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Mercredi
26 avril 2023

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 avril 2023

Report continued from volume A.

1710

STRENGTHENING SAFETY
AND MODERNIZING JUSTICE
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT
DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA
MODERNISATION DE LA JUSTICE

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

Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare / Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives au système judiciaire, à la prévention et à la protection contre l'incendie ainsi qu'au bien-être des animaux.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I rise today on behalf of the people I represent in London West to participate in debate on the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, Bill 102. I'm going to begin by focusing on schedules 3 and 5, but before I do, Speaker, I did want to echo some of the concerns that were expressed by my colleague the member for Oshawa in her remarks earlier.

This is a bill that was tabled yesterday. It arrived in print form this morning, so we now have a print copy of this bill, which is 24 pages, seven different schedules. And there is a lot in this bill, Speaker. So we got the print copy today, and now here we are, a mere hours later, debating this legislation in the chamber. That does a disservice to the people that we were elected to represent because it limits our ability to reach out to people in our communities who will be affected by this bill, to do the outreach to stakeholder organizations to understand the implications of this bill, and to participate meaningfully in this debate on the provisions of this proposed legislation.

But I do have something to say about this bill. I have read some of the media that has come out over yesterday afternoon and evening and into today. I have also had an opportunity to be in this place and to listen to some of the comments that were made by the government members in providing some context for this bill and speaking to the specific measures that are included.

As I said, I want to begin with a focus on schedules 3 and 5 of Bill 102. These are the schedules that basically implement Keira's Law, the federal legislation that was passed, at the provincial level and the education courses that are described in this bill that will now be available for

newly appointed judges and newly appointed justices of the peace as well as through continuing education. The courses that are described in this bill mirror exactly what the federal government has just passed in terms of continuing education for judges: that is, education "on matters related to sexual assault law, intimate partner violence, coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships and social context, which includes systemic racism and systemic discrimination."

I want to recognize the heroic efforts of Jennifer Kagan-Viater and her husband, who are Keira's—were Keira's—parents. Keira, of course, was a four-year-old child who died while in the care of her father because the justice system, the people involved in the justice system, did not recognize the risks that they were creating for Keira when they left her in her father's care. We have seen this too many times in this province, Speaker, when an abusive partner uses the children to get back at the partner that he is targeting or that they are targeting. In the wake of that horrendous loss, Jennifer, Keira's mother, undertook a campaign to get an education program for judges in place.

This bill, these two schedules of this act, implement that program at the provincial level for, as I said, provincial judges and justices of the peace. While I commend that effort by this government, I did want to share some good questions that were asked about the effectiveness of this measure by Pamela Cross. Pamela Cross is someone that I suspect many of us in this House are very familiar with through her advocacy at Luke's Place and the expertise that she brings to death review committees, coroners' inquests and other studies on how to deal with the epidemic of violence against women in this province.

Yesterday, in an editorial that Pamela posted called "Changing the World," she did caution that "as always ... the devil will be in the details: How soon will the" courts "move to establish these seminars? How will judges be encouraged to attend? How will the content be developed and delivered, and by whom? Will there be any kind of evaluation process to assess what is actually learned and whether it is applied?"

These are very good questions, Speaker. She asks these questions about Keira's Law, which was passed at the federal level, but they are equally valid questions with regard to the measures that we see in this bill in schedules 3 and 5, and I would encourage the government to make sure that there are very specific and comprehensive answers to those questions.

Speaker, the measures that have been brought forward today in Bill 102 come at a time when we are seeing violence against women at rates that we have never experienced in this province before. We have an epidemic of

violence against women. That was the first recommendation of the Renfrew inquest that was called in the wake of the murder of the three women in Renfrew county several years ago. The province must acknowledge that violence against women is an epidemic in Ontario. The province must come forward with new investments in prevention and awareness. The province must listen to the hundreds of recommendations that have been made by death review committees, by coroners' inquests over the past 30 years, and use that information to develop policy and programs and resources that are actually going to deal with these preventable deaths—because all of these deaths, or the vast majority of these deaths that we have seen in this province are preventable.

And thank goodness for OAITH, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, for publishing the femicide report on a monthly basis. We just got the report from March, which showed three more women were killed in this province last month. There have been 18 women killed to date in this province because of femicide and intimate partner violence.

So while I'm glad to see schedules 3 and 5 come forward in this bill, I wonder why the government continues to ignore some of the most critical recommendations of the Renfrew inquest. There was a partial response from the government earlier this year detailing some of the actions they were taking on some of the recommendations of that coroner's report, but the province continues to refuse, as I said, to declare intimate partner violence as an epidemic. They have still not established the intimate partner violence commission. They have still not created the role of a survivor advocate. They have still not instituted a provincial implementation committee to monitor the implementation of the Renfrew recommendations. They still don't have a plan for second-stage housing for intimate partner violence survivors. There are many things that we are still waiting for this province to do, and those measures are really a sign to women in this province, to citizens in this province, that this government is finally taking seriously its obligation to address the epidemic of intimate partner violence that we are experiencing.

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I now want to move to the provisions of schedule 1 of the bill, and that deals with policing in this province. Basically, this schedule says that the requirement for post-secondary education that was included in the 2019 COPS Act, which was never put into force, is no longer going to be there. That is the requirement for a police cadet or someone who wants to become a police officer to have a post-secondary education. The fact that this was not actually in place in the province—they're just removing a provision of a bill that had not yet been enacted—does raise the question of what the impact of that measure will be. Clearly, there was no obligation for police forces in the past to require post-secondary education, so it is hard to imagine that this is going to open up the doors to a lot of new people coming forward to deal with the shortage of police officers that communities across Ontario are facing.

But the interesting thing—the question I had for the government about this recommendation is the timing of it

is very curious, because it follows the recent release of the Mass Casualty Commission Report, which was a comprehensive overview of policing in Canada that was undertaken in the wake of the 22 murders in Nova Scotia. Instead of recommending that the bar be lowered for educational requirements for police officers, that report strongly recommends that the educational requirements be strengthened. And in particular, that report talks about the importance of police officers having training on things like the investigation of sexual assault complaints; recognizing and responding to gender-based and intimate partner violence, including coercive control, criminal harassment, uttering threats and hate-motivated crimes; and recognizing the effects of trauma, both in themselves and on those with whom they deal.

Speaker, this really reflects much of what we have heard in the official opposition and that I think all MPPs have heard from police officers that we speak to in our communities about the need for more training, for more specialized skill sets in things like investigating sexual assault, in understanding the impact of trauma on survivors. Police officers that we've been speaking to are asking for more training in understanding mental health and addictions. There is a crisis of mental health and addictions in our communities across the province. De-escalation—these are all the kinds of tools that police officers need more than ever, and additional training is very important in developing those tools in the tool box.

I also want to acknowledge the reality that our police services in this province are dealing with incredible pressures that we have never experienced before, not just because of the mental health and addictions crisis, but also because of the shortage of police officers, and we saw that in a report from the Auditor General back in December 2021. She pointed to the fact that there are more than 1,000 vacancies for front-line OPP constables in 2020, and that has an impact on all of those communities that rely on the OPP to deliver police services when there are 1,000 unfilled vacancies.

But the interesting thing about her report is that she found that one third of those vacancies are constables on long-term leave. In many cases, those long-term leaves are the result of PTSD, and that points to the fact that we do not provide the support that our police officers need when they are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. We do not provide the support they need to be able to heal and monitor their own well-being.

I also want to say that this shortage of police officers is not just something we're seeing in the smaller communities that rely on the OPP but also in urban centres like London that have a police service. The London Police Service has about 900 members; 600 of them are police officers. Acting Chief Trish McIntyre—and I do want to honour Acting Chief McIntyre as London's first female chief of police—points out that, at any given time, at least 10% of London's front-line officers are off on stress leave, trying to recuperate from the effects of the job, which can lead to burnout or PTSD, so very similar to what is being seen in the OPP.

In the few minutes I have left, I want to also give a shout-out to the commitment of the London Police Service to engaging with community partners in addressing the mental health and addictions crisis, the homelessness crisis that we're seeing in London. London has developed a unique, one-of-a-kind, cross-community, cross-sector plan to address the homelessness crisis in our city called the Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response. The police services board, the chief of police—both our former police Chief Steve Williams, who retired after an illustrious 30-year career in policing, and new Acting Chief McIntyre—have been very involved in coordinating a community response to mental health and addictions and homelessness. They understand that many of the pressures on our police services are as a result of a lack of investments in the community supports that are needed.

But the London Police Services Board, in light of those numbers that I shared with you about the people who are off on stress leave and the need for more officers, have put in a request to city council to hire 52 more officers. When speaking to that request, former Chief Steve Williams told CBC that only 20% of the calls to the London Police Service have anything to do with crime; 80% are about disturbances, disorder, mental illness and addictions issues. Certainly, Chief Williams at the time acknowledged that addictions, mental health and homelessness are absolutely having an impact on what officers are seeing in the streets.

In closing, Speaker, I want to say that what we are hearing is not that a requirement to have a post-secondary education was a barrier to getting into policing, not that the cost of the Ontario Police College tuition was a barrier, but that the lack of supports, the lack of support for police officers who are struggling with PTSD, the lack of investments in community safety that would help people who are struggling the most—these are what have contributed to creating some of those shortages of police officers in our cities.

1730

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We'll now have questions to the member for London West with regard to her presentation.

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I wanted to thank the member from London West for her comments. Would she agree with me that when we look for criteria of what would make a great cadet going to the Ontario Police College, there should be a competency of a cadet, a character and courage, and that a cadet should also be prepared to work hard and to take care of their communities in the middle of the night? Would the member agree that there are other great qualities of life experiences that go to making a great cadet?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I know that the London Police Services Board—and I'm sure that police services in communities across Ontario—have really made a priority in trying to ensure that the force is reflective of the diversity of the community. London Police Service puts a lot of effort into trying to recruit from diverse populations to ensure that officers represent the people of our city.

While I certainly acknowledge that tuition for post-secondary education can be a barrier for underrepresented groups, I think that it is critically important to ensure that the life experience of a cadet, the foundations that they bring to the position of a police officer, is going to be what is most important.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was very interested in the last little part of the speech that the member gave, because London was really a trailblazer in addressing homelessness, mental health and addiction by having their police officers be a part of a large group of different, mainly not-for-profit agencies dealing with mental health and addictions to make changes on the forefront. I was wondering if the member from London could share a little bit more as to the importance to have funding for those interdisciplinary teams to be able to do their work, which includes supporting police officers who support people facing mental health, addiction and homelessness.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, thank you very much, Speaker, and I appreciate the question from the member for Nickel Belt, because one of the asks CMHA—Canadian Mental Health Association—London—on included in their pre-budget submission was permanent, stable funding for the COAST program. The COAST program in London is the program that is already available in other cities but exists in London on a pilot basis. It is the program that pairs a mental health worker with a police officer in responding to a situation that doesn't actually require a police response; it requires a mental health response. That program has had great success, great effectiveness in the evaluations, and yet, the province has not yet come to the table with the permanent, stable funding that London needs to continue to operate the COAST program.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Questions?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the presentation from the member of the opposite side. The proposed change to the Courts of Justice Act and Justices of the Peace Act will support judicial education related to gender-based violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace, since this is one of the most emphasized contents that you have shared with us. This information is in the bill, schedule 3 and also schedule 5, and these changes would ensure a consistent approach to the way that judges are educated about gender-based violence and its impacts on children, families and communities. Would the opposition agree that we take care of what your concerns are in voting for Bill 102?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I certainly acknowledge the work that the government did to include these two schedules, but dealing with gender-based violence has to be undertaken within a comprehensive plan, and the first step in that plan should be the formal declaration of intimate partner violence as an epidemic. That is what this government continues to fail to do. That was the first recommendation of the Renfrew coroner's inquest. It is something that advocates across the VAW sector have consistently called for, because that provides a framework for actions

that the government needs to take to actually deal with the epidemic that we are seeing.

These two pieces, taken in isolation, although they are critically important, won't actually have the impact that we want them to have, unless they are undertaken as part of a comprehensive program.

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

MPP Jamie West: Speaker, the member from London West talked about intimate partner violence. It reminded me that a couple weeks ago I did a member's statement on my friend Marcel Charron, who was a labour leader in Sudbury. Marcel was known for many things in Sudbury, but I think something that makes it a point of pride for me was how passionately he spoke about his sister, Chantal, who had died of intimate partner violence. Her boyfriend killed her on August 22, 1994. That's 29 years ago.

I appreciate the member's passion when it comes to intimate partner violence. We're talking about nearly 30 years of Marcel and his family looking for movement on legislation like this. Could the member please expand on how these changes would be more effective in terms of helping people like Chantal?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The federal legislation outlines the kinds of courses that federal judges will have to take. This legislation talks about provincial judges and justices of the peace. But as we see from the Mass Casualty Commission report, there is a lot of training that our police officers would also benefit from. That was a very detailed recommendation from the Mass Casualty Commission, about the range of skills and training that police officers need to have in order to respond to intimate partner violence, sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence.

It goes back to the point that I was making about our police officers in Ontario wanting more access to training, broader kinds of training to deal with the complexities of our society.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member opposite for her presentation. As we know, the Police Services Act has served us for a few decades now, and we all recognize how crime has gone up in all different forms. That being the case, my question to the member is: Would you not agree that it is time to modernize this act and make it more robust, to move forward?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I think I did highlight some of the findings of the Auditor General about the number of vacancies for OPP constables—a thousand vacant positions—but I also talked about the fact that one third of those vacancies are officers who are on leave, in large part due to PTSD. I know many of us have heard from officers in our communities about the stress on officer well-being because of the complexity of the problems that they are facing in our communities—problems related to mental health and addictions, and homelessness and poverty. And without the tools to effectively address those issues, it just compounds the pressure that officers experience.

