivors see that society takes their recovery seriously enough to provide this protection.”

1810

Today we have a chance to act decisively, to close a potential loophole and to give more peace of mind to survivors and vulnerable populations across Ontario. I'll be honest: I saw on Twitter that this legislation had been passed in Alberta, and the moment I read up on it I was angry. I couldn't believe that this loophole existed in 2020, when I first read about it and when I first introduced this private member's bill.

When I reached out to Minister Glubish in Alberta, he told me that while he was happy with the progress made there, it wasn't enough. It wasn't enough because this was still happening in other parts of Canada, because evil people were still trying to hide and because criminals are still able to leave a province that is closing this loophole and change their name in another province. This is why it is so incredibly important that we pass this legislation everywhere in Canada. We must stand together as Canadians, steadfast in our commitment to closing the loophole, protecting victims and telling sexual assaulters, “You have no place to hide and you will be held accountable for your crimes.”

I mention this last piece because I had conversations with child advocacy centres about this bill. We got to talking about the sexual assault of children. These were difficult conversations, but imagine how difficult it is to live through this type of assault. I was told that many victims want to keep track of their offenders, because they're scared and the fear never leaves them as they grow up. Children who are sexually assaulted do not move past it. They are broken in a way that guarantees that no matter how well you glue their pieces back together, no matter how strong that glue, they will never be the same as they were before. No child deserves this, and it is hard for the places that represent them to even procure the resources that they need, because people struggle with even hearing these stories, never mind going through these situations.

These things make my heart hurt. I think of my own children, and I get angry that any sexual assaulter is able to change their name and hide. I think of people like Karla Homolka, who has lived under the name of Karla Leanne Teale and who tried to escape to Quebec to live a normal, anonymous life after her almost unspeakable crimes, the ones that she and Paul Bernardo committed—“almost unspeakable” because they don't deserve to hide from what they did, and we should speak to them. Her sister

Tammy Homolka was not only raped by her; she was murdered by her.

On April 6, 1992, Kristen French was walking home from Holy Cross school and was approached by Karla and Paul in the parking lot under the pretense of needing directions. While she was assisting them with directions, they grabbed her from behind and forced her into the car at knifepoint. The kidnapping was seen by several eyewitnesses. She was held in captivity for three days, and they videotaped themselves torturing her and subjecting her to sexual humiliation and degradation. They murdered her on April 19, 1992, and her naked body was found in a ditch.

This story never stops hurting, and while I pray and trust that victims like Tammy and Kristen have found peace with God above and do not hurt anymore, criminals like Karla Homolka should not be able to hide and start new lives where they are not held accountable for the vile crimes they have committed. People like Karla Homolka should not be able to volunteer at an elementary school as if they're any other loving neighbourhood parent.

If a sex offender is on the registry list and they are convicted, they should be barred from changing their name, full stop. I'm extremely proud to stand before all of you to bring this bill forward again. I know it would be the most important piece of work that I could do as an MPP, because if I prevent even one more sexual assault, bring peace to one victim, then I will do something that will have transcended party lines—

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to thank the member for bringing her passion for this bill forward once again. It's always an honour to stand on behalf of the official opposition and on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

One of our responsibilities as legislators is to work through the challenging issues of our time and help our communities find answers to difficult problems we face as a province. The effects of sexual violence cannot be understated. This type of violence crosses all social boundaries, affects people of every age and cultural background, and has a devastating impact on the lives of survivors and their families, as well as the well-being of our society. Often, the victims are the most vulnerable members of our society, including children.

The official opposition supports legislation and policies that keep people safe and provide effective tools to do so. There is good reason to have Sex Offender Registry legislation, including Ontario's own Christopher's Law, so named to commemorate the memory of a child who was taken from us under incredibly tragic circumstances.

Ontarians should be encouraged that we were the first jurisdiction in Canada to enact a Sex Offender Registry, a tool that continues to be used to this day to keep Ontarians safe. If there are opportunities to make tools like this more effective, then it is our responsibility to explore them, in

keeping with our obligation to protect Ontario's most vulnerable.

New Democrats support sending this bill to committee for further consideration. This will give the House the opportunity to hear from the experts and better ensure that the steps taken to address this problem are effective and result in the best possible protection.

Again, I want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for her contribution to this incredibly important discussion.

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

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I'll start by saying that Christopher's Law and the establishment of the Sex Offender Registry are very important protection measures against dangerous people. Christopher's Law was named after 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson, who was murdered in 1988 by a convicted pedophile on federal statutory release.

At the 1993 inquest into Christopher's death, the coroner's jury recommended creating a national registry for convicted sex offenders, requiring them to register with their local police service. Ontario was the first province to establish a registry. The database, which contains the name, the current address and a current photograph, as well as the offence for which the offender has been convicted, is intended to provide police services with important information to improve their ability to investigate sex-related crimes, as well as monitor and locate convicted sex offenders within the community.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of the law is heavily reduced if one can change their name to avoid being located. I used to be a school trustee, and it gives me chills to think that there could have been sex offenders who changed their names and may have been working in our schools.

Monsieur le Président, les délinquants sexuels représentent une menace réelle de la pire espèce pour nos communautés et pour les jeunes en particulier. Comme parent, je crois fermement que notre gouvernement doit faire le maximum pour nous protéger et s'assurer que les outils qui sont mis à la disposition de nos forces de l'ordre pour combattre ce fléau fonctionnent de façon efficace. Ce n'est pas le cas si le registre supposé fournir à la police des informations importantes sur les délinquants sexuels afin de pouvoir les localiser n'est pas robuste.

C'est pourquoi le projet de loi de la députée de Scarborough-Centre est important, car il y a une faille dans le système si une personne dont le nom apparaît sur le registre peut changer son nom et se soustraire à la surveillance de la police et mettre nos enfants en danger.

I support this bill, which takes a positive step to eliminate a loophole by ensuring that offenders cannot simply fabricate a new identity and put children in harm's way.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I am delighted to rise today to speak to Bill 49, Change of Name Amendment Act, 2021. Before I begin, I want to thank the member from Scarborough Centre for bringing this meaningful bill forward.

I'm a proud father of two beautiful children, and similarly to all parents, I think about their safety. In addition to being a parent, I'm also a strong advocate for children's empowerment. I believe that all children have dreams they want to pursue; they just need the support to help them to realize their full potential. This is a reason why I have been a volunteer for World Vision Hong Kong and Canada for more than 13 years, and currently sponsor six children through this organization.

Speaker, as much as I support this bill, I must be honest and say I cannot believe this bill is necessary in Ontario in 2021. When my colleague first introduced this bill I was shocked, as I believe many others were, to hear that it was possible for registered sex offenders to change their names. In Ontario, our priority should be protecting victims. We should never strive to make life easier for convicted sex offenders who prey on our most vulnerable members of society.

1820

Speaker, before I immigrated to Canada I volunteered in Hong Kong for organizations supporting marginal youths and vulnerable people in the community. Through that time, some youths have shared with me their heart-breaking—heartbreaking—stories of sexual assault and the trauma the survivors continue to experience to this day. It takes courage for the youths to share their stories, and once you hear them, it changes your life.

Unfortunately, this vicious crime occurs in all parts of the world, including our province, and the possibility that convicted sex offenders can change their identities and possibly go on to victimize more people here in Ontario is sickening and appalling.

Take an offender in Saskatchewan: He was in prison on child pornography convictions and he was able to change his name while he was in prison on these charges. Yes, you heard that correctly. After he changed his name he started offending again, over the phone, from within the prison. There is absolutely no reason this man should have had the ability to change his name. Sexual offences are serious, and once convicted they should not have the right to change their names and hide from their offences. People like this offender in Saskatchewan should never be able to hide from what they did.

Unfortunately, there are numerous stories about convicted sex offenders who have been legally able to change their names. It is shocking but it is the reality that we are currently faced with.

When convicted sex offenders are able to change their names, their previous victims are put in danger and so are possible future victims. Rather than putting victims at risk, we should be doing everything we can to protect them.

It is my understanding that both Alberta and Saskatchewan have passed legislation to stop sex offenders from changing their names, and to protect victims. I firmly

believe that Ontario should join them and show a strong commitment to our province's vulnerable.

I want to once again thank the member from Scarborough Centre for bringing forward this legislation that would do just that. This is an easy decision for us to make, one that all Ontarians can get behind. It doesn't matter what political party you support; protecting victims is something that matters to all of us.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I rise today to speak in support of the proposed legislation to ban registered sex offenders from having the legal means to change their names. This bill has been introduced by my hard-working colleague MPP Christina Mitas.

To many Ontarians, this is an important and common-sense fix to an issue that has persisted for far too long. We, as a province, have an opportunity to stand up for all of the victims who have been affected. I believe that this bill will provide an extra layer of protection to vulnerable communities and will help to prevent registered sex offenders from circumventing the Sex Offender Registry. We as a Legislature can provide progress on this very important legislation.

Currently, there exists a legal loophole that allows sex offenders to legally change their names. There is no provision within the Change of Name Act for registered sex offenders, nor is there a provision under Christopher's Law. Mr. Speaker, this legislation, if passed, will shore up these holes and offer much stronger protection to our communities and vulnerable people within Ontario.

As we have seen in other jurisdictions, specifically Alberta's provincial Parliament, they have adopted a closely mirroring legislation introduced by Minister Nate Glubish. On July 23 of this year, Alberta's Bill 28, the Vital Statistics (Protecting Albertans from Convicted Sex Offenders) Amendment Act, received royal assent in Alberta. This legislation prevents convicted sex offenders from having the legal means to change their names. This is exactly what is needed right here in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard so much about this issue in my community of Brampton West. Residents are not happy with this loophole. After discussing this with many families with young children in Brampton West, who want to continue raising their kids in the best province in Canada but are worried—they want us as a Legislature to do as much as we can to make sure that the problems and loopholes in our society are addressed.

The creation of Christopher's Law and Ontario's Sex Offender Registry came about after a young boy, Christopher Stephenson, was abducted and murdered. It was later discovered that his killer was a convicted sex offender, but at the time Ontario did not have a sex offender registry. The registry was created in 2001 after lobbying and advocacy work by Christopher's father, Jim Stephenson, and his mother, Anna. It is our hope that our legislation, if passed, will help to further bolster this legislation and provide additional protection to Ontarians.

If passed, this legislation will amend the Change of Name Act with exemptions found within Christopher's Law. We have an opportunity to build on the important work that Christopher's parents, Jim and Anna, established, and we would be honouring the memory of Christopher and so many Ontarians who have been victims of such heinous crimes.

This is also an opportunity for this Legislature to send a message to those who commit these crimes—the message that we will not tolerate these abhorrent crimes in our society. Ontarians are devastated each time there is a story like Christopher's, and we will continue to do what it takes to find solutions that have the approval of Ontarians and that provide meaningful solutions to gaps in our system.

Thousands of Canadians each year change their names for many different reasons, but to make sure that the process is protected and that Ontarians have faith in it, this simple and reasonable fix to a loophole is something that I emphatically support. It is about time that Ontario sends the unified message that we will not sit back idly while these crimes take place. We have a responsibility to act in support of the families of the victims and to make sure that these crimes never take place.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues in this Legislature to continue to work together in finding more solutions to address gaps like these. The Change of Name Act amendment is one that I believe should have cross-party support. I support this proposed legislation and I encourage all members of this Legislature to support it as well.

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

The member for Scarborough Centre has two minutes to respond.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: Thank you to my colleagues the members for Markham–Unionville, Brampton West, Ottawa–Vanier and Algoma–Manitoulin for speaking to my private member's bill and lending your support.

More often than not, we legislative reactively here at Queen's Park. As we all know, legislation regularly comes about because something becomes a problem large enough to get our attention, whether it's a problem that arises broadly in society or an event so significant in its impact that it compels us to act.

However, in some circumstances, we have to think ahead. We have to expect problems, to assess risk and to legislate in an anticipatory way. I firmly believe that the Change of Name Amendment Act does just that. If ever there was something that all of us could agree on, this should undoubtedly be it. We must all come together to protect victims.

As a mom of almost three, these are the types of issues that keep me up at night. That Christopher's Law took 13 years to be enacted after an 11-year-old boy was raped and murdered is heartbreaking, even 20 years after the fact.

While I of course know that we are taking strides to protect victims, we cannot and should not delay on this.

I came here to present this bill today because I knew it was too important not to reintroduce. This is bigger than me. This is something we should all band together on because it is the right thing to do. If my PMB can be the catalyst that makes this happen, it will be the honour of my time spent here at Queen's Park as a member of provincial Parliament.

I hope that all of my colleagues will join me in advocating and fighting for this to get passed: for Kristen French, for Tammy Homolka, for Christopher Stephenson, for the thousands of victims' names that we do not know, and for those who we can prevent from becoming victims and from being broken in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The time permitted for private members' public business has expired.

Miss Mitas has moved second reading of Bill 39, An Act to amend the Change of Name Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): Pursuant to standing order 101(b), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House unless Miss Mitas has a different committee she would like it referred to.

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: I would like it referred to the committee on legislative affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Percy Hatfield): The member wants to refer this to the committee on legislative affairs. Are we agreed? Agreed. Then this is referred to the committee on legislative affairs.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. on November 17, 2021.

The House adjourned at 1831.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins	
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	
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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, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation (Transit-Oriented Communities) / Ministre associé des Transports (Aménagement axé sur les transports en commun)
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
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Collard, Lucille (LIB)	Ottawa—Vanier	
Crawford, Stephen (PC)	Oakville	
Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
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Fee, Amy (PC)	Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Waterloo	

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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
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Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)	Milton	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme
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, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
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 / Solliciteuse générale
Kanapathi, Logan (PC)	Markham—Thornhill	
Karahalios, Belinda C. (NBP)	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, Hon. / L'hon. Jane (PC)	Burlington	Associate Minister of Children and Women's Issues / Ministre associée déléguée au dossier de l'Enfance et à la Condition féminine
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	

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Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (IND)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Park, Lindsey (IND)	Durham	
Parsa, Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Rod (PC)	Ajax	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Associate Minister of Digital Government / Ministre associé délégué de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development, Mines, Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines, des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Roberts, Jeremy (PC)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Romano, Hon. / L'hon. Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Simard, Amanda (LIB)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Singh, Gurratan (NDP)	Brampton East / Brampton-Est	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Sara (NDP)	Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Small Business and Red Tape Reduction / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises et à la Réduction des formalités administratives
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
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
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	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	Deputy Speaker / Vice-président

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
Wilson, Jim (IND)	Simcoe—Grey	
Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Yarde, Kevin (NDP)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	
Vacant	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	

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