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T-4

**Standing Committee on
Regulations and Private Bills**

**Comité permanent des
règlements et des projets
de loi d'intérêt privé**

2nd Session
42nd Parliament

Tuesday 7 December 2021

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42^e législature

Mardi 7 décembre 2021

Chair: Aris Babikian
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Aris Babikian
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON REGULATIONS
AND PRIVATE BILLS**

Tuesday 7 December 2021

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
RÈGLEMENTS ET DES PROJETS
DE LOI D'INTÉRÊT PRIVÉ**

Mardi 7 décembre 2021

The committee met at 0900 in committee room 1 and by video conference.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good morning. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order.

We have the following members with us in the room: MPP Smith. The following members are participating remotely: MPP Wai, MPP Stiles, MPP Hogarth, MPP Ke, MPP West, MPP Roberts, MPP McDonell. Did I miss anyone?

We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly, and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning.

As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we start the meeting?

I see MPP Barrett has joined us. MPP Barrett, can you identify yourself and your location, please?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, good morning, everybody. Toby Barrett, MPP, province of Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you.

Are there any questions before we begin? I see none.

On the agenda is committee business. Are there any motions? MPP Smith, go ahead.

Mr. Dave Smith: I move that committee enter closed session for the purposes of organizing committee business and that broadcasting staff be permitted to remain in the closed session meeting for the purposes of operating the electronic meeting technology.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): All of us have heard the motion, and it is on the screen. So any comments, any discussion? I see MPP Stiles. Go ahead, MPP Stiles.

Ms. Marit Stiles: It's a pleasure to be here this morning. I just wanted to speak against the motion to move in camera. I don't think any of the business of this committee should be conducted behind closed doors. There's no really good reason to move into a closed session in this situation. I'm hoping that instead of deliberating behind closed doors, we can actually deliberate in the public view, on record. I just wanted to raise that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any other discussion or comments? MPP West, go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: I also want to echo MPP Stiles's comments about not being on the record. We go in camera so often in this committee that it might as well be on our agenda, and never has there ever been anything that I believe couldn't be discussed in public. We are servants of the public, after all. We do this on such a regular basis that I find it very discouraging and not really what we're elected for. We're elected to debate things publicly. I don't know why we do this on a regular basis, and I'm opposed to it. I would like a—what's the right term, a standing count—a recorded vote, anyways.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any other comments or discussions? I see none, so I will put the question now: Shall the motion carry?

Ayes

Barrett, Hogarth, McDonell, Roberts, Dave Smith.

Nays

Fraser, Stiles, West.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The motion is carried.

Give us a few minutes to organize the committee so that we can enter the closed session.

The committee continued in closed session at 0905 and resumed at 1500.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Good afternoon. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order.

We have MPP Ke with us in the room. We are going to acknowledge and provide an opportunity for our colleagues on the network to identify themselves and their whereabouts. We'll start with MPP Coe. Go ahead.

Mr. Lorne Coe: Yes, good afternoon, Chair. I'm situated in my office here at Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Great. Thank you. MPP West?

Mr. Jamie West: I'm MPP West. I'm in my office at Queen's Park.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Billy Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Good afternoon, Chair. I am MPP Billy Pang. I am in the Legislature.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Stephen Crawford, identify yourself and your whereabouts, please.

Mr. Stephen Crawford: Hi. It's MPP Stephen Crawford. I am here in Toronto.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We have already identified MPP Daisy Wai, MPP Jeremy Roberts and MPP McDonnell from the morning session, so we don't need to go through the identification.

We are also joined by staff from legislative counsel, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Since it could take a little bit of time for your audio and video to come up after I recognize you, please take a brief pause before beginning. As always, all comments should go through the Chair. Are there any questions before we begin? I see none.

There are two private members' public bills on the agenda today which we will consider.

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM EDUCATION MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DE SENSIBILISATION AU RACISME ANTI-ASIATIQUE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to proclaim May as Anti-Asian Racism Education Month / Projet de loi 34, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois de sensibilisation au racisme anti-asiatique.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We'll now commence public hearings on Bill 34, An Act to proclaim May as Anti-Asian Racism Education Month. The member for Don Valley North shall have 10 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 20 minutes of questioning and answers divided into one round of seven and a half minutes for the government members, seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and five minutes for the independent member. Are there any questions? I see none.

I will now call upon the Don Valley North MPP to make his presentation. MPP Ke, you will have 10 minutes for your presentation. You may begin.

Mr. Vincent Ke: I am honoured to have the privilege to present my private member's bill, Bill 34, Anti-Asian Racism Education Month in May, to our committee. From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank you, all honourable ministers and colleagues, for the extraordinary support.

Ontario is often the leader when striving to set the best course of action for others to follow. I'm proud to accept the responsibility to contribute to our combined efforts to inspire significant social change—change that promises to shine a light on the social inequities and injustices that cause innocent people harm through no fault of their own, change that will amplify the message loud and clear that there is absolutely no room for anti-Asian racism in Ontario.

Bill 34 will instill hope and restore trust in those who are affected by it: Canadians of Asian heritage. Bill 34 will focus on the prevalence of anti-Asian racism, to expose it for what it is: a virulent and unacceptable form of abuse. Visible minorities are always more vulnerable to racist mistreatment, simply because they are easily identified as different and, therefore, they are vulnerable targets of abuse that stems from ignorance, fear, bias and hate.

According to Statistics Canada, "research based on crowd-sourced data showed that, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, certain population groups designated as visible minorities—most notably Chinese, Korean and Southeast Asian participants—were more likely than other groups to have perceived an increase in the frequency of harassment or attacks based on race, ethnicity or skin colour."

Anti-Asian racism is a disturbing source of societal and personal injury that has the power to create disruption and immeasurable damage and devastation for its victims. With a concerted effort to educate the public about the serious consequences of anti-Asian racism to individuals—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Ke, just one second. I see MPP Pang raised his hand. You have a point of order, MPP Pang?

Mr. Billy Pang: Yes, Mr. Chair. Could you ask the control to turn the camera to MPP Ke? I think I want to look at him and see his presentation.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Okay, thank you very much, MPP Pang. Here it is.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Can I continue?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Ke, go ahead. Continue, please.

Mr. Vincent Ke: With a concerted effort to educate the public about the serious consequences of anti-Asian racism to individuals and their communities, Bill 34 will educate and raise public awareness to change deep-seated perceptions, biases and attitudes, with the resolute goal to improve the lives and experiences of so many people who count on us in Ontario to lead by example. Asian Canadians rely on our unequivocal support, and they deserve it.

As I mentioned in my second reading debate of Bill 34, the shadow pandemic, which was identified since the onset of the COVID-19 public health crisis, has cast a long shadow indeed on the Asian community. Too many Asians in Ontario have lived experience with anti-Asian racism, which has sadly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I have listened to heartbreaking stories of anti-Asian racism that many people, including many of my constituents and my close friends, have experienced. They feel as if they are living under a heavy and dark shadow of fear due to words or acts of anti-Asian racism that have touched them directly.

The wounds left by anti-Asian racism are not always visible, but they are nonetheless genuinely painful and extremely difficult to heal. The scars these types of wounds inflict can last for a lifetime, and it is all preventable with education and awareness about the harmful influences of anti-Asian racism. For those who have had the courage to confide in me their experiences with anti-Asian racism,

they feel encouraged by Bill 34 and hopeful it will motivate real change.

1510

Education is the key that will unlock the doors and open them wide to discover the pathway that will guide us to mutual respect, understanding and empathy. Education is necessary because many people don't understand the problem—or worse, they minimize or dismiss it. The problem is that Asian Canadians are too often victimized by hateful words and deeds. They often suffer in silence because they don't want to risk attracting criticism or negative attention. The perpetrators of anti-Asian racism count on their silence and ours to continue without any consequences, expressing their racist words in person or on social media. Some go to extremes and commit cowardly and vicious assaults against the helpless targets of their hate.

Through awareness and education, we have the power to create revolutionary change for generations to come. We can replace racism by planting new and truthful ideas in the minds of our children, who will grow strong and resilient in a fertile atmosphere of mutual understanding, kindness, respect and inclusion.

Bill 34 offers us the opportunity to speak up and be heard. Today, we are not silent in the face of the suffering of others. Today, we have the chance to stand together to support Asian Canadians. We will not look away from the problem. Together, we will face it head on. Their stories will be told, with dignity restored.

It's time that the offenders who threaten our peace and unity, those who willfully engage in and promote anti-Asian racist sentiment, rhetoric and attacks are exposed, shamed and silenced. Together, we have the opportunity to blend our concern about anti-Asian racism with a dedicated cause to improve the lives of Canadians of all ages and backgrounds.

Bill 34 endeavours to acknowledge, address and eliminate anti-Asian racism in our schools, our communities and our province while promoting the value of Asian Canadians and their many contributions. Asian Canadians and their families deserve to live in peace, free of fear.

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the attention and the consideration that Bill 34 has received. I believe wholeheartedly that it will be the beginning of stopping the turbulent tide of anti-Asian racism in our midst. I am honoured to present Bill 34 to you, my esteemed colleagues, and I humbly and sincerely ask you for your support. I know the Asian Canadian community is counting on us all. If Bill 34 is successful, I believe that a year from now we will see measurable progress in our collective effort to eliminate anti-Asian racism from our homes, schools, communities and province.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Ke.

Now we will start with the questioning. First I will go to the government side, and you have seven and a half minutes. To start the questioning, I see MPP Billy Pang raising his hand. Go ahead, MPP Pang. Ask your question.

Mr. Billy Pang: To MPP Ke: As a previous school board trustee I have heard a lot of strategy in the school

board discussed about racism. In your bill, you put anti-Asian racism education as only mentioned in this bill. Shouldn't we strive to eliminate all kinds of racism and discrimination?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, MPP Pang, and thank you so much for your confidence in speaking on this bill in second reading.

Very unfortunately, there are many types of racism circulating in Canada, and each deserves the appropriate attention to combat against it. Each targeted ethnic or racial group has specific concerns. I know from experience and from listening to the concerns from all my Asian Canadian constituents that anti-Asian racism needs its own unique platform to educate the public about the serious problems it causes.

For instance, people who experience anti-Black racism or anti-Semitism do not experience the same kinds of racism, discrimination or xenophobia as experienced by Asian Canadians. The roots of racism are different for each group, and therefore the conversation around each type of racism requires specific knowledge, understanding and education. Each group that is subjected to racism deserves to be recognized and have their focus and attention on their specific concerns.

All types of racism are unacceptable. We are all Canadians of equal worth. When one person is affected by racism, hatred, prejudice or discrimination, we are all affected. Racism has the power to harm and diminish us all. I don't view the anti-Asian racism movement as the competitor of other anti-racism initiatives. On the contrary: All anti-racism efforts should work in solidarity because we are fighting for the same cause—to eliminate the menace of racism.

With that being said, while we have made significant efforts towards progress on addressing other types of racism, we have remained relatively silent on anti-Asian racism. There has been minimal media coverage and a lack of public awareness campaigns. No substantive measures have been taken by the government to address this important issue that affects the whole Asian Canadian community. They have been left to worry and suffer in silence and isolation, while not knowing where to seek assistance, support and relief.

It is time to fill in the blanks in this important cause by having meaningful discussions and by creating targeted measures that provide short-term and long-term solutions.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Any other questions from the government side? MPP Daisy Wai, go ahead.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much, MPP Ke, for this very good bill. I still want, as you mentioned, meaningful discussions. Can you elaborate on this a little bit more?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, MPP Wai. Thank you for your question. Meaningful discussion can lead to less tension and greater mutual understanding that would effectively combat racism. Open and honest communication is required to bring about change.

Racism is often deeply rooted in cultures, in families, in communities and in individuals. If left to fester, it can

spread its destruction for generations. Racism is learned, and it can also be unlearned. Education gives us the tools to uproot and reject misinformation, negative stereotypes and harmful bias that have the very real potential to lead towards acts of racism, hate and discrimination. Through awareness and education, we have the power to create revolutionary change for generations to come. We can replace racism by planting new and truthful ideas in the minds of our children which will grow strong and resilient in a greater atmosphere of understanding, kindness, respect and inclusion.

I strongly believe that Bill 34 will encourage open communication on the sensitive topic of racism. It will help to educate the public about anti-Asian racism, hate and discrimination, and have a positive impact on the public perception of our Asian Canadian neighbours.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Roberts, go ahead. You have two minutes.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: Thank you so much, MPP Ke, for bringing this important legislation forward. I have a very large and vibrant Asian Canadian community in my riding and my partner is Filipino. This is a very important piece of legislation. I'm really glad to see you bringing it forward.

1520

You mentioned targeted measures that provide short-term and long-term solutions. I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little bit more on this and some of those measures that you see us being able to do to help combat anti-Asian racism in our communities.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, MPP Roberts. The targeted measures could be holding perpetrators of anti-Asian racism accountable for their hateful words and deeds. It is time that the offenders who threaten our peace and unity, those who wilfully engage in and promote anti-Asian racism statements, rhetoric and attacks, are exposed, shamed and silenced.

Educating victims and witnesses to seek assistance, to raise their voices and to stand up for themselves and others: Their stories need to be told and heard to restore dignity and respect.

Facilitating conversations between different ethnic communities to foster mutual understanding—so also encouraging all Canadians to stand together to support Asian Canadians. We will not look away from the problem. Together, we will face it head on.

And collecting race-based data for sufficient mapping of the problem: In accordance with the—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Ke. The government time is up.

Now, we will move to the opposition side with questioning. Any questions from the opposition side? MPP West, please go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: I'd like to give the opportunity to MPP Ke to finish what he was saying previously.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Go ahead, MPP Ke. Finish the comments and thoughts.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Okay, yes. Collecting race-based data for sufficient mapping of the problem: In accordance with

the Anti-Racism Act and anti-racism data standards, all school boards in Ontario will be required to collect race-based data by January 1, 2023; also, working with community partners to promote public awareness and a community-based approach for easy access to information and assistance; and blending anti-Asian racism education with the celebration of Asian culture and heritage, promoting awareness for better public understanding of racist confrontations that Asian Canadians are facing.

I'm optimistic about the future discussions about race and ethnicity. When we acknowledge the problems and put our collective efforts into solving them, I'm confident that positive change will occur.

Thank you, MPP Roberts.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, MPP Ke. One of the things I was reading, just looking at this bill in particular, was about microaggressions towards Asian people. I remembered a previous committee meeting. Someone had mispronounced your name; you had corrected it. I think I would have mispronounced it as well, because "Ke" to me would be like "kay" or "key," and you correct us to "Ke." I think that's a good step into recognizing small things people could be doing, not even recognizing the impact it would have on somebody.

What are things that our fellow Ontarians can do or resources available for us to help us better become allies in the fight against anti-Asian racism?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you, MPP West. Yes, it's a good question. During this pandemic, people of Asian heritage are experiencing a heightened rate of race-related incidents. According to the Vancouver Police Department, the city has seen a 717% increase in anti-Asian crimes from 2019 to 2020. Alarming, Toronto has the second-highest rate of cases involving anti-Asian crimes among major Canadian cities. So many Asian Canadians are viewed as outsiders and second-class citizens in this country. They often remain silent in the face of this type of insult and try to ignore them. They pretend that these aggressive and alienating comments don't hurt them, but we all know that is not true.

Anti-Asian racism is called another kind of violence by the Angus Reid Institute and it will likely have a long-lasting effect on the Asian Canadian community. And as I always mention—and presenting to all people—"Go back to China" or "Go back to your own country" are hurtful comments that Asian Canadians of all ages too often hear.

Even Senator Victor Oh, one of my friends, is not immune to this type of racist confrontation. Earlier this year, when he was walking from the House of Commons to his Ottawa residence, a young person passing by yelled at him the F-word and told him to go back to where he came from.

So I want to make a difference to the sense of safety and security of members of the Asian Canadian community, especially for the affected children and youth and our vulnerable seniors. There is a lot of recent data on incidents happening just recently and during the pandemic, and that's a lot of the reason that I bring this bill forward.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, MPP Ke. I think one of my colleagues asked most of the questions I was thinking

about. I was curious about choosing the month of May. Is there any significance to it, or was it just the month that you chose?

Mr. Vincent Ke: Yes, May is Asian Heritage Month, when we are celebrating Asian culture and heritage. Most of the community celebrates at this time, to celebrate and be proud of the Asian Canadian contributions to building this country. But I wanted just to remind us, while we are celebrating we also want to remember there is racism against this group still happening and is actually escalating. Just as I mentioned earlier, because this is a pandemic, it's really easy for them to be a convenient scapegoat to be blamed with the violence.

When I first introduced this bill it was in May, and I just want it to be in May as it's an education month. But because our House recessed in the summertime and came back in the fall, we have a second session and that's why I reintroduced this bill and we're now here in the committee.

Mr. Jamie West: Okay. That seems like a good fit, you know, if you're going to be celebrating anyways it's a good time to talk about the racism. Was there anything else that you wanted to say that you didn't have time to say? I don't have any more questions. I just wasn't sure if there was more that you wanted to talk about in your bill.

Okay, Chair, it looks like not. I have no further questions. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP West. We don't have the independent member present with us to ask questions, so we will forgo his portion of the questioning.

Thank you very much, MPP Ke, for being here with us and sharing your thoughts and your comments on this bill.

ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS
MONTH ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS
DE SENSIBILISATION
À L'ENDOMÉTRIOSE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to proclaim March as Endometriosis Awareness Month / Projet de loi 58, Loi proclamant le mois de mars Mois de sensibilisation à l'endométriose.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The member for Davenport shall have 10 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 20 minutes of questioning and answers, divided into one round of seven and a half minutes for the government members, seven and a half minutes for the official opposition members and five minutes for the independent members. Are there any questions? If not, I'm going to invite MPP Stiles to make her presentation. MPP Stiles, go ahead, please.

1530

Ms. Marit Stiles: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the committee for giving me an opportunity today to speak about this bill. I want to start by saying that my pronouns are she/her and elle.

It was a real pleasure to see this bill brought forward for debate last week. It is a bill, as you mentioned, that would

make the month of March Endometriosis Awareness Month in Ontario. Chair, I introduced this bill alongside my colleague from Toronto Centre, MPP Suze Morrison, originally in the last session. Then it died with prorogation, and maybe that was just as well, because here we are with this opportunity to draw attention to a really debilitating disease and hopefully make change for many, many people.

I want to, right off the top, thank Endometriosis Network Canada, EndoAct, Change for Endometriosis Ontario, folks like Katie Luciani, Philippa Bridge-Cook and medical community members like Dr. Sony Singh and Dr. Catherine Allaire, and so many others who are really taking up the cause.

But most of all, I really want to thank all the endo warriors out there. I think there are quite a few of them who have tuned in today and tuned in last week when we had this sort of surprise debate about the bill. I want to say, good on you. I know it's a tough haul, but we are getting somewhere, and I really appreciate all that all of you do every day.

I also want to thank, again, MPP Suze Morrison for coming forward with me on this bill, and also MPP Robin Martin, because last week in the Legislature, when we had an opportunity to speak, it was MPP Morrison and MPP Martin who spoke. I really appreciated their comments. It is a very difficult topic.

Obviously, we're not all looking forward to talking about these issues, for a lot of reasons, mostly because of the stigma associated with women's health and menstruation. But I think, also, as women in politics, we've been told, "Don't talk about things that differentiate you." And women, for so many generations, for forever, were kept out of politics because we were seen to be less than persons, for one thing, and some of these women's health issues, the stigma associated with them, means that a lot of women in leadership, not just in politics, avoid talking about the realities that we face. But I think it's extraordinarily important, however difficult, so I really want to thank MPP Martin and MPP Morrison for having the courage to do so.

Endometriosis is an inflammatory disease that affects at least one in 10 women, trans and non-binary people who menstruate, and it can cause symptoms that are really debilitating and conditions like chronic pelvic pain, nausea, obviously excessive menstrual pain, and infertility. Again, it's at least one in 10 women, or others who menstruate, because we don't really know. We suspect that many, many people go undiagnosed.

With this many people affected, though, you would think that it would be well known and discussed, that there would be media attention and research and policy around treatment and diagnosis, but, again, this is a disease that's mired in a lot of shame and stigma, the same sort of stuff that surrounds menstruation generally. I have to say, I think we've all in this Legislature done a great service to so many by talking about these issues, by talking about the need for menstrual supplies in schools, for example.

These things all really open the door to show that we can talk about these issues. We can talk about them openly. There's no shame associated. And I'm going to

say it: Especially for men to talk about these issues is really important—or non-menstruating people, maybe, is a better way to put it—because when you talk about it, you send a message, as well, to others, to those little boys in schools who maybe will learn something and look up to you too.

But this is something that is shared by all people, not just, again, women, but trans and non-binary people, and it means that many people with endometriosis suffer for years before seeking help—years and years. They're often dismissed and misdiagnosed by the medical system—often, again, for many years—and unfortunately, many are never diagnosed at all, we suspect.

I know that some of the people who talked about this last week in the Legislature talked about waiting for, gosh, at least 15 years before getting a diagnosis, which almost always is associated with the fact that somebody is trying to actually get pregnant and it becomes a fertility issue. When it's a fertility issue, the medical system really kicks into high gear. It's like, "Wow, we've got to diagnose that, because, gosh, we want her—or them—to be able to get pregnant," but the truth is that in the meantime, all those people have been suffering, often really badly, for many years. It's really unfortunate, because the impact of endometriosis on quality of life, on self esteem, is massive.

If that wasn't enough reason for us to start talking about this disease and taking it more seriously, the impact on a person's ability to work, to attend school—it's costly to families, to communities and to the economy. As I mentioned last week in the Legislature, research shows that endometriosis costs the Canadian economy \$1.8 billion each year, with adult sufferers often forced to miss work due to pain and young people often falling behind in their studies due to missing school.

Chair, this is a very personal issue for so many people that, again, it's hard to talk about, as I already mentioned, so I almost guarantee that there are people in all of your lives who have been impacted. I can tell you that in the last week—and I really want to share this with the government members, because it was a lovely surprise to see this brought forward, this bill. I just want to say I've received so many emails and calls and posts on social media from folks talking about how much they appreciated this. Sometimes we think, "Okay, an awareness month is just a little, tiny step," but the important thing is that acknowledging this as a province, that whole month, really allows for a door to open for conversations that are so important—also with the medical community, because it's astonishing that there are so few answers and no solutions. There is no prevention per se, but there are treatments.

What I just wanted to share as I wrap up here is that while the average diagnosis takes about seven years minimum—that's not counting, of course, the many people who go undiagnosed, we suspect, for most of their life—we also know that real diagnosis can only really happen with laparoscopic surgery; those pelvic exams tell people a lot. But there are lots of treatment options, some of them surgical, and we need the medical establishment the medical community, to be well- and better-versed on these issues.

I think that was another thing I really wanted to leave you with, is that a lot of our young people don't know what's normal, right? And so, one of the things that's really important is to have a conversation about what's normal pain and what's not normal pain and defining that a little bit, and so there are lots of opportunities with an awareness month like this to talk about those things.

I want to thank the government again for bringing this forward. I'm really pleased to be able to be here with the committee to talk to you about it. I'm not an expert, but I will do my very best based on the knowledge I have and what I've been provided with by so many experts out there, to share what I know and answer your questions. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Stiles, for shedding light on this important issue.

Now we will go to the questioning. We will start this time with the opposition side. You have seven and a half minutes. MPP West, go ahead.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to congratulate MPP Stiles and MPP Morrison for bringing forward this important issue, and I want to echo MPP Stiles's compliments to MPP Martin for speaking during debate about this. I also want to congratulate the endo advocates on this. I literally had never heard of this before, and I think it's a good reason saying why this is so important to us. When I put this into my calendar today, I wrote "endrometrisosis" and spelled it completely wrong, so even that little bit of awareness is great.

1540

This is a great first step. It's raising awareness for people like me. I'm sure there are others in the room who feel the same way. What else could the government be doing to address the issues raised by endo activists, MPP Stiles?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, MPP West. I really appreciate your question and I'm sure your constituents in Sudbury do, too. Like you said, it's not something people know about. There's no shame in that, to be honest, because again, it's not like a lot of other diseases. We're quiet about it, we don't talk about it a lot. Women don't like to talk about periods, generally. It used to be not something you talked about in polite society at all. Of course, there are a lot of cultural issues around it. But I think it's a really important conversation to have, so this is great, that we can do that, because so many people are actually impacted, and I feel like it's probably one of the most prevalent diseases that we know very little about.

What I would say—and this is, again, really just based on meetings I've had with folks who have been doing this work for a very long time, folks like Endometriosis Network Canada, for example, who have been doing a ton of work on this at the federal level in particular to raise awareness and to try to put in place a national endometriosis plan. We really do need that. We need to lay out what research needs to happen and how we train and prepare folks in the medical community to better deal with endometriosis and symptoms and identify them early. All of those are things that we could be doing provincially as well.

Again, another big shout-out to a relatively new group—maybe that isn't the right way to put it, but Change for Endometriosis Ontario, which has been trying to organize around this, mostly based in Ottawa. How do we raise those issues? How do we raise them in the medical community? The province has an incredibly important leadership role here, and I really encourage the government to continue to meet with those organizations to have those important conversations and to meet with those in the medical community who are really leaders in this regard—experts, not me. But I would say that's very important.

Then the other piece that I've been talking a lot about is education, because right now, in our health and physical education curriculum, we deal with lots of important things, but we don't, as far as I understand—and I know that some educators may inject this into their conversations in their classrooms, but we don't really have the kind of menstruation, period conversations that we need to with everyone, whatever your gender. We need to be talking about this openly. We need to talk about what defines your period, but also what's normal. And that's tricky, right, because those things do differ from person to person. But talking about what's a normal amount of pain, for example, when a person who experiences the kind of pain that endometriosis usually involves—and we heard this in some of the speeches last week. It could mean that you're missing a lot of school, missing work all the time. Pain shouldn't be that intense every month, right? So those are the kinds of conversations we need to have.

There is some really amazing work going on in New Zealand, where they have set up some fantastic curriculum around these issues, with great success. The government of British Columbia is pilot-testing a similar curriculum program in partnership with academic institutions, researchers and schools there in BC and having really great results.

That's important, because what we would love to have happen is a situation where, maybe, fathers or parents of kids who are menstruating say, "You know what? I think we should go to the doctor and get this checked out. This doesn't seem right. There must be something they can do to help with your pain," and be able to ask the right questions when they do go to see a doctor or a nurse or a nurse practitioner. Knowing what questions to ask, knowing yourself what's normal and what's not is really, really important.

Again, I can't stress enough how many people are dealing with this all the time. We, as a government, as a province—and our medical community is also not really dealing with it. Yes, I hear these same stories today that I heard five, 10 years ago and that I experienced myself and that many of the other people in our Legislature experienced who have been talking about this. It really continues to be an issue throughout the province and we need to improve access to diagnosis and to surgical treatment. We need to make it more available. We need to make it more available across the province, because, of course, if you've got a waiting list in Toronto with a specialist, 500 people on a waiting list, you can imagine what it's like in other

regions. So let's talk about this and make sure that our family physicians have the training and the skills to be able to at least diagnose what endometriosis is. Thanks for the question.

Mr. Jamie West: Yes, thank you very much. Chair, how much time do I have?

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): You have 56 seconds.

Mr. Jamie West: Well, congratulations on this. I'm sure more awareness is going to lead to more research as well. There's probably no time for you to reply, so maybe just nod. I'll hand it off, Chair. Thank you.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thanks.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP West, and thank you, MPP Stiles.

Now we move to the government side. I see MPP Billy Pang. Go ahead, MPP Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: Mr. Chair, through you: MPP Stiles, thank you for bringing awareness of this painful disorder of endometriosis forward. Would you speak more on this proposed act on Endometriosis Awareness Month that you expect to achieve, and what's your plan to achieve that?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Sure, absolutely, and thank you very much for the question. Obviously, this bill really just establishes March as Endometriosis Awareness Month, which, I think, that month has been recognized in other jurisdictions, so it's not particularly new, but it is new in Ontario.

My hope would be, just like every other awareness month, that we would have an opportunity, for example, as politicians, to make remarks in the Legislature to acknowledge this month and, in that way, I hope, spread some awareness. It also allows those organizations out there to have some focus around which they can organize to increase awareness and advocacy. This is a big part of change.

We in the government can be proactive and as I've just mentioned, there are a lot of things I think we could be doing. Again, I'm not a medical expert, but there are many experts out there, both medical experts and also the people themselves who experience this and have been on this journey. They call themselves endo warriors. There are a lot of people out there who have been on this journey for a long time, have had various experiences and have learned from them and have shared that experience with others.

I think we need to, as a province, use this opportunity that we have right now to shed more awareness around the issue, shed some light on it. I can't tell you, again, how much I think that will matter, because just based on even anecdotal evidence, let alone the limited research that's being done out there, very few people—I mean, we're talking often people as young as maybe 11, certainly by the time they're 13, 14, experiencing that kind of pain and discomfort, and maybe it gets worse as they get older, and nobody can tell them what's going on. Maybe they even went to look for help and didn't get a good answer. Maybe they're too ashamed to. Maybe they've just been told their whole lives that that's how it is, because maybe their mothers or their grandmothers experienced the same thing. And so, even just talking about it like this makes a huge difference.

I'm hoping that, come Endometriosis Awareness Month in March this coming year in the Legislature, we can all don yellow ribbons and we can make statements and we can talk about it in our communities and that in doing that, we'll all really help to reduce the stigma and the shame associated and just to make these conversations less uncomfortable.

Look, I will tell you honestly, you could ask my colleagues in the NDP caucus, I have definitely put these issues on the table in the Legislature a few times—issues related to menstruation—but it's not because I enjoy talking about it particularly. It's mostly because I feel like that's one of the areas which we've kind of missed as a society. We've got women now representing so many of our elected members; we've got women in so many positions of power and influence; we've got women all throughout the medical community; but yet we're still really falling behind in dealing with some of these issues like endometriosis. So I hope that that's what we can achieve with a bill like this. Thanks for the question.

1550

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the answer. I will pass the next question to my colleague.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): MPP Roberts, go ahead.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: MPP Stiles, thank you so much for speaking to the committee today. I also just really want to commend you on your work on this bill and on your wonderful speech the other day. I was in the chamber when you gave your remarks for second reading, and yourself, the MPP for Toronto Centre and the MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence delivered really, really fantastic speeches where you were able to personalize it and talk about these issues from a human level.

I can tell you, it ended up spurring a conversation for me. My mother is just retired as an ob-gyn nurse after a 30-year career. I was having breakfast with her on the weekend and I mentioned this bill, and of course she was very familiar with this and shared a lot of the concerns you had about the lack of knowledge here.

I want to pick up a little bit on some of the stuff you were just chatting about, about some things that we as MPPs can do in our own ridings when it comes to March. What sort of things do you think we can do to help raise awareness? Is it getting stuff in newsletters? Is it sharing stories? Is it the social media platform we have? What are some ideas that you have that we can use to get this important message out?

Ms. Marit Stiles: Yes, thank you, MPP Roberts, and thanks for sharing that about your mom. I didn't know that. That's really cool and interesting.

Yes, absolutely. What are the things that we can do as legislators? We can absolutely use the tools that we have, like social media and newsletters, to get the word out, to just even talk about what this is. Even just to describe it a little, I think, makes a big difference for a lot of people who might be reading about it and learning about it for the first time.

I also think it would be really great—I've done this a bit myself, and I know that there are a lot of really cool

organizations, as I have mentioned already previously, who are doing great advocacy around this, but also just sharing a lot of information. I think hosting a Zoom or something with folks who come from that community, those organizations, would be really useful, and to hear from them about what the ideas are that they have for what government should be doing at all levels, but also just what individuals can do to advocate for themselves, because that's a big piece of it, right?

Even if we can change every law, we still need to be able to empower people to feel like they can raise questions and issues with their physician, and that's a big—of course, as we all know here, that's often been an obstacle for lots of different kinds of treatment, being knowledgeable enough and knowing that you have the right to advocate for yourself.

So I think those things are really important and I would definitely be happy to connect you all with people who advocate in that area. I have to say, it's been a learning journey for me too, just in the last couple of years. There are a lot of people out there who are really active on this issue and would love to hear their MPPs advocating like that.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): The government side has 30 seconds. MPP Wai?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I don't know how much I can ask in 30 seconds. In fact, originally, I wanted to say that I echo—being a woman myself, I have gone through those pains when I was young, and I can check with my other female colleagues—or people like my classmates and things like that, but I want to see how can we constructively help them—

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Thank you, MPP Wai. Unfortunately, your time is up and our witness time is up. Thank you, MPP Stiles, for your presentation.

Ms. Marit Stiles: Thank you, MPP Wai. I'm sorry I didn't get to answer your question.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): We don't have the independent member here, so we will go directly to the clause-by-clause examination.

ANTI-ASIAN RACISM EDUCATION MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS DE SENSIBILISATION AU RACISME ANTI-ASIATIQUE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to proclaim May as Anti-Asian Racism Education Month / Projet de loi 34, Loi proclamant le mois de mai Mois de sensibilisation au racisme anti-asiatique.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): First, we will commence clause-by-clause consideration on Bill 34, An Act to proclaim May as Anti-Asian Racism Education Month. Now, are there any comments or questions to any section of the bill? I see none.

There are no amendments to sections 1 to 3 of the bill. I propose we bundle them. Does the committee agree? Okay. Is there any debate on sections 1 to 3? Any comments?

No? Okay. I will put the question: Shall sections 1 to 3 carry? All in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Sections 1 to 3 are carried.

Shall the preamble carry? I am going to put the question: All in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? The preamble is carried.

Shall the title of the bill carry? Before I put the question, is there any debate? Comments? Seeing none, all in favour of the title of the bill, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, the title of the bill is carried.

Shall Bill 34 carry? Before I put the question, is there any debate or comments? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, Bill 34 is carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? Any debate? Any comments? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, I will report Bill 34 to the House.

ENDOMETRIOSIS AWARENESS
MONTH ACT, 2021
LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS
DE SENSIBILISATION
À L'ENDOMÉTRIOSE

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to proclaim March as Endometriosis Awareness Month / Projet de loi 58, Loi proclamant le mois de mars Mois de sensibilisation à l'endométriose.

The Chair (Mr. Aris Babikian): Now we will move to clause-by-clause consideration on Bill 58, An Act to proclaim March as Endometriosis Awareness Month. Are there any comments or questions to any section of the bill? Any debate? Any comments? None? Okay.

Since there are no amendments to sections 1 to 3 of the bill, I propose we bundle them. Does the committee agree? Any debate? Any comments? None? So I will put the question: All in favour of sections 1 to 3, please raise your hand. Any opposition? I see none. Sections 1 to 3 are carried.

Shall the preamble carry? Any debate? Any comments? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, the preamble is carried.

We move now to the title of the bill. Shall the title of the bill carry? Any debate? Any comments? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, the title of the bill is carried.

Shall Bill 58 carry? Any debate? Any comments? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, Bill 58 is carried.

Shall I report the bill to the House? Any debate? Any questions? Seeing none, all in favour, please raise your hand. Any opposition? Seeing none, I will report the bill to the House.

Thank you very much to all of you and to our witnesses. There being no further business, this committee now stands adjourned until 9 a.m., Wednesday, December 8, 2021.

The committee adjourned at 1601.

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