1740

So we will continue to call for improved training for officers as a means to strengthen community safety.

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's great to hear the debate—one of two this afternoon. I always like late-afternoon debates because everybody's getting to the end of the day—we're all a bit tired. It's quiet in here; it's kind of like church.

I want to tell you a little story about grounding ourselves—and I beg the Speaker's indulgence; I will get directly to the bill. In my riding of Ottawa South, I'm really lucky to have one thing: All my kids live there, my grandkids live there, my whole family lives there. It's a great riding, not just because my family lives there, but because it's a great riding. My daughter was talking to our grandson Vaughn, who's eight years old. He's a smart little guy. She wanted to quiz him. She said, "Who's the Prime Minister of Canada?" He goes, "Justin Trudeau." She sent me a note telling me this last week, while I was here. And then she said, "Well, who's the mayor of Ottawa?" He was kind of stalling. She goes, "Hmm?" He goes, "Mark Sutcliffe." And then she goes, "Who's your MP?" He was kind of hesitating and he goes, "David McGuinty." And then she says, "Who's your MPP?" And he says, without skipping a beat, "I don't know her name." So I saw him last Sunday, and I thought, "This kid is trolling me, right?" No, he was serious. So, just when we think we're becoming famous and well-known within our ridings, we realize that people don't know who we are—even our family. That's not the point. I just wanted to say that to lighten everything up this afternoon because we're all in this together. Right, folks? We're all in this together.

The thing that has been most talked about in this bill is the fact that it's only going to be a secondary school diploma required to be a police officer. So the thing I'm trying to understand is—the government is changing something they said they were going to change but didn't actually change. So what is it that they're changing? They never enacted the bill that this was in. So it's a bit confusing from a legislative perspective.

But more importantly, I want to talk about the community policing. I've had the benefit of working with a lot of community police officers in my community of Ottawa South. Actually, Moe Elmi, right now, who was the community officer in Ottawa South, of the Ottawa police force, and is now a justice of the peace—a great representative of the community, a great person.

Policing has changed a lot since I graduated high school. They have cars. I'm just kidding. That didn't even get—right over your head.

Laughter.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. You got that. They weren't doing horse-and-buggy anymore. But it has changed a great deal. Policing is more complex than it was 40 years ago—more than 40 years ago. There's a lot of mental health challenges in policing, not just in terms of the mental health challenges on the street, which the member beside me here—the member from London West—articulated, but also for officers themselves. For front-line officers, there's a real challenge. It's more about community-building now. It's more about working with communities. It's about working with people.

So one of the things that concerns me when I see this—and I can understand the intent with this bill. The thing that concerns me, and I'd like to hear from the minister, is that I believe that all officers need to have the tools, the training, the education and the maturity that they need to be able to build community, protect the community⁷ and protect themselves. I also get concerned about the role of maturity and life experience when you have the responsibility of lethal force, when you can use lethal force against someone.

So the thing that concerns me about this is not about what we're saying in this bill but what it is we're not saying. How are we establishing the criteria to make sure that our front-line officers have the education, the training, the skills and the support they need to keep their communities safe and keep themselves safe?

I'd like to hear from the minister just exactly how we plan to do that in Ontario, because what it feels like is we're lowering the bar when, in actual fact, we need to raise the bar. That's not to say that someone who has life experience and has just a post-secondary degree—I don't have a college degree; I ended up here. I have a high school graduation, but I don't have a full college degree or university degree. So there is something to be said for life experience and maturity and learning, and we have to actually acknowledge that. But we can't put ourselves at risk of lowering that bar without establishing criteria that are going to help front-line officers, help our police services, to ensure that people have what they need to be able to do the job.

It's a different job these days. There's risk involved in it, but there's a lot of work to be done around building community, a lot of work around mental health. And I keep coming back to maturity, about life experience and what we want those front-line officers to have. It's not what we're saying in here that concerns me as much as what we took out and what we are going to put in its place. What kind of supports are we going to give those front-line officers? We know we want to recruit people. We know we need people, but we need them everywhere.

This is to my other point: I support the tuition support for new recruits. Do you know what? We should do the same thing for nurses. We are desperate for nurses in this province—desperate. Closing an emergency room—the members beside me here mentioned that today—in Minden, Ontario. Why? No nurses. I talked about cancer surgeries, the other day, at the Ottawa Hospital—13% of women getting their surgeries within the recommended safe time. Why not? Not enough nurses. It's a big problem.

I think that that approach is the right approach, but we need to apply it in other critical areas too and areas that may be not more important, but more critical. I think if you're closing an emergency room in a community, that's critical. I think if a sister, a friend, a mother is not getting the surgeries that she needs in the allotted times because they don't have nurses, that's critical. So while I support that, I think we have to apply that to other areas especially nursing and front-line health care workers.

I do have to say, I haven't read enough about the protections around animal welfare. I always think that's a

good thing to do. We always have to look at that. Our constituents are very attuned to that. We all are. I did listen to the member from Timiskaming about his love of horses—but more importantly, I'm trying to understand what powers that gives the inspectors and if it is balanced. Is the right of appeal a fair process for farmers, a fair process for animal owners?

I support all the work that's in this bill with regard to training of justices and justices of the peace. It's really important. We just came through some work on bail in Ontario, and it's a problem. What I would like to ask the government to do is, as well as taking these training measures—you did put in a program that the Superior Court justices doing the bail hearings for serious crimes, which you haven't released yet or actually used that learning experience to ensure that the law is being properly applied in that case.

The other challenge that exists within our justice system is the ability for the people who make decisions to get the information they need so they can apply the law fairly. I don't expect you to address that in this bill, but it's something that needs to be done. In my community of Ottawa South, a young man was released, and two days later he killed a young woman and her mother on the street in their neighbourhood. He shouldn't have been released. People didn't have the information. The father and the grieving husband are wondering, "How did that happen? How did that happen?"

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So while I support things in this bill, I've got some really serious questions about what we're trying to do with regard to police recruiting and, in actual fact, how we should be supporting those areas where we have a human resource challenge or a critical challenge. We should be doing that in more than just policing. I think members would agree with that. We have that shortage of nurses.

I do have a question, and the minister is not here right now, but maybe I'll get an answer from him—sorry; pardon me. I withdraw.

Laughter.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. I'm done. No, I knew what I did as soon as I said it. I've been around long enough.

I'm trying to understand the section with regard to the Coroners Act and why we need to make all these regs. I'm always nervous about governments making regs. We made regs when we were government, but whenever I see more reg-making power, it's, "What is it you're trying to do?" Maybe a member in the questions—it sounds like the member from Sarnia could give me an answer on that one.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words about the bill and for indulging me with my grandson's obvious lack of knowledge about who the MPP in Ottawa South is. I thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): We now have questions to the member for Ottawa South. The member for Kitchener-Conestoga can lead off.

Mr. Mike Harris: It's always a pleasure to fill George Springer's position here in the Ontario Legislature. If

anybody was paying attention to the game last night, I believe he hit two home runs. So I'll try and knock one out of the park here myself, Mr. Speaker, and it is getting late on a Wednesday afternoon.

I just want to go back to the piece that the member from Ottawa South talked about, police recruitment. I think it's very important that when we're looking at, in his estimation, lowering qualifications or diminishing the role of people looking to get into the policing profession, there are so many things and checks and balances—and maybe “diminishing” is not the right term, but there are so many checks and balances, when you look at people that are either being recruited or filling out active applications, from the police force themselves. Of course, if they pass through all of that, then they're going to the Ontario Police College, where they learn about all the things that are happening. But there are a lot of checks and balances already in place, and I just don't think it's a fair comment, at least in my mind, to say that someone who is either coming out of high school or maybe who has been out for a couple of years doesn't have the capacity without a post-secondary education to be able to that job properly.

Mr. John Fraser: I thank the member for his question. So, adding six days to a 60-day program is not a lot. Here's why I'm concerned about it: I'm a dad; you're a dad. I have a son. They're older now, much older, but I think about my son at 20. I think about myself at 20. I think about myself at 19. Do I have the maturity? Do I have the life experience? Do I have the skills? Do I have the skills to de-escalate? Do I have the skills and the judgment to be able to have the use of lethal force? Do I have the skills that I need to protect myself?

That's my point. It's not about policing being not a good thing and not important in our communities. It's about making sure people have the tools so they can do their job and, in this job, keep themselves and other people safe.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is right in line with “keep themselves safe.” We all care about our police officers. We all want them to come home at the end of their shift safe. They see and experience things that none of us will ever see. And the results are there when you look at close to 30% of some departments who are off on long-term sick leave because of post-traumatic stress disorder.

I think it's up to us to really show that we care about police officers, we care about keeping every worker safe. And how do you do this? You make sure that they have the support in place to de-escalate once they have seen something, have counselling in place. Make it acceptable within the culture of the workplace to seek those supports, so that you don't end up with PTSD and you don't end up with long-term PTSD.

You've talked about what's in the bill and what's not in the bill. Have you seen anything in the bill that will ensure that we show our police officers that we care about each and every one of them? We want them to come home safe at the end of every shift, and that includes supporting them with everything that they face that leads to PTSD.

Mr. John Fraser: Exactly. And I don't think for one minute that the minister doesn't care about that or that's not important to the minister; I know that it is. But from our perspective, we just need to know, in some of some sort of concrete form, how we're going to ensure that those things that the front-line officers need are going to be there, and some of that is maturity.

I have a daughter as well, too. I think exactly the same way: How would I see Kirsten at 19 or 20 having that kind of responsibility? As a parent, what I would want them to have—I mean, obviously, I'd be scared and concerned and probably say, like my dad did when my little sister wanted to be a firefighter, “Don't do it,” because it's the natural protectiveness of parents, and you don't want your kids to be at risk. But we know they're going to be at risk, so let's just make sure that they have those things: the training, the education, the tools and the maturity.

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

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member's speech, and I think one of the issues with what the opposition says is that they focus a lot on whataboutism. This legislation is from the Solicitor General. It is here to support the hard-working men and women who choose to put their lives on the line every day and risk their lives to keep Ontario communities safe. This is what we're doing to support them.

But with respect to what the member from Ottawa South said about nursing, to respond to his whataboutism, if you just do a quick search of the numerous releases that we've made in the past several years, as early as February 11, 2020, our government announced that we are offering a stand-alone degree for nursing, because in the past, if you wanted to be a nurse, you had to get a post-secondary degree first, and then you had to go to nursing school. So by offering a stand-alone degree, we've already reduced the costs for students and people who want to get into nursing.

So my question to the member is, will you support this legislation that focuses on supporting those men and women in blue, who want to keep our communities safe, without bringing in any whataboutism or focusing on something that our government has already done in the past?

Mr. John Fraser: Oh my gosh, whataboutism? What about keeping officers safe and giving them the tools? What about making sure that they have what they need to deal with a mental health situation? What about that? Well, there's a lot about that.

But here's the thing: My mom is a nurse. She was a nurse for 35 years. This relates to the police college and how we're going to pay for tuition. I said to my mom, “Why did you become a nurse?” Do you know what she said? “They paid me.” She was a nurse for 35 years. We're at that point in this province with certain roles and professions in our society where we have to start thinking about tuition, like the minister has here, where we have to think about helping people be able to thrive and live while they're getting an education that's going to benefit us. We have to ask for something from them. And I hope that with

this free tuition the minister is suggesting there is something on the other end, that you've got to make a commitment to us for five years or four years or three years. I think that's important. We do that with nurses, we do that with physicians, so I would like to see that there. It's not a hill I'm going to die on, but I think everybody's got to have something in the game.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the House.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): It is now time for private members' public business.

1800

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MISSING PERSONS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue supporting police services in locating vulnerable missing persons and assess innovative solutions that can bring more loved ones home.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Mr. Bailey has moved private members' notice of motion number 45. Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Robert Bailey: We're here today to talk about the significance of locating vulnerable missing persons and working quickly and efficiently with police services to do that. We know that the protecting the citizens of our province is an utmost priority, and I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to talk about some ways we are doing just that.

Speaker, earlier this year I had the opportunity to attend the launch of the Project Lifesaver initiative in Lambton county. This is a joint effort between the local police services in Lambton and Victim Services of Sarnia Lambton. Working together, the police and local support agency identified the need for a better way to support people in our community that are prone to wandering and are at risk of going missing. This is a growing concern. About six in 10 people with dementia will wander. For the families of individuals with dementia, this is a constant worry. Families of young children with autism have also expressed an interest in this program. That's why I was so impressed to learn Project Lifesaver was being launched in Lambton county and its remarkable success rate in other areas of this province. This initiative is community-based and provides our police and emergency services with a program designed to protect and quickly locate vulnerable missing persons.

Project Lifesaver provides a timely response to locate these people, reduces the potential for injury and saves lives. What makes this initiative unique is that it uses proven technology to allow first responders to quickly locate a wandering person and get them back to their family. Individuals are registered for the program by sharing

details with police about their behaviours, patterns, physical description and recent photos. They are then provided with a personalized wristband that emits a unique radio signal once every second. Should a registered individual go missing, police can immediately begin to track their location using handheld and cruiser-mounted receivers to track their specific signal.

This is the remarkable part, Madam Speaker: Once police are alerted, missing Project Lifesaver participants are being located within an average of 20 to 30 minutes. This is an incredible example of innovative solutions being used to keep our communities and our most vulnerable persons in a situation safe.

Currently, the Ministry of the Solicitor General has provided grants to help run this program in many communities across our province like my own. In Lambton county, a \$252,000 Ontario Community Safety and Policing Grant covered the cost of purchasing three handheld and three cruiser-mounted trackers for the Lambton OPP. Sarnia Police Services are also adding at least three trackers to their service, thanks to the grants from the province as well.

I want to thank my colleague, my boss, the Honourable Michael Kerzner, for making this a priority and for the needed investments in our communities across this province.

Why I am so passionate about this, Madam Speaker, is because, as technology advances, we're able to better protect our most vulnerable members of society through innovative and efficient solutions.

As all members of this House will agree, there's still more that we can do. In 2003, the province of Ontario, in collaboration with Ontario law enforcement, adopted an emergency broadcast system that is issued in the event of a child abduction or someone going missing, commonly known as Amber Alerts. I cannot stress the importance of this enough.

The Amber Alert system was created in memory of Amber Hagerman. Her death had a profound impact on her community and has since had that same impact across the globe. This emergency alert system facilitates the rapid distribution of information to the public in the event of a child abduction, and the alert should not be taken lightly.

During a child abduction, public assistance can be integral in bringing a child home safely. Quick information shared across many nearby communities can mean the difference for a child in danger. The real driving factor behind the effectiveness of the Amber alert is that in order for it to be issued, specific criteria must be met. This is important, Madam Speaker, for two reasons: First, it's targeting children that are not only missing but are in high probability of facing real and imminent danger. Secondly, it distributes identifying descriptive information about the child, the abductor or the vehicle to help the public better identify that child at risk. The Ontario Provincial Police have said that overuse of this system could diminish public response when it is truly needed, and that's not something we should risk.

What happens when we don't have this information and all that emergency services are left to work with are the

individual's last whereabouts? That is why, Madam Speaker, I'm calling on the government of Ontario to continue to use situation-specific initiatives and ensure emergency services are able to respond immediately when needed in ways that can get these loved ones back home.

The needs of our most vulnerable people are unique, and the ways we respond need to reflect that. By supporting initiatives like Project Lifesaver, we are enabling police services to have the tools they need to keep our communities safe and our loved ones safe as well. Not only this, but we need to make sure emergency services have the capacity to respond to all situations when needed.

As I mentioned earlier, Project Lifesaver is able to help locate a loved one in as quick as 30 minutes. That is about 95% less time than standard operations of searching. By using the two searchers Project Lifesaver requires, we are making available approximately 924 man-hours for a traditional search that can be used when and where needed without worrying about backlogs or delays in responding. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I consider this an incredible success.

Just as an additional comment, in Sarnia–Lambton the day they announced this, they talked about an individual who went missing in the village of Point Edward. Now, Point Edward, for those that know, that area is right on the lake and the river. So they had the marine team out looking for the individual. They brought down the helicopter from Orillia plus all the people on the ground, the fire service—everybody was in action. They found the individual, thank God, safe. But that's an example where this thing would have picked him up. The range is two and a half kilometres. So if they'd had that system, they could have picked that individual up very quickly.

According to York Regional Police, they average 140 missing persons calls a month; 10% involve elderly people. It's estimated that York region will see—it's hard to believe—a nearly 280% increase in its population of the elderly by 2036. Luckily, this region uses Project Lifesaver and has previously had a success rate of 100%. Let me repeat that one more time: Project Lifesaver in York has the ability to bring our most vulnerable people home 100% of the time.

This program has the ability to not only locate loved ones but bring peace of mind to family and caregivers. But just don't take my word for it, Madam Speaker, listen to the family and neighbours of nine-year-old Fabrizio Celenza who has now become an ambassador for Project Lifesaver: “It was a sense of relief when [we] found out about Project Lifesaver and got him the bracelet,” said neighbour Tina Conte. ‘The fact that they are able to locate if anything were to happen is a sense of relief for the family.’”

Fabrizio has autism and ADHD, but at first glance looks like any other nine-year-old boy. His father said that participating in Project Lifesaver was sparked by an incident at school where he ran away and the teacher didn't even know he had left the schoolyard. That scare is something that no family should have to experience, especially when these tools do exist.

Paul Ballance, chief of operations for Project Lifesaver International has said, “With the dramatic increase of cognitive conditions since the inception of the organization, the program has grown from a localized program to a program recognized internationally as a proven and effective method of ‘bringing loved ones home.’”

It's clear to me, Madam Speaker, that supporting initiatives just like this is the key to keeping our loved ones safe. I want to thank the police services in Sarnia–Lambton, York region, Windsor-Essex and many more across this province who have already adopted this incredible program.

Innovative solutions are out there to best locate vulnerable missing persons and bring peace of mind to my and your family. I commend the government of Ontario for the great work that has already been done and look forward to many more conversations to come to make sure that we do everything that we can to bring our loved ones home.

1810

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to be able to rise today in the House to speak to the motion put forward by the member from Sarnia–Lambton. The motion states the government “should continue supporting police services in locating vulnerable missing persons and assess innovative solutions that can bring more loved ones home.”

Speaker, I could not agree more. In fact, I put forward an innovative solution myself which I will speak more about today. I introduced Bill 74, the Missing Persons Amendment Act, 2023, to provide an innovative solution to help police forces locate vulnerable missing persons by providing them with an additional tool in the form of a vulnerable persons alert.

My colleague the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane also tabled a motion in the Standing Committee on Justice Policy to bring forward Bill 74 for clause-by-clause consideration, which unfortunately caused a scramble in the committee and the government members shut down that committee instead of addressing the request. So as you can see, we also believe in innovative solutions.

Speaker, I want to start by telling you about where the idea of this solution began, because I think it's important for everyone to understand how real solutions can impact real people.

Last year, two communities were hit with tragedy. Draven Graham was an 11-year-old boy with autism who passed away after leaving his home in Lindsay, Ontario. Draven was non-verbal and would not respond to his name. The community pulled together an incredible effort to search for Draven. Unfortunately, he had already passed by the time he was found. Draven did not qualify for an Amber Alert, which is the only recognized alert in Ontario.

Two months later, tragedy struck again in my hometown of Hamilton. Shirley Love was a woman with dementia who left her home in December not dressed for the weather. I spoke with her daughter Lori and she explained how her mother would not have looked vulnerable if you saw her on the street, but she was. Shirley was found days

later, deceased, in a golf course. The currently available alert would not have covered Shirley either.

A new alert that I am proposing would have, and would for those in similar circumstances. The missing persons alert for vulnerable people was also requested by almost 100,000 people who signed petitions for both Draven and Shirley, and Bill 74. People know this makes sense.

Members of Draven's family travelled here to Queen's Park on March 30 to express their support for Bill 74. I was joined by Draven's father, Justin, and his grandparents Julie and Patrick to call for this government to immediately bring Bill 74 to committee for immediate consideration.

While Shirley's daughter, Lori, was not able to attend, she expressed her support through a written quote which I will share with you now:

"My mom went missing on a sunny, December afternoon and bitter temperatures and darkness would fall within two hours of her disappearance. She was not dressed for winter weather and her confusion would prevent her from seeking shelter or returning home. Two hours was all we had. My mom died cold and alone in the brushy area of a nearby golf course, a tragic end to a beautiful life that could have been prevented with a simple alert."

Speaker, did you know about six in 10 people with dementia will wander? If they are not found within 24 hours, up to half of the missing persons living with dementia will be found seriously injured or deceased—six in 10, Speaker. A vulnerable persons alert could be the innovative solution this House is looking for to help support people with dementia, like Shirley, because it would have helped to ensure that our loved ones who are in a bad situation can be brought home safely when time is critical.

When proposing innovative solutions, I think it's important to understand first what the tools we already have do. The Missing Persons Act, 2018, established measures to assist members of a police force in locating a missing person in the absence of a criminal investigation—not much different than the proposal brought forward today from the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Prior to this bill, police officers were limited in their ability to investigate a missing person's case if it was not a criminal case. Since this is a piece of legislation intended to support police officers in non-criminal missing person cases, it makes sense to put forward additional solutions using the structure and the framework we already have in place.

Bill 74 would amend the Missing Persons Act, 2018, to include a definition of a "vulnerable person" and the actual vulnerable persons alert, and would amend the reporting requirements established in the current act to include vulnerable persons alerts. It would also specify the targeted area for the alert. The OPP would have the authority to issue a vulnerable persons alert in accordance with the officer's request, using the same authority they have to issue the current Amber Alert.

But I want to be clear: This is not an Amber Alert. This new alert I'm proposing looks to fill a gap. While it will also have limited intentional use, much like the Amber

Alert, it will cover a different demographic that the Amber Alert cannot cover under the current criteria, and it has its own intended area of use. It would not be province-wide; it would only be sent to the area that makes sense. If your neighbour was missing, would you not want to know so that you could look in your backyard or keep your eyes open? I would, and I know from my conversations with members previous across the aisle that they would too.

Now I want to tell you about the community reaction and the support for the solution proposed in Bill 74. I engaged in extensive stakeholder consultation on Bill 74, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Some of the groups I met with included the Ontario Autism Coalition, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the Ontario Community Support Association. I also spoke with several members on the government bench who were very pleased and supported this initiative.

I want to read some of the community quotes on how they feel about the solution proposed in Bill 74. The Ontario Autism Coalition: "This bill is of critical importance to not just the autism community but to all people who are of priority populations that would benefit from this type of assistance should they go missing. Our community knows that every second matters when a loved one goes missing. A timely and comprehensive response can make all the difference in locating a missing loved one."

The Ontario Community Support Association: "OCSA supports the proposed amendments to the Missing Persons Act, 2018, because they would provide an important new tool to help locate missing vulnerable individuals quickly and safely. We believe that this legislation would help to reduce the risk of harm to vulnerable individuals and their families, and would improve the overall safety and well-being of our communities."

The Alzheimer Society of Ontario: "Six in 10 Ontarians living with dementia will go missing at some point. In half of all cases where a person living with dementia is not found within 24 hours, they will be seriously injured or die. A vulnerable persons alert would help avoid some of these tragic outcomes, and the Alzheimer Society of Ontario fully endorses a local, targeted alert system to help quickly locate vulnerable people, including those living with dementia. There are steps we can all take to recognize the risk and prepare for someone we know who lives with dementia going missing."

This solution means a great deal to so many in our community, as well. I have heard from countless people on what passing Bill 74 would mean to them. Multiple community members expressed how this alert would be valuable, as their children with autism often figure out how to unlock specialized locks, meaning they can leave their home and potentially end up in a dangerous situation. Many also shared how children with autism do not perceive danger in the same way that you and I would. Some do not answer to their names, and this puts them at a unique risk if they go missing.

One community member said, "I'm a parent to a child with autism ... they have no sense of danger and are extremely vulnerable. There are so many risks and this

would give some peace of mind to know there would be an alert to go out to the community and hopefully would allow them to be found safe and quicker, since people would be aware and could be on the lookout.”

Other community members expressed how they are caretakers for seniors with dementia or Alzheimer’s, and how their loved ones are uniquely susceptible because they do not look vulnerable. One member expressed how caregivers need support as well, and this alert could do just that.

Speaker, as you’ve heard, the community has been overwhelming with support for Bill 74. I listened intently to the member opposite from Sarnia–Lambton and his proposal today, and, you know, Project Lifesaver is a good project. It is a good initiative, there is no doubt about it; I met with those folks also, but not everyone has the ability—first of all, will they all register for that project? Not likely. This is another tool in the tool box; it is not the only solution. This has always been the case. Not everyone will wear those wristbands. I know a parent who specifically is trying to work with this and their child with autism refuses to wear the alert.

1820

Demographically, will it work everywhere? We heard the member say that the government had to give grants to the community to be able to bring this proposal in. Are they willing to do that across the province? That’s fantastic, because, you know what, this could be a tool to save people’s lives. But it’s not the only tool. For that person who is not registered, for that child who cannot wear that bracelet, what about them? Are we just going to leave them out because they choose not to buy into a program? That’s not the way forward.

We’ve always said that the missing person alert is not the only solution. It is a tool; it is a solution when other solutions have failed. There needs to be a backup plan. This is the plan, in Bill 74, that is a backup plan. This isn’t about playing politics between whose bill it is and where it’s coming from. It’s a good initiative. One hundred thousand people in this province who have had this put in front of them say that, yes, this makes sense. I’m sure if more people had seen it, they would also say it makes sense and they would also say that Project Lifesaver makes sense.

There are many tools that can save lives in the province of Ontario. I hope that the government will see fit to look at all tools before them. This is something that can be implemented quite easily. It is no cost to anybody. This system is already there. It is just an extra tool.

I will be supporting this, and I know my members will be supporting this also. I hope that the government will also see fit to bring Bill 74 back to the justice committee and put that extra tool on the table. Let’s save lives in every direction and possible way that we can.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank my colleague and friend, the member from Sarnia–Lambton, for bringing this motion forward, and particularly for Project Lifesaver. It’s currently being pioneered in Lambton county,

York region, Windsor–Essex and several other regions around the province.

As you’ve already heard from my colleague, Project Lifesaver is an innovative new program designed to assist the police in locating vulnerable missing people, particularly those with dementia, who can be prone to wander. It utilizes innovative technologies to track and locate vulnerable individuals and return them safely to their loved ones. This pilot is just one more tool that can be used to assist the police forces in protecting the people of Ontario. If you’re wondering why, the answer is quite simple. As you heard tonight, Project Lifesaver has proven results of finding missing people within 30 minutes in most cases.

Speaker, this motion is fully consistent with everything we are trying to do to assist the police in carrying out their duties. Just yesterday, I was pleased to join the Premier and the Solicitor General at Toronto Police College to announce new measures to support police recruitment and retention. Earlier this year, I was privileged to be a member of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, tasked with holding hearings and drafting a report on bail reform.

Our government is fully committed to ensure that all people can feel safe at home and in their community, and to continue our efforts to do so, we turn our attention to the issue of having our most vulnerable persons going missing. By vulnerable persons, I’m talking about those who face a unique set of obstacles each and every day of their lives. Senior citizens with Alzheimer’s and dementia, as well as individuals with autism or Down syndrome, are prone to wander. For example, Madam Speaker, about six in 10 people with dementia will wander at some point in their life.

In Ontario, we take the issue of finding missing people very seriously. It’s been two decades now since we implemented Amber Alerts to find missing children who have been abducted and face imminent danger. But as I mentioned earlier, vulnerable persons face unique challenges every day, and for that we need unique, innovative solutions when these individuals need their help in time of crisis. What happens when we don’t have the same information available to us that make Amber Alerts so effective, when a vulnerable person goes missing? Well, this is where the proven results of Project Lifesaver can be the difference between a successful rescue and a tragic loss for the family of a loved one. Project Lifesaver wristbands emit signals 24/7 and, in almost all cases, lead to recovery in less than an hour. For so many that have felt the anxiety of not knowing where and when their loved ones have gone missing, these wristbands are, as the same implies, a true lifesaver. Innovative solutions such as Project Lifesaver are fully aligned with this government’s efforts to think outside the box when it comes to policing, safe streets, stronger and healthier communities and, in this case, protection of our most vulnerable.

If I may say so, by tabling this motion it is a testament to the spirit of public service from the member for Sarnia–Lambton and what he brings to his role. This parliamentarian, Speaker, has worked more than 15 years now to serve his constituents and his province, and he does so

with dignity, honesty, and an unflinching devotion to find new ways to make Ontario a better and safer place—and he's my BFF. Today is simply one more example, and I urge all members in this House to support his efforts.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Peterborough–Kawartha.

Mr. Dave Smith: Private member's motion number 48 actually touches close to home for me. My constituency office was on Water Street in Peterborough, and we've got a convenience store that's basically right beside it. I had to move the constituency office because they're tearing it down to put in a—we had to move the office because the building's being torn down to put in apartment buildings. But it was a community convenience store, and I had a constituent who frequented that store. He got a little bit older and was moved into a long-term-care facility, and I got a phone call from his daughter-in-law because she knew us and she knew our proximity to that convenience store. Her father-in-law had been to the convenience store every single day after he retired because it was part of his daily trips. It was just something he did.

When he got moved into long-term care—he was moved into long-term care because he had dementia—he became a runner. He frequently left the long-term-care facility. I get the phone call from this constituent because she knew we were beside them. She knew that I knew who this person was and what they looked like, and asked, would I go next door and see if he was there because he had been gone for about two and a half hours at that point. He wasn't there. It took about five hours to find him. He was really upset with the police when they picked him up because he was trying to go back home. He had forgotten that he was living in a long-term-care facility. He knew where his house was that they had sold. Imagine if he had found his way back there, tried to get in and what could have happened.

So having some kind of a tool, something that alerts you when someone has gone, I think it's a very valuable tool. I can't pick it up because it would be considered a prop, but all of us have cell phones. Anyone that's got an iPhone has the Find My phone app. This really is the same type of technology. Project Lifesaver is something that can work. It can work for a lot of different people. And what I like about this motion is it's not tied to any one technology. It's not tied to any one thing. What this motion says is explore different options, different opportunities for us to find a way to protect those who are vulnerable.

We've heard tonight some talk about children who have autism and some of the challenges there. I was involved with Special Hockey International. Back in 2018 when I was first elected, I introduced a private member's bill to celebrate when the Special Hockey International tournament came to Ontario again. We see that with a lot of kids with autism. Again, a family that I know that was involved in hockey had a daughter, six years old at the time, who was a runner. Every opportunity, she took off. She was non-verbal. They had to change all of the windows in the house because she figured out how to get out through the window. So they had to go to the expense of changing all

the windows. One of the things that was a little bit sad about the situation with her was she had a harness and was tethered, basically, to her mother, because she would just take off.

1830

We need to have different tools in the toolbox. We need to have those innovative ways of finding someone when they take off, when they are non-verbal, when they don't know who they are or where they are. This motion would bring that forward and have us actually take a look at what we can do, in an innovative way.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: It's a pleasure to rise this evening to speak in favour of my colleague's motion, the member from Sarnia–Lambton, who is a seasoned veteran of this chamber and has far more experience than I do. He's a person from whom I often seek good advice, and receive good advice, and even though we are not geographically neighbours of each other, I feel like he is my neighbour because he has that kind of personality. I actually feel a certain affinity with him even though we have a different gap in experience.

I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lake-shore and the member from Peterborough–Kawartha for their comments.

Tonight, of course, we are discussing the motion “That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should continue supporting police services in locating vulnerable missing persons and assess innovative solutions that can bring more loved ones home.”

That is the motion we are discussing. In turning my own mind to the issues at stake during this motion, I asked myself, what do we want and what do we don't want? Which is a funny way of wording things.

So let me start with what we don't want. What we don't want is duplication. What we don't want are false alarms. What we don't want is bombardment, a word that I use to describe a phenomenon of the modern age where we have so much technology that we are bombarded with information—bombarded, for example, with spam emails; bombarded with false alarms; bombarded with messages that we are now becoming accustomed to, becoming immune to. There's so much coming out that we don't want to act as accordingly as we should because of the constant bombardment of information in a modern age. That's what we don't want.

What we do want is a system that works. What we want is a system that helps families. What we want is a system that moves fast—a system like the Amber Alert system. The reason why the Amber Alert system works is because we know that when we get that alert, everybody understands it, and they aren't constantly bombarded with them. Because if you're constantly bombarded with them, people learn not to take them seriously. The reason why we do take them seriously is because we know that they are valid alerts from a system that people have confidence in. We can trust that system, and that's why it works. That's the kind of system that we'd be looking for with this motion,

and that's the kind of system that this motion is targeting—a system that will work, that people can be confident in, and that they can trust.

I congratulate the member from Sarnia–Lambton for bringing forward this motion, because it is very practical. It is very practical. We're going to look for something that works and something that we can all have confidence in. So once again, I congratulate the member.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate? Further debate?

The member from Sarnia–Lambton, you have two minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to thank the House for their consideration today, and I especially want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for her passion and her advocacy for vulnerable persons. I think all of our hearts are in the right place, and I want to thank her especially for her explanation, again, of her bill. Like I say, we're all in the same boat, we just got to get rowing in the same direction.

I also want to thank my good friend from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for her kind remarks—certainly much appreciated. I don't know how accurate they are, but they're certainly much appreciated.

The member from Peterborough–Kawartha and his story about an individual—I think there's many stories like the one the member from Peterborough–Kawartha expressed.

And, of course, the member from Essex with his legal mind, and his thoughts on that as well.

So, members, it's great to be here today. I think whatever we can do in any way to make people safe in this province, whether it's vulnerable persons like children, seniors with dementia etc., I think we should all strive to do that. I thank everyone for their time and their consideration today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Bailey has moved private member's notice of motion number 48.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING SAFETY AND MODERNIZING JUSTICE ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT DE LA SÉCURITÉ ET LA MODERNISATION DE LA JUSTICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 2023, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal

welfare / *Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant diverses lois relatives au système judiciaire, à la prévention et à la protection contre l'incendie ainsi qu'au bien-être des animaux.*

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Mr. Dave Smith: There are a number of things in this bill.

I know that, in theory, I've got 20 minutes that I can speak and then there will be 10 minutes of questions afterwards, but I know that we have a number of members who want to weigh in on this tonight so I'm probably going to cut my speech down to about nine and a half minutes just to be respectful of some of my colleagues wanting to speak.

One of the things I want to talk about in particular in this is the intimate partner violence training for judges. The reason I want to talk about this is we see a lot of things happening in our communities where it's not taken seriously, where our judicial system right now is letting people out on bail really quickly, really easily, without a whole lot of conditions, and we see a lot of repeat offenders. I do think that most judges and most justices of the peace try to take things seriously, but some—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order.

Mr. Joel Harden: Thank you, Speaker. I just wonder if the member could suggest where in the bill bail reform is being put forward—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I will allow the member. It was coming back to training around judges.

Resume your debate.

Mr. Dave Smith: Absolutely. I'm a minute and a half into it, and if the member actually listened for about two minutes, he would have found that out.

Part of the thing that the training does in this is the intimate partner violence training for judges. They're to take into account when they are reviewing a case, before they actually make a ruling—whether that be in bail court or when the charges come forward.

So my reasoning behind this, Speaker: I want to talk about two things that are in the Peterborough Examiner today. One of them: "A 39-year-old Bowmanville man is facing an assault charge after an incident Tuesday morning. At approximately 8:30 a.m. on April 25, Peterborough police officers were called to the area of"—wherever, blah, blah, blah. And we come down to, "As a result of the investigation, a 39-year-old Bowmanville man was arrested and charged with assault with a weapon, spousal." Intimate partner violence right there. "The accused was held in custody and appeared in court Tuesday, April 25, 2023."

What they don't say is, was he released on bail immediately? In all likelihood, he was released on bail immediately. Had we had those judges have that intimate partner violence training, would that have changed how the judge viewed bail for that individual? I would like to think yes, that they would, because it is a serious crime.

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I want to read something else that was put in the Peterborough Examiner late this afternoon. It will be in the print version of it tomorrow:

“Peterborough Police Release Safety Warning After Man’s Release.

“Peterborough Police have taken the rare step of warning the public about the release of a 20-year-old Selwyn township man who has a history of targeting women in Peterborough.”

I’ll skip down to near the bottom: “He was charged at the time with possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose, two counts of possession of a firearm or ammunition and two counts of failing to comply with a probation order”—two counts of failing to comply with a probation order; he was out twice, already.

“City police did not specify which trail he was near,” when it happened.

“Given the nature of the crimes, which includes a history of targeting women, we have chosen to release his name and photo,” a city police press release states.”

This is somebody who is a known threat to women. This is someone who has already been released multiple times. This is someone who broke those conditions of release multiple times.

Had a judge had training on intimate partner violence, had a judge looked at that and accepted that this is a real threat to the women in our community, perhaps this individual would not have been released as quickly—perhaps the threat to women in my community would be reduced.

We see this time, after time, after time. We’ve heard multiple times. The police have said to me, both the OPP in Peterborough and the Peterborough Police Service, multiple times, that Bill C-75 is a real problem, that catch-and-release.

This is one of those things where we’re going to be giving instruction to judges; we’ll be giving instructions to justices of the peace to take these things into consideration before they make a decision, whether that be at bail time or after they have been convicted of something.

Now, I do agree, everyone needs the presumption of innocence. You are innocent until proven guilty. But we also have to take into account that there are people out there who will be victimized by these individuals. We know in society right now we have individuals—mostly men—who will cause a problem for women, and far too often our court system has turned a blind eye to it. This is something that we can do at the provincial level, then, that will make a difference.

It’s been said multiple times that the problem is toxic masculinity, and I disagree with that. The problem is a lack of masculinity, because a real man who is masculine has a backbone and knows you do not do those things. The problem is those who do it are cowards. Those who do it are bullies. Those who do it beat up on someone who is more vulnerable.

We, as legislators, need to take that opportunity to step forward and say, “Enough is enough. It’s not going to happen on our watch.” We’re going to take steps to make

sure that we are there protecting our vulnerable people in our community—that we’re there and saying it’s not acceptable for someone who has a history of abusing women, someone who has a history of domestic violence, continuing to perpetuate that harm on someone.

We have that opportunity. We have made these changes. We will be making these changes if this bill passes. I think that if nothing else, that we accomplish from this bill—if there is nothing else that we accomplish from it, by making it more difficult for one those predators to be released from jail, that is a win.

We should never be in a position where the victim has less rights than the perpetrator, and right now victims have less rights than the perpetrators. This is something that we should all be getting behind.

I know I said I was only going to be about nine and a half minutes; there are a couple of other things I wanted to talk about.

Violent crime has increased by 20% over the last seven years. We have crimes with firearm use up 129%.

I’ll go back to that first story I talked about: What the guy did was, he hit his girlfriend with the butt end of a knife. These types of crimes are increasing.

You can go back through the newspapers in Peterborough over the last few years, and the amount of gun violence that is there has increased significantly in a small town like Peterborough. We can’t have that. It’s going across all of Ontario. We need to make sure that we’re putting things in place so that we’re stopping that.

We do have to work with the federal government on these things. I recognize that the Criminal Code is federal, but at the provincial level we do have tools; we do have the ability to take the judges, the justices of the peace, and put in an education program where we can talk about this, where we can make adjustments to it so that the next victim doesn’t happen. We don’t have to accept that we release that guy so he can go back out again and beat up another woman. That should never happen.

Madam Speaker, in respect of my other colleagues who want to speak tonight, I will sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I appreciate the comments from the member from Peterborough–Kawartha. Absolutely, we need to address violence against women in the province. It actually needs to be acknowledged as an epidemic. But when your government first came to power, the first thing you did was dismantle the blue ribbon panel on violence against women—the expert women who were advising this government.

And you’ve cut women’s shelters and women’s services across the province. In Hamilton, we have women’s shelters that have no place to put women except in closets. They’re turning offices and closets into places to house women, because of the lack of funding from your government.

So while I appreciate what you’re saying, how can you defend the fact that it’s not just—the solution needs to be

all-encompassing. Women need a safe place to live, as well.

Mr. Dave Smith: If we take a look back to what the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said, the increase of \$202 million towards homeless prevention—that's all stuff that municipalities can take that funding and apply it where they believe it's going to make the best results on it.

We also have to make sure that what we're doing with our police services, what we're doing with our justices of the peace, what we're doing with our judges are ensuring that those who perpetuate those crimes stop perpetuating those crimes. What this legislation does is, it trains judges, it trains justices of the peace so that they understand the violence behind domestic partner violence, intimate partner violence, and we finally get to a position where we can put an end to that catch-and-release, so that those individuals who constantly do that do not get released and put those victims further at risk.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The projet de loi, the bill before us today is a proposal that would introduce the power for the Chief Justice to establish courses for newly appointed judges, and those courses would include courses respecting the following: sexual assault law; intimate partner violence; coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships; and social context, which include systemic racism and systemic discrimination. I think those are important courses. I think judges and justices of the peace should have knowledge in those areas. I think such knowledge would assist them greatly in issuing orders and making determinations with respect to situations such as bail release. I'm wondering if the member from Peterborough—Kawartha could offer his views on that.

Mr. Dave Smith: One of the things I didn't talk about in my brief speech that I gave—and I'm going to pick up on what the member from Essex has said on this, because I think this is something that's important. One of the things that we're changing—the legislation that was in place was put in place in 1990, and I want to talk about human trafficking in particular on it, because the changes to what we're doing with the judges and justices of the peace will help on the human trafficking side of it. The reason I pointed out that it was made in 1990 is the first cellphone with Internet capability was the Nokia 9000 Communicator, which was released in 1996. The legislation that we are modifying was made before anyone had cellphone capability to connect on the Internet.

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If you don't think that human trafficking is a problem and that they're not using the Internet, that they're not using cellphones to traffic these women, you're sadly mistaken. We have to make these changes. We have to educate judges and justices of the peace to make sure that we don't perpetuate that, so that we get rid of a lot of those challenges. Human trafficking is Ontario's dirty little secret.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We're here at night sitting today, so hopefully people are tuning in and watching. It's such an interesting time in Ontario in many ways. Today we're talking about Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023.

There are a few things I want to touch on. I want to talk a little bit about my interest in policing back in the day. When I was a youngster, many years ago—in high school, as a matter of fact—I had an interest in going into policing. So through the high school that I was at, they actually arranged a co-op placement. I didn't want to go to the policing side of it for co-op. I wanted to experience different dimensions of policing, so I went into the probation-parole side, because—my goal was to be a police officer—I wanted to understand the people that I perhaps would be working with or dealing with. I ended up getting a placement in a halfway house, a federal halfway house called St. Leonard's. I want to thank St. Leonard's for that opportunity because I learned a lot as a 17-, 18-year-old young woman about the services and the needs of people who were incarcerated and then, of course, out in the community trying to rehabilitate and reintegrate into society. That was a very valuable lesson.

From there I went to Loyalist College and I went into the law and security program. That was a two-year college study and I wanted to streamline into policing. The first year you were in the general education portfolio, where they had corrections, border services and policing. Those were the three things they introduced you to. And then, in the second year, they would put you into the specialty that you'd decided you wanted to study.

Fortunately or unfortunately, however, life takes you down different paths. Due to my eyesight back then—I don't know if they have it now, but they had a minimum requirement. If you don't have glasses, you're supposed to see a certain distance. Well, I can't see worth a darn, so that kind of made the decision that I wasn't able to pass the physical eye requirement into policing. I ended up choosing corrections because I had done the co-op there, so it kind of made sense.

I did that for a year and then I did a co-op through Loyalist College at a detention centre in Napanee. That was an eye-opener, I'll tell you. That was quite interesting. Then, after I graduated, knowing that policing wasn't going to be my venue into a career path, I went into St. Leonard's again. They actually hired me into a federal halfway house—on King Edward, as a matter of fact. It was a three-storey walk-up and they had contained units, but there were common areas, the kitchen and the living room and that kind of thing.

I spent some time there, part-time, then I also worked at the—which is no longer in operation—youth detention centre on King Street, across from the police station. That was, under this government, defunct just a couple years ago. I did part-time there.

Through that experience, there was one thing that really changed my mind. When I was doing a night shift at the federal parole halfway house, they had to come in at a certain time. There were curfews and they had to sign in. A gentleman came in and I could smell alcohol on him

because I have a very good sense of smell. You had to report these things, so I reported it. What kind of turned me around to say, “This is not the field for me,” is because what I had found was instead of helping people who have addictions—back then it was mostly alcohol that we had seen. It was probably 33 years ago. That’s mostly what we saw. So they sent him back to jail to complete his sentence. I always just thought, “Why aren’t we providing treatment?” It wasn’t a crime he committed. Yes, he broke the condition of his parole, but—so that turned me off corrections and policing entirely.

So that was my experience with law enforcement a little bit in my youth, but as I’ve grown and experienced life, I realize that this bill here—there is a need to make sure that our communities are safe, of course. I did meet with the police association when they came here to lobby us as a lobby day as most groups do. There was an article back on December 10, 2020, and the headline in the London Free Press was “London has fewest” police officers “per capita in southwestern Ontario,” according to StatsCan. Now, the article says “cops,” but I prefer to call them police officers. The whole point of this was that London is a city that’s growing so quickly, they weren’t keeping apace with hiring police officers.

So the article goes on to say that:

“London has the fewest police officers per capita in southwestern Ontario according to a new report from Statistics Canada.

“There were 590 officers serving a population of 414,959 in London last year”—now, keep in mind this is in 2020 and London has grown since then—“a ratio of 142.2 officers per 100,000 citizens, the national agency said this week in its annual report on police resources.” So compare that to other cities—they did that in the article here per 100,000 people. So Chatham-Kent had 155.5 every 100,000 citizens; London had 142.2 police officers per 100,000 citizens; Sarnia had 146; Stratford has 150; St. Thomas—which actually was kind of shocking because St. Thomas is a small community—had 175.6; Windsor, 205; and Woodstock, 155.9. So clearly, the ratio wasn’t up to par with the population growth and the population at that time in the city of London. So that to say that, obviously, we need to make sure that we have the correct police complement to population, right?

And oftentimes, when I spoke to the Police Association of Ontario, the members did explain that there were barriers—financial barriers—accessing the college. There was a financial barrier that kept some people from applying. People who were changing careers: Let’s say they were at a certain income level. To change, they’d have to start at the bottom and work their way up and that kind of thing. They also talked about the fact that this government was waiving tuition fees for other careers, to promote people getting into that stream. So, this bill does have that in there, which is a way to make sure that police officers or wannabe police officers studying will have that opportunity. So that’s a good step. They’ve heard the calls of lobby groups. All lobby groups that we get in here are asking for things, so in this case, the government paid attention to that and it’s in the act.

But the other thing that I think we also need to be aware of is yes, there needs to be the right complement of police officers in the community according to population, but there also have to be community services. Oftentimes, from my experience in the field when I was in corrections, if there are community programs and community services in your city where you live, it helps curb crime. So, if there are things that can help people find resources when they need them—and one of the things is economics, poverty. Oftentimes, perhaps, people look for way to make money. We know that in this time it is very different to afford many things. Having the programs to divert populations in our schools, in our neighbourhoods, where they can find productive things and they can find programs and they can find education opportunities—because that’s another thing.

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People who need that guidance, maybe it’s not always so clear in their home or around their friends. Again, I’ll speak a little bit from experience. I came from a home where my mom was very ill and my dad worked a lot. As children in that home, we had to look after our mom. But when I went to school, I had wonderful teachers and I remember them to this day; Mrs. Bladek was one of them. The other one escapes me, but it will come to me. I really looked up to them. What they did is they took me under their wing. Not that I, perhaps, would have strayed far, but the point was these teachers recognized—Mrs. Bladek specifically—that our home wasn’t so stable, with the mom available to us.

I come from a family of four boys and two girls. We had six in our family. My mom and my dad came here from Portugal with five of us; I was six years old. My mom and my dad were struggling. My mom was ill, as I say, and my dad worked in construction and was gone all the time. Then when he came home, of course, he helped out. But having four brothers and one sister—that was a lot for our family, and we did have community programs out there. My dad had a very strong support system, because we had aunts and uncles around. Family is very important. When my dad needed help there were translation services.

There were a lot of things that could help struggling families. And by no means were we struggling any more than other people—obviously, some families struggle a lot more—but having community centres, having good education programs, having before- and after-school programs—those things are really important. Because in my day, when we got home after school, we were left to look after ourselves. Plus of course we had our mom to look after. This went on for decades. It went on until I was 19 or 20 years old, so it wasn’t just a little blip. My mom was ill throughout my whole childhood and into my adulthood.

Having those programs is really important. I think the government has attempted to make some of those changes but there are a lot of things—like housing in London, for instance. We have a lot of homelessness in London. Again, if we don’t have affordable housing people are left in the street. They are desperate and sometimes they do things that cause the police to come and deal with that situation. That’s something we could avert. we could avert those

police resources from those situations if we had affordable housing.

I know when I met with police officers over many, many years, ever since I've been elected, every time they would say that they're the 411 for the 911. Everybody would call the police for everything because they didn't have mental health and addiction services. Someone was on the street and posed a threat to someone else, or a family couldn't get their child or their adult son or daughter into services and they couldn't handle it and there was escalation in the home. The police talked about that. They said, "We were called to those calls." They really weren't police duties but there was no help for parents to get their kids into the mental health program. The wait-lists are so long.

I understand also that there is some training here for judges. That's a good thing. There is a federal law, it's called Kiera's Law. I'm going to read a little bit from the website: "On February 9th, 2020, Keira Kagan was killed by her biological father in an act of revenge filicide. This website is a tribute to Keira and a hub for our advocacy work. Family Court must change. Domestic violence is relevant to parenting and children like Keira deserve better. Thirty to 40 children a year in Canada are killed by a violent parent, often after systems such as the courts and children's aid services fail to protect them. There are innumerable Canadian children who experience violence and abuse at the hands of a parent who is supposed to protect them."

This kind of topic really shakes me a little bit, because where you are in your home is where you're supposed to have the safest place on the planet.

They go on to say, "This will lead to lifelong mental and physical health consequences for them," when children aren't protected in their home. "Support Keira's Law which will provide education for judges on domestic violence and coercive control."

That's in here, and that's a good thing; I know people have called for that. It's important that people in our legal system understand the complexities of people's lives. It's not just black and white. And when they have an opportunity as a judge or justice of the peace to address someone's problem there because they have that training, that's a good thing too—and addressing the victim, the person who has been victimized by that situation, by that perpetrator, that they have the education to understand what they've gone through. Hopefully, more and more judicial systems will have the opportunity to offer services to those victims, survivors, of those crimes, because we can't forget the crime happened. Those atrocious acts happened, but we can't leave people—again, as I say, just because justice was served doesn't mean that they don't need extra services out in their community.

So I'll just summarize: When I grew up, my father was under a lot of stress. He worked construction all day, and then he came home, and he made meals, he washed laundry. We all pitched in. But when I reflect back as a woman with my own family and I think of the kind of stress he was under, with my mom being so ill—and we're talking extreme illness—my dad always came home after

work. My dad knew that we depended on him, and he was our strength. He never forsake us. He was always there. He didn't go carousing or have—knock on wood—any addiction problems. He didn't hurt us. So when I hear things like from Keira's Law and how kids are not safe in their own homes and how those types of things can end up as lifelong problems, they need our help, and we need to have those services available for children.

CAS has to be a better agency. There has to be better oversight when it comes to CAS as well. Many years ago, the NDP called for the Ombudsman oversight for CAS. That system sometimes doesn't work properly, and it needs to be also addressed, because it is part of a crime situation when kids have to be helped in bad homes.

Again, safety is a concern for everyone. There is violence in our communities. Police respond to those things, and that's appropriately what they should respond to, but when there are social calls like mental health, a child, an autism adult, homelessness, we have to do things a little differently and make sure those social programs—and policing needs those supports to address those complex needs, because they're not criminal needs; they're social needs in our society, that we are understanding there is a difference.

So as I said, in the article that happened here, London's ratios were very much not up to par. So encouraging people who have maturity, who have education, good ethics to join police forces is a good idea, but we want to make sure we get the right people in there so that they are delivering that safe type of service that people want when they do call for help. It's certainly not something I ever want to do. I don't want to ever pick up the phone and call them, because when that happens, that is the crisis, right? That is the worst position you could be put in, when you have to call the police for help.

1910

So I do admire the work that police officers do. I'm sure it's not easy, and in London specifically, if they were underserved in their community, I know that many times they couldn't necessarily get to calls that they wanted to.

I'm glad to speak to the bill, and I look forward to people's questions. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Lorne Coe: Thank you to the member from London–Fanshawe for her delegation today on this bill. An important piece of the bill, Speaker, and you'll know this, is supporting the education of judges and justices of the peace, focusing largely on gender-based violence to begin. It relates back to a debate we had in this Legislature in the evening as well. It was on Keira's Law, aimed at protecting children and supporting women who are fleeing abusive relationships and those who are victims of intimate partner violence and coercive control.

I'd like the member from London–Fanshawe to speak about that and listen carefully to her response in terms of her willingness to support this bill, but in particular this important piece that's been long awaited in terms of the education of our judiciary. Thank you.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'll over go that again. I did speak about Kiera's Law. Federally, they're doing lots of work on that. Nobody wants to see that happen again anywhere—any province, anywhere—and having judges be trained—absolutely. Sometimes I think lawyers should be trained, too. They're part of the legal system and they're dealing with very fragile people, right, when I talk about the victims, and people who are dealing with the families that have experienced these crimes.

So definitely, having judge education when it comes to domestic violence, gender-based violence is something we would support. That section in the bill is supportable.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for sharing her personal interest history and her interest in policing, as well as corrections. I wanted to touch specifically on sections 3 and 5, about the education of judges, and I wanted to ask the member about her former career. In your former career, did colleagues of yours always embrace new training, and should the province also designate that this training be coupled with some sort of evaluation to ensure that there's comprehension and appreciation of this serious topic?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I appreciate the question from London North Centre. I have to say that, 33 years ago, when I was involved in these things, there was talk back then about education, but it wasn't really promoted; it wasn't really received. But people were talking about it.

Now, your question about evaluation—absolutely. I come from an insurance background, and when you had a RIBO licence, a registered insurance broker of Ontario licence, you had to take annual testing. You had to upgrade yourself. Especially in society today, there are so many different facets. I don't think just taking a course once and saying, "I'm knowledgeable"—I think it should be an ongoing process so that people are refreshed and updated every year.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: Thank you to the member opposite for the speech. Ontario and many other jurisdictions have seen recent increases in violent crime and repeat offences. The justice system must be able to combat these issues in order to maintain public safety in Ontario. Every day, we rely on men and women in uniform to keep us safe. The proposed legislation has received approval and support from many policing stakeholders for modernizing our safety systems. Will the opposition support the front-line personnel that keep Ontarians safe by supporting the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Like with anything, I don't rush to any decisions. We are debating this bill today; are there elements in there that are supportable? Yes, but you don't jump to a knee-jerk reaction on anything. We just got a briefing yesterday. Things happen quickly, but that doesn't mean it's supportable or not supportable. It means I'm going to take time to read the information before I decide and make a decision. But there are items in there that I have spoken positively about.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I want to thank the member from London–Fanshawe for sharing her story of her upbringing and her family. It was very interesting and informative, and I appreciate that. You mentioned something that caught my ear, and it was saying it's not criminal needs but rather social needs. That really struck a chord with me, and I wondered if you could elaborate more on that.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I think that when we talk about needs—for an example, the education piece that we talked about, educating judges, educating social workers—which, I mean, social workers are great; they probably know all that already—even lawyers that are involved in these cases, to understand the sensitivities about the social needs of families who are experiencing these kinds of criminal acts.

And then there are the social needs in our communities. There are programs that we can make sure that we have to offer positive—and divert kids from other areas that are high-risk into healthy activities. We know that kids who are left unattended after school—and I say, I had that experience myself. Luckily, we were all on the same page. You can get into situations that aren't healthy. So those social needs need to also be acknowledged and invested in.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you very much to my colleague from London–Fanshawe for your very thoughtful remarks. It's always interesting to get to hear more about the personal histories and journeys that members have taken in coming to this House. The member touched briefly on the rushed trajectory of this bill, and the fact that it was only tabled yesterday at 3 p.m. and the opposition really haven't had a chance to fully review the bill, to speak to stakeholders, to speak to constituents in our riding. The bill deals with some incredibly serious topics like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, coercive violence. Does the member from London–Fanshawe feel that it does these serious issues a disservice to rush this bill this way and to prevent the voices of many Ontarians from actually being fully heard as part of this debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, and there is a pattern here, and that is concerning to me, because we do need to consult with the people that these bills affect. Talking about sexual assault victims and domestic violence victims, when they're engaged in the system and then having the services—first of all, prevention would be an amazing thing we should maybe be doing, prevention to educate people so that people don't perpetrate those crimes. But then if it happens, let's get the feedback from the people who are involved in the system. We won't have an opportunity to do that, not as wholesome as we should. I'm sure our staff is working on that very quickly and getting that information.

The other thing is, if they are involved in those crimes, get the support services and social needs that need to be in

the community to help those survivors get through that in their life.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from London—Fanshawe for her comments today. I listened intently to her. It was interesting to hear about your background and your foray into policing, parole, probation and corrections. That was an interesting part of what you had to say.

A couple of times now you've mentioned that lawyers should also be educated. Lawyers are educated. Crown lawyers are educated as part of our training for them.

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This is adding education for judges. So we think that's an important step, and I think, from what I've heard you say, you support it.

Can you support the rest of the things in the bill which are strengthening and modernizing our justice system?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, that's good. I'm glad you cleared that up

Definitely, I know lawyers have an education pathway that's quite intense, but the social piece, the pieces that judges are being educated on—I'm assuming that they're educated on that, as well. That's what I thought I heard.

Mrs. Robin Martin: That's the new part.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That's the new part, yes.

Again, I think I have said this: I understand that the government always wants a commitment right away, but I never make decisions right away—whether it's this, whether it's something at home, whether it's purchasing something. I look at things before I buy them, and I look at things before I vote on them. So I will take consideration on that, and we'll vote on the day it comes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Good evening, everyone. It's great to be in the chamber at night, debating Bill 102. It's great sitting with all of you. I'm happy to be here debating Bill 102—

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: No sarcasm there. I'm genuine. We might see some ghosts; who knows?

The Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act—I'm happy to be here for this.

Police officers play an essential role in keeping our communities safe. They are faced with extremely challenging situations on a daily basis. I can only imagine. It's a tough job. I think it has always been tough—but especially now, in light of many officers being targeted, it's a really tough job. We know they face extremely challenging situations, and so they must receive adequate training to ensure that they have the skills necessary to effectively manage these difficult circumstances.

They're not currently required to have a post-secondary degree. The Community Safety and Policing Act, which established this requirement, received royal assent in 2019 but has not yet come into force. This government moved that idea—to have a post-secondary degree—and is now changing their minds. I'm just kind of curious as to where

that's coming from. I think it's confusing to the public, to Ontarians—saying one thing and then doing another, like not entering the greenbelt, and then entering the greenbelt. I think we need to stick to our messaging and stick to our ideas. So I'm really questioning that flip-flopping. I think it creates a lack of trust. So maybe that could be fully explained by my members opposite—reversing that decision. We know that provinces all across Canada look to Ontario for ideas. Often, on things we do here, we end up leading the charge, and then other provinces and municipalities follow suit—not always. Sometimes we get our ideas from other provinces, but by and large, I think Ontario usually sets the tone. With this complete change, I'm wondering what other provinces think.

What worries me the most is the age of our possible future police officers. If you're just coming out of high school—think about you at that age. Maybe you're an old soul; maybe you had a ton of life experiences already by 18. But I think all of us still had so much to learn in life at 18.

I really worry about the hiring processes for the police force. Are they really looking for backgrounds? I would like to see more police officers hired with social work backgrounds—psychology, sociology, social work—people who know and see firsthand what people are going through these days. I wonder how thorough and robust that hiring process will be. Are we going to still look for the highest-calibre candidates to hire for police officers?

Then, once they get in, I'm very worried about this training. It was three months—66 days. How robust is that training? Is it going to have a really fulsome sensitivity-training component, mental-health-training component? It's going to need that if we're hiring young people to be officers.

I also worry about the colossal pressure that is now going to be put on these kids, I'm going to call them. That's a monumental amount of pressure to put on a young person, and the expectations are huge. There are steps in between that usually we go through before we get to this kind of role and experiences that you will undergo in life to help you hone your judgment and your understanding of people. I just worry about the sense of judgment and life experience that would be probably lacking in such a young person.

But maybe I'm missing something here; maybe we're looking at very mature 18-year-olds, as I said. But I worry about this, and I think we all should.

My experience when I was city councillor—we had our CPLC, 55 Division Community Police Liaison Committee. I worked very closely with them and had a good rapport with them. I even had to shave off a moustache of a police officer—actually our superintendent—for the Movember fundraiser.

Interjection.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: It was for a fundraiser. Let me clarify before that goes on TikTok or something. But yes, I worked very well with 55 Division.

We had an officer, our community police officer named Jonny Mo, we called him. He grew up in the beach, went to school there, moved around different neighbourhoods

in my riding. He knew the areas, he knew the neighbourhoods, he knew the issues, he knew the residents, and he was fantastic. He worked well with community leaders. If you're familiar with CPLC committees, they're often comprised of not just elected officials but community leaders, BIA members, schools, parent council members—just to have everyone together at the table.

This is another thing we want to look at with hiring of police officers, that they come from the communities they serve. In Toronto, not a lot of police officers live in Toronto. I know the 55 Division—I think it was probably one of the key divisions where most members lived in the city, lived in the riding. We need more of that. We need people from the community serving the community, understanding the needs of the community and keeping it safe. I really hope that that's part of the hiring process and part of the training.

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Removing the tuition? Well, there are lots of groups who want to remove tuition altogether for everything, like they do in Europe. I mean, why limit it just to policing? Why not all front-line worker professions? We're desperate—people are leaving professions left, right and centre, the health care professions, so why not look at that?

There's a lofty goal to build 1.5 million homes. Why not look at removing tuition for the trades? I mean, if we're looking at that, if that's something the government is interested in, why just limit it to policing? That's a question for them.

As the member from London—Fanshawe said, I really like that line that it's not just criminal needs, it's social needs. We know that many people are in crises right now. We hear about it in the news; we see it. We hear it in our community constituency offices—people walking in, desperate for help; people calling; people emailing, and so we need people with proper training and understanding and empathy to help our people, Ontarians who are in need.

I think that, as with many bills with the government, there are some good things and then there are some other things that are concerning, and I just hope we can work that all out.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Lorne Coe: To the member from Beaches—East York: I've got a quote here from Jon Reid, who is president of the Toronto Police Association. The member from Beaches—East York will be interested in this because this is the president of the Toronto Police Association, and he says, "The Toronto Police Association welcomes the Ford government's investment in community safety and policing." Does the member from Beaches—East York also support the proposed legislation that's going to instill the type of community safety I'm sure she would want for her constituents? Yes or no?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: As I mentioned, and I'm sure you heard, there are things in this bill that are supportable, absolutely, and then there are other things that are concerning. As I mentioned, I wonder why the government has changed their mind from 2019 to now on the requirement to have higher education for policing. I

said I have a track record of working well with many divisions, but with 55 division, also 54 division, which is now part of my riding, and so again, there are things to work out, and as you know I'm here, I work across party lines, and I like to collaborate for the greater good.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you to the member from Beaches—East York. I just want to comment that we just received this bill yesterday. It opens up quite a few substantial acts, the policing act; it opens up the Courts of Justice Act, the Coroners Act, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Justices of the Peace Act, Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act and the Provincial Offences Act.

So this bill is substantial and opens up a lot of important things, yet we've only had not 24 hours to consider this bill. Can you tell me, in your role as a person that's here to hold the government to account, how this bill being dropped like this when it's so significant has impacted your ability to ask good questions and to make this legislation better?

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Well, thank you very much. That is an amazing question. I'm not a speed reader, and I don't know if anyone else in this chamber is, but it's a lot to consume, especially when you're a member of a group that doesn't have party status and doesn't have a caucus bureau. So, yes, we need more time. I'm not sure why the government is working so quickly to try and ram this through. Why not take the time for everyone to learn the whole bill and to understand it and to work together? Why not take the time to do it right?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Christine Hogarth: I want to thank the member from Beaches—East York for her dialogue tonight. Being a member from Toronto and, I know, someone who takes transit, I just want to ask you a little bit about—after the recent waves of violence on the TTC, it's really important that we prioritize public safety. That's one of the things we find very important and why we want to make sure that we feel safe in our homes and our communities.

Part of Bill 102 is bringing the Community Safety and Policing Act into force to modernize our justice system. That's part of this bill. I know some were saying they didn't have enough time to read the bill, but that is in the bill. I'm just wondering if that's something that you find that you could support.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you to my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. We worked well together at city hall years and years ago.

Yes, there are many things, as I said, that are supportable. I do take transit when I'm not riding my bike on the glorious bike lanes in Toronto, and it's concerning what's happening on the transit system as far as public safety. I know first-hand—from some friends, some friends' children—of people who are afraid to take transit, and that's a concern, because we want to get people out of their cars

and taking public transit, especially in a climate emergency. So, yes, I'm happy to support some things in this bill; there are other things that I would like us to work together on.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Being a front-line officer, being a first responder, is a very difficult job. We all have great respect for them. It's not easy. They're often the ones who are running in when we're ruining out, and that takes a toll on mental health.

I'd love to hear from the member on why it's really important to support our front-line officers when they're facing mental health issues as a result of their job, PTSD and further.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Thank you for that important question.

We don't invest enough in our mental health programs in the city and across the province. We all can see and experience and hear first-hand from residents that people are struggling, and we need to do more.

With regard to our front-line workers, absolutely—we saw what happened with our health care professionals in the pandemic, and people are leaving that profession. I have a brother who is a firefighter up in Collingwood, and I hear from him often about PTSD and mental health issues—and I can only imagine. I have relatives, great-uncles, who came over from Ireland, who became police officers—because that's what you did; you were a police officer or a politician when you came over from Ireland. But I don't know first-hand myself what it's like. I can't even fathom what these front-line workers experience day in and day out. We need to support them always.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Hon. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to join the debate here this evening.

I was listening carefully to the member from Beaches–East York, who talked about the need for our officers to have life experience. You can get life experience in a number of different ways—by having employment and working in a profession.

When police services are hiring potential new recruits, there's a very thorough, robust screening process that takes place, where they're measuring physical fitness, they're measuring aptitude, they're measuring personality and just street smarts, and that is going to continue under this legislation.

But what has been a barrier for a lot of people who have a profession and are working towards policing is that there's a \$15,000 cost, potentially, to going to the Ontario Police College. So do you not believe, member from Beaches–East York, that removing that barrier will get more of the people that she wants with life experience to be on our streets and making sure that our communities are safe?

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Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I mentioned removing the tuition. Why just limit it to policing? I'm supportive of removing the tuition, but why limit it just to

policing? Why not to other vocations, front-line workers and, as I was saying, the trades? You want to build all those homes. How are you getting people into the trades? We're desperate for workers. People are leaving the profession—doctors, PSWs, nurses—so why limit it just to that? Why not look at it in a more fulsome manner?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question, quick response?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You know what? I'm going to just give you another opportunity to talk. I'm happy to hear that the government is supportive of free tuition for people in the province of Ontario. It's something we've been advocating for for such a long time. Can you just elucidate some of the front-line-service providers that should be provided free tuition? PSWs, paramedics, nurses, so many people that could impact our province positively should not have to pay tuition. I really agree with the Minister of Energy that we should give free tuition to people in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: Right. To the member opposite from Bay of Quinte, I love that you're all about free tuition for students and that you don't want to just limit it to policing. We are talking about our front-line workers, our PSWs, our nurses. Think of all those people impacted by the pandemic and who were so vital in helping take care of us. It's so disturbing that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member from Beaches–East York.

The member from Carleton, further debate?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. I am holding Bill 102 in my hand right now. I know that this is not considered a prop. I know the Clerks are looking at me. This bill, as you can see, is printed in both English and in French, so the length of the bill is actually half. If I take out the preambles and everything else, the actual number of pages of this bill is 24—24 pages, Madam Speaker. And all I've heard for the past seven or eight hours from the opposition and from the independent members is that they have not had time to read this bill. They've brought it up over and over and over again. My point is that if you don't have time to read 24 pages of legislation, maybe you're in the wrong line of work—just saying.

With that, I'm going to continue to the bill. The reason that I got elected and the reason that the people of Carleton re-elected me—and I'm honoured to represent them—is because I work hard. When we bring things forward and when we are getting things done for the province of Ontario, we don't balk. We don't step back and say, “Oh, my gosh, it's so long. I'm not going to read it.” We're not going to say, “I'm not a speed reader.”

We all have staff. We all have support. It is literally our responsibility, as elected officials, to read legislation and make sure we're prepared for it. If they can't read 24 pages of legislation, that's on them. I think that's a huge testament to the reason that we have 83 seats in the House and that there are so many of us that I actually have to sit on this side of the House. I have to sit on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, because no one wants to vote for

the NDP and the Liberals are still in the penalty box. They don't even have official status.

With that, I am pleased to rise and speak to Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. This legislation is going to transform policing and other community safety and justice legislation to support modernization and build safer communities. If passed, this legislation is going to be one of the final steps toward bringing the Community Safety and Policing Act into force, which will ultimately replace the current Police Services Act. It will establish a modern and robust legislative framework that advances the safety, transparency and effectiveness of the community safety system.

I would like to thank Solicitor General Kerzner, PA Bailey, PA Hogarth and the entire team at the Ministry of the Solicitor General for their hard work on this legislation. I would also like to thank our amazing Attorney General, MPP Doug Downey, for the amazing work he has done. He has been a strong representative of everything related to the Ministry of the Attorney General in the province for years. We are very lucky to have him. I would like to thank him and his parliamentary assistant.

Today I would like to focus on the policing aspect of this bill and understand and explain to everyone so they can understand why this bill is needed. Ontario and many other jurisdictions have seen increases in violent crime and repeat offences. Since 2014, there has been a 9% increase in crime, 20% increase in violent crime and 129% increase in illegal firearms use in Ontario. The justice system must be able to combat these issues in order to maintain public safety in Ontario.

The amendments in our legislation focus on oversight and governance, labour arbitration, police recognition and education and providing clarification and alignment with other statutes. Through the Community Safety and Policing Act, our government will establish a legislative framework that modernizes Ontario's approach to policing and community safety that addresses changes to policing over the last 30 years, including improving accountability for the policing sector. This modernized framework is designed to advance policing that is fair, equitable, safe, transparent and effective.

This legislation will ultimately help build safer communities across Ontario. I am thrilled that it contains provisions for police recognition and education, such as expanding King's Commissions to include municipal and First Nations police officers. It also eliminates the post-secondary education requirement in the Community Safety and Policing Act to become a police officer in order to address the recruiting shortage of police officers in Ontario. And just to clarify on this, it has never actually been a legal requirement in Ontario for someone to have a post-secondary degree in order to become a police officer. This is something that we introduced in 2019, but it never actually received royal assent. And so the status quo, Madame Speaker, is what we are maintaining with this piece of legislation.

The policing community in Ottawa, where my riding of Carleton is located, has recognized the positive impact that this change will have in policing on our province. And

while other members of this House—well, actually only the opposition and the independents—have claimed they haven't had time to reach out to their policing communities, yesterday I actually took the initiative, because the people of Carleton rely on me to do their job. The people of Carleton rely on me to be their voice. I took the initiative yesterday to reach out to the Ottawa police chief, Eric Stubbs. I also reached out to the police union president, Matt Cox, to ask them about this legislation. And yesterday, Madame Speaker, right away, they gave me statements. I'd like to read those statements to you.

The Ottawa police chief, Eric Stubbs—who, by the way, has been a fantastic, fantastic person; I've had the pleasure of meeting with him. He actually took the time to drive out to my const office and we had coffee together and it was really great, Madam Speaker. It's so good having a strong relationship with members of policing in your community. I encourage all members to do that.

As soon as I reached out to Ottawa police chief Eric Stubbs, he responded to me right away. This is on text message, on my phone. He said, "We appreciate the efforts by the provincial government in decreasing the financial strain some people have when considering a career in policing. Their dream may now become a reality for those that couldn't afford the tuition. We're also pleased to see the increase in numbers during the year. Now it's our job to fill those seats!"

In addition, President Matthew Cox of the Ottawa Police Association said, "The Ottawa Police Association would like to thank Premier Ford and the provincial government for supporting law enforcement and recognizing the need for more police in Ontario. Community safety is paramount for the city of Ottawa, and the tuition cost associated to the Ontario Police College training or the requirement of post-secondary education were potential barriers preventing some quality applicants from applying."

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We are getting it done for the Ottawa Police Service. We are getting it done for the Ottawa police union. We are getting it done for police forces and police unions across the province of Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to support this important piece of legislation, and I hope that everyone, all across the House, on both sides, will support and vote for this legislation, regardless of whether or not they've had the time to read it. We on this side of the House have read the legislation and we support it. We've taken the time to reach out to our stakeholders, and this is what our stakeholders are saying about this legislation. If we want to support police, if we want to support the men and women in blue who risk their lives every day to have our backs, the least we can do is to support them and make sure they are supported by this government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes):
Questions?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I'd like to pose a question to the very good member from Carleton, who gave her presentation tonight, which was very well researched and obviously well delivered.

The particular portion of this bill that I would like to ask her to address would be the criterion that applies to people who want to pose themselves as candidates as police officers, because, as we all know, even if you have a secondary degree/diploma or a post-secondary degree/diploma, that doesn't automatically make you a police officer. It simply allows you to put yourself forward as a candidate to become a police officer, and the nice thing about this act is, it allows many more people to put themselves forward as candidates to potentially enter into the very strong training program to become a police officer. I was hoping that she might comment on that.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you to the member for his question. Ultimately, it's up to the local police force to determine the criteria. As a province, we provide the baseline, and essentially this legislation is not changing the criteria. It's always been up to those police forces to determine if they want to go above and beyond the criteria.

One thing that I'm very proud of with our police forces in Ontario, whether it's OPP, whether it's Ottawa Police Service, whether it's another municipality, whether it's First Nations policing, is the high standard that police forces hold to their new recruits and their new members to, and they take that very seriously. That's why I am so proud that we're supporting our police forces, not just in Ottawa but across the province, because the standard they have is so high, it is world-class, and we are blessed to live in Ontario, where we have some of the best men and women in blue in uniform.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: We can always count on the member opposite to bring down the temperature in here with her speeches, right?

I'm going to ask a question—seriously, this isn't a game; this is a serious question.

Hon. Todd Smith: Then why would you preface it like that, if it's so serious?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Because, to be honest, sometimes—I'll be straight with you—it seems like it's a lot of game-playing in terms of the questions. It's about “gotcha” and catching you and all of that stuff.

So here's my question, and it's a serious one: Do you honestly believe that 24 hours and a couple of phone calls informs people here who have a responsibility to make serious decisions on legislation that has a far-reaching impact on the future of this province? And I ask you to take a little bit of time—I count three members in this House who sat during a Liberal government. Ask them how they felt when the same was done to them.

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Madam Speaker, here's a piece of legislation—once again, we have 24 pages. Now, I'm not sure about the member opposite, but as a former international trade lawyer—and I'm sure any lawyers here will appreciate that oftentimes, last minute, you are dumped with documents and you are dumped with exhibits and you are dumped with discovery and you are going to have to go over thousands of pages in less than 24 hours. So if the member opposite can't read 24 pages and digest it in 24

hours, that's a comment on them, not on me, because I was able to do it, and I was able to reach out to the Ottawa police chief and the Ottawa police union to get their comment and their feedback on this.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Okay. Can we stop the clock for a minute? I think we just need to get that out of our systems a little bit.

Okay, all right. Cool. Further question?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank the member from Carleton for her passion and her comments today. I know the member from Essex and the member from Carleton are both lawyers. I'm a lawyer by background. Do you like the justice modernization initiatives and other initiatives in the bill?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: Thank you for the question. One hundred per cent, I think these initiatives are much needed. They're well overdue. One of the big complaints that I heard when I was first running in 2018, especially when I was meeting with lawyers—and this is something I experienced myself as a lawyer—is just how antiquated the system was. Back then, before 2018, lawyers still had to serve by fax. Who uses fax these days? Our government modernized this to actually make it allowable to use email, and so, yes, I'm fully in support—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Before I begin my remarks, with your indulgence, Speaker, despite the heckling that's going on, I would like to wish a very happy 18th birthday to my talented and beautiful niece Scarlett. Happy birthday.

Interjection.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: There we go. We're building bridges right here in the Ontario Legislature. All right.

It's an honour for me to rise today and to add the voices of the great people of London North Centre. Today in my discussion of Bill 102, I will be focusing on schedules 3 and 5 in particular. When we take a look at what has been announced in this bill, it's interesting, because it comprises some of what has been suggested in Keira's Law. Now, for those of you watching at home, Keira's Law is something that just recently passed the Senate, and it's going to affect the way courts approach domestic violence. It is something that is absolutely necessary—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Stop the clock. Pause. To the member, my apologies. The member from Beaches—East York—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Order. Hello? Carleton, member from Beaches—East York—we're still having debate. Thank you so much.

Resuming debate, the member from London North Centre.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Thank you, Speaker. The NDP is here to build bridges, and we just watch Conservatives and Liberals burn them down.

More seriously, in schedules 3 and 5, it is reflecting legislation that is named after four-year-old Keira Kagan.

Keira died in 2020, after multiple judges ignored warnings about her father's potential for violence. She died, most unfortunately, in what is presumed to be a murder-suicide. Dr. Jennifer Kagan and her partner were here just this afternoon.

In looking at this legislation that we find before us in Bill 102, I'd like to bring forward the voice of Dr. Jennifer Kagan. She said that the judge said that "domestic violence is not relevant to parenting." In addition, she tried to warn officials. She tried to warn the courts. She tried to warn about her ex-husband's abusive ways, and these went ignored.

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Federally, Bill C-233 is going to amend the Judges Act, and it's going to establish seminars for judges on intimate partner violence and coercive control, something that is reflected within Bill 102 and something that is entirely supportable. However, in my questions to the government earlier, whether this training—what format it would take and whether there would be evaluation to see whether this knowledge had been fully apprehended, fully understood. The government has not yet answered. That is a concern.

In many professional environments, training can take a number of forms. It can be in the form of a PowerPoint. It can be in the form of an online questionnaire. What is in this legislation to ensure that provincial judges are going to fully apprehend and be able to recognize the signs of intimate partner violence and coercive control? Keira is depending on this government.

I'd also like to speak to the Renfrew inquest recommendations and what they have called for, which we don't unfortunately see reflected in this bill. They include: declaring intimate partner violence an epidemic; number two, establishing an independent intimate partner violence commission; number three, creating a survivor advocate role within the Ontario government; and lastly, immediately instituting a provincial implementation committee to oversee the comprehensive consideration of all of these recommendations. The government has stopped short of all of these recommendations.

In our discussion of the motion that was put before this great House just recently on bail reform, I spoke to this government about my ride-along with Sergeant Mike Muscat. The ride-along took place on a Friday evening. It took place also on St. Patrick's Day. I learned so much during that ride-along about what front-line officers are facing. I think it also is important to point out that this took place prior to COVID. But during that evening, I got to see how well our front-line officers engage with their community, how they understand the community. Sergeant Muscat knew many of the people that he was seeing by name, because he'd seen them before.

But what really stuck out to me at that time was how front-line police officers need supports with people who are struggling with their mental health. This government, despite this being brought to the government's attention on a number of occasions, has still failed our front-line officers.

Quite frankly, from the side of the official opposition, we believe that there need to be more community supports.

We need more. And we need more training so that officers are understanding of equity, human rights, mental health and de-escalation.

In my community as well, there has been a great pilot program, and it's called COAST. It's a joint partnership between CMHA Elgin-Middlesex, St. Joe's health care, Middlesex-London Paramedic Service and London Police Service.

It's important for us to point out as well that this is not directly funded by the provincial government. Despite the fact that this was brought forward during pre-budget consultations, it is something that the government has chosen not to fund within the 2023 budget, which is such a mistake.

But COAST is an innovative program whereby front-line officers responding to mental health distress calls will go to those calls with a social worker. Because nine times out of 10, anytime a police officer will show up in their uniform, someone who is struggling with their mental health will immediately be escalated.

So the presence of a social worker, who is that first caring individual, can help de-escalate a situation. Because quite frankly, police officers are there to enforce the law. They're not there to be mental health care practitioners. That is what has been said time and time again to me, from the folks I speak with in London Police Service. They've been calling for mental health supports, yet this government is ignoring the calls of front-line officers.

I was speaking a few years ago to our former chief John Pare in London. He spoke about how all of his officers are doing their very best, but so many of the calls that come through are people who are struggling with their mental health. Police officers are not equipped to deliver that kind of service, and it's distracting them from the job that they ought to be doing, which is protecting public safety.

Our soon-to-be former chief, Chief Steve Williams, who is retiring after a wonderful 30-year career, has also spoken about these issues.

This government has not provided the community supports that police officers require. We keep calling for them on this side of the House. And yet, this government will introduce pieces of legislation as quick as they can and, really, without consultation, without reflecting on what police service boards have been calling for for years.

In addition to the mental health supports for the community, I'd also like to discuss the mental health supports that first responders themselves require. These brave people go into dangerous situations, whereas anyone else would flee. They go there to protect us. They go there to save other people who are in that situation. They run into the jaws of hell, whereas most people would run in the opposite direction.

Unfortunately, many officers could potentially suffer from PTSD—post-traumatic stress disorder—and this is something that the province took quite some time to recognize. In fact, it was only recognized that officers should have presumptive coverage for PTSD in 2016. It's something that, to my understanding, is still not offered for our health care workers—for nurses—who see people at their

very worst. They see people who have undergone tremendous trauma, and yet this government does not provide them with that presumptive coverage. In fact, in Bill 102, post-traumatic stress disorder does not even show up once.

In my discussion of PTSD, I want to recognize and honour the life and the service of Omar Hassan. I want to extend my condolences to his widow and to his sons, as well as to all of his fellow officers and all of his friends. PTSD took Officer Hassan's life. He spent 13 years working undercover, and he spent nearly a decade with the province's anti-terrorism unit. Omar Hassan was a first. He was of Pakistani descent. He was the first officer of Muslim and South Asian descent in the London police force. He was fluent in Urdu. He was fluent in Punjabi. He had a degree in economics from Western University. I also want to add the voice of his friend, who knew Omar well. His friend is Jim Dean, a former police officer who is now a lawyer.

Jim said, "He was a good cop. He was amazing at his job, and he had a great way of dealing with people. He just always tried to be fair, tried to help people, to understand things and always trying to problem solve. He was very good at that. He had a way with people and that was quite obvious the way people admired him.

"He was definitely someone that it was tough to argue with or be mad at or take issue with, because he took everything in stride and he came across as a gentleman."

Omar struggled with PTSD. As Jim has said, you can't look inside of someone and understand their struggle.

Jim went on to say, "He was very proud of the job he was doing and he thrived on it. It was a big part of his life. He thought everybody was equal, that everybody deserved a chance. It didn't matter whether you were somebody living on the street or if you were a police officer. You were on the same level."

He's remembered well.

Omar was also confronted by racism and racial profiling by his colleagues; he was also faced with that within the community. Being the first—as I said, the first Muslim and South Asian officer in the London police force—sometimes is a difficult role for people.

In the wake of Omar's death—and Omar did die by suicide—officers within the London police reached out, and it sent shock waves across our community. In the Greater Sudbury Police Service, they estimate that over 80% of front-line officers will experience PTSD. They say it's not a matter of if; it's a matter of when. This government has not stood up for police by recognizing this.

2010

There have been some changes. Ontario has started to offer some services for police officers, including in the Peel region, serving first responders such as firefighters, police officers, paramedics and nurses with assessment, intensive treatment and aftercare. But the officers I speak with who might be struggling with their mental health can't go to Peel when they're struggling. They are expected to, if they're deeply struggling, attend the hospital where they take many of the people in the community. They're going to see people in the community. They're

going to see the emergency room nurses. They're going to see some of their clientele also waiting in that emergency room. So that's a barrier. That's a barrier they cannot face, that they cannot get past. When they're struggling, the last thing an officer would want to do would be to go to that place. So we as a Legislature have to make sure that they have a safe place to go, in every community, where there aren't those barriers, so that people like Omar Hassan will still be with us. And there will be so many more. It's not a matter of if, Speaker; it's a matter of when.

When we look at so many of the pieces of this bill, it's shocking that this government has dropped it so quickly. When we were discussing bail reform, the motion just recently before this House, the Toronto Police Service made a number of recommendations that weren't implemented within the motion. There was an opportunity here to make sure that those voices were reflected, yet those voices seem to be absent. It's surprising to me that this government will make a lot of noises and say a lot of words about supporting front-line officers, yet when they have an opportunity to do so, they choose not to.

I also want to add the voices of Conservative opposition members, which was shortly before the June election in 2018, before the 43rd Parliament was formed. One of the opposition Conservative members quoted Chris Jackel, who is an OPSEU member. At the time, Jackel was very upset because the Liberal government at the time was stating that "Ontario's streets are safer than ever." Community safety is also a huge concern right now. At this time, Jackel explained that "there are no compliance checks for as many as 50,000 offenders in the community, including sex offenders—no compliance checks, which includes sex offenders?" And also that "Ontario has the country's highest rates of recidivism."

During the motion about bail reform, we discussed the struggles that people within the correctional system face. Correctional officers are doing their very best at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. It was a detention centre that was built for a small number of people. It has ballooned in size. We have seen the removal of things that corrections officers would depend upon and rely upon, such as a gym. They have an incredibly stressful job, in a prison that was not suited to the number of inmates currently. They are unable to adequately supervise and watch them because of the way it's actually designed. But we've also seen a provincial government that has ignored it. It's an institution that is crumbling. It is an institution that is not working. Yet this government, when they were in opposition, completely castigated and ridiculed and called into question the Liberal government at the time for not doing the right thing, for not looking after EMDC, and yet we see more of the same. In fact, there was just a recent court case regarding the treatment of inmates in EMDC.

Speaker, I see that my time is very quickly running out. Bill 102, while there are some supportable sections, such as 3 and 5, I think this government really needs to listen to the voices of front-line officers. It needs to reflect the voices of front-line officers in legislation. The words that we hear bandied about in this chamber are not enough; we

need to see them reflected. We need to see greater investments in mental health supports for our community. Front-line officers have told me time and again that the homelessness crisis is the cause of the malaise within our society. If people don't have a safe place to call home, it ruins a life. As soon as somebody doesn't have an address and doesn't have a safe place, it's almost as though they stop existing within our society.

It is not only a human rights crisis—because we have enough resources, but we haven't seen governments that value that; we haven't seen governments that take that into consideration. But not only is there a human cost, there is a financial cost. Poverty costs this government money, whether it's through health care, whether it's through the criminal justice system, whether it's to businesses who are having to lock their doors and having to be concerned about having their windows broken. It's something that affects every single person. We cannot continue to look away.

This government, in their 2023 budget, heard in the pre-budget consultations from people all across the province who talked about homelessness. We don't see those important investments. We don't see the wraparound services that people across our province are going to require, and the cost to that is human lives. We see an arbitrary cap on the number of supervised consumption sites, and we see much backwards thinking.

To this government: You have an opportunity here. Let's back up these words with action. Let's support our front-line officers. Let's make investments in mental health. Let's make sure there are wraparound services so people can rebuild their lives. Show people they are valued. Show people that they can have a future. It's up to you whether you provide them with that future. It is up to you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to ask my friend opposite—because he's passionate about where he lives and his great community. When we look at having the backs of the officers, would he agree with me that by reducing the barriers and making it easier for people to join the profession, we are in fact protecting his community in the years ahead by finding cadets who will come to the Ontario Police College with their experiences, with their life experiences, and having the commitment to serve his community? Does he agree with that?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the Solicitor General for his question. I would like to reduce the barriers for front-line officers right now, and that can be done through legislation; that can be done through investment. The barriers that they face are ones I've discussed during my presentation. They are being called to mental health calls that they are not well equipped for. They need greater investments in that.

But I also want this government to reduce the barriers for front-line officers who need assistance with PTSD, with their mental health. Don't make them travel to Peel. Make sure that is something that is available in every

community in a low-barrier way so that they can get that assistance, because they're worth it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from London North Centre for that very gripping presentation. The number I won't be able to forget is the 80% of officers likely to contract post-traumatic stress disorder. That is a truly shocking number, and something that certainly mirrors what I've heard from folks back home.

You made a case in your address to us today to make sure we do a lot better to get people access to mental health resources—certainly the people we're trying to bring into the police college, graduating and going out and working in our community. I'm wondering if you're aware of any other best practices. I'm wondering if you're aware of anything you can point the Solicitor General to, the government to so that we can make sure the people who do that important work of community service, that we have their backs, because we know they're going to face difficult situations in our communities.

2020

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre for that excellent question. It is a shocking statistic. It was Constable James Jefferson—I should attribute the quote to where it belongs—who said it's not a matter of if in policing, it's a matter of when it's going to hit you. He also went on to say that it's estimated that officers attend 140 traumatic calls in their career and that these are “the worst that humanity has to offer.”

I also remember dealing with someone—and I can't speak to what level or what their name was, but this is somebody who worked on a child sex crimes unit and suffered from PTSD. WSIB for many years was ignoring the claims. It was automatic that they would turn them down. This is somebody who has seen things that no human being should ever have to see, and WSIB said, “Prove that it was work-related.” That's a shame.

Nurses also need to have presumptive coverage for PTSD because they are seeing things that it's almost impossible to digest, to comprehend and to make sense of when you see people in these horrible states.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to say happy birthday to the member opposite's niece, Scarlett, who is turning 18—I hope she's doing something other than watching this program for her birthday—and thank him for his contribution to the debate.

He talked a lot about the importance of having the backs of police; about PTSD supports, which, of course, we have; about mobile crisis teams, which, of course, we have, and which we're putting out in more and more communities all the time; and also about homelessness. I understand that recently in London–Middlesex, an announcement was made about funding for homelessness: \$22 million—up 63%, \$8 million more.

It is this government, however, and this piece of legislation that shows that we do have the backs of police

officers. That's why they support this legislation and why we're reforming it. Will you support it with us?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for her question. I'll never forget that when I first took my seat in this great place, in 2018, I was approached by one of the government members, who said to me, "I want to inform you that I'm going to be in your community for the Ontario Summer Games. It always offended me when the Liberals never told me." I thought that was very honourable. What I do find quite disappointing—that is a great announcement for London, the \$22 million—is that this government didn't show that same level of honour by inviting the London-area MPPs to that announcement. That's something I would have loved to have attended.

I am very thankful that the government has seen the need to invest in London, but it's something where, if this government wants to say these words about working across and working together, they actually have to base it on actions, and not simple words.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member from London North Centre for sharing some information that I didn't know, statistics that are mind-boggling.

I just want to turn your attention a little bit to the issue of violence against women in the province—actually, in the country and the province. In the Renfrew coroner's inquest, the number one request or recommendation is that the province formally declare intimate partner violence an epidemic. This is the first step in understanding what we are dealing with, not just the police and first responders but all of us as a community.

This is in the context of the city of Hamilton's women's shelters that have no space for women who are fleeing domestic violence because their funding has been cut. Can you speak about how we need to address all these concerns, not just in one part of our community?

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas, because it is an incredibly important question. Intimate partner violence is an epidemic. That was one of the Renfrew inquest's recommendations, that the province adequately call it the epidemic that it is.

There are so many within our community, whether it's fleeing a partner because of violence. There are also what are known as the hidden homeless. There are women who are couch surfing, women who aren't actually reflected in the statistics, women who aren't receiving services from this province. And—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member from London North Centre. Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

Government House leader?

Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, I think it would be beneficial for debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I recognize the member from London North Centre to complete your question.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: Again to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas: There are many people within the community who are struggling. We've seen funding for violence-against-women shelters not be anywhere near enough. It's a shame that we live in a province where these organizations require the charitable donations of people within their community who recognize their value. We need a government that actually funds them properly, so that people can rebuild and save their lives.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Question?

Mr. Billy Pang: In February 2021, the Ontario government established four mental health collaboration tables to better support the mental health and well-being of policing, fire, corrections and paramedic services personnel. Ontario is investing \$3.8 billion over 10 years to fill urgent gaps in mental health and addiction care, create new services and expand programs.

Since 2019, Ontario has invested \$535 million in new annualized funding to create connected, comprehensive and integrated mental health and addictions systems, so there are lots of supports for the community and also our front-line officers. We are not a government that is defunding the police; we are recruiting more.

I would like to invite the member opposite to support this bill.

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to thank the government member for what I'm not sure really was a question.

But I did want to return to what the Greater Sudbury Police Service are doing. What they're doing is they are providing education and training to their front-line officers about what PTSD looks like—what it looks like not only just in others, but also within themselves—because if somebody is going to access the help that they need, they first have to recognize that there's a problem. Sometimes, that recognition might come from a colleague. That might be somebody reaching out and saying, "I think you're struggling. This is what you need to do."

But also, to this government: We need to make sure that these investments are within all communities across the province, so that front-line people and officers can receive the help when and where they need it, not travelling to one centre of excellence in the province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate? The member from Markham–Unionville.

Mr. Billy Pang: Madam Speaker, good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to address the House today on the critical issues of community safety and modernizing our justice system.

Ontario, like many other jurisdictions, has been experiencing a concerning increase in violent crime and repeat offences. The safety of our community must be a top priority, and it is therefore essential that we equip our justice system with the necessary tools to combat these issues effectively.

This is why the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, introduced this week by our government, is such a crucial piece of legislation. If passed, it will serve as a transformative tool for modernizing policing and other community safety and justice legislation, allowing us to build safer communities. The act will also serve as one of the final steps required to bring the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, the CSPA, into force. Once in force, the CSPA will replace the current Police Services Act, establishing a modern and robust legislative framework that advances safety, transparency and the effectiveness of the community safety system.

But we are not stopping there. Additional changes are being made to other acts, including the Provincial Animal Welfare System Act, the Coroners Act and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. We have also made significant changes to acts which fall under the purview of the Ministry of the Attorney General, including the Provincial Offences Act, the Courts of Justice Act, and the Justices of the Peace Act.

2030

Speaker, since 2014, there has been a 9% increase in crime, a 20% increase in the violent crime rate, and a 129% increase in the illegal firearm use rate in Ontario. Additionally, there has been a 29% increase in opioid drug offences from the year 2020 to 2021. These are numbers nobody wishes to see. These increases may be driven by multiple causes, including social issues such as addiction, mental health and poverty, as well as legal and constitutional requirements respecting bails, and the pandemic.

Our government is committed to keeping Ontario safe, and we are taking the necessary steps to improve an outdated community safety and justice system. Our government's proposal aims to modernize community safety and justice systems and build safer communities by transforming policing and other safety and justice legislation. We are freeing up court resources for more serious and backlogged cases, and exploring future policy opportunities to respond to current and emerging challenges.

Mr. Speaker, let me highlight some of the important amendments to the Community Safety and Policing Act. The CSPA received royal assent back on March 26, 2019. However, there are several important operational and critical amendments required to bring the act into force. These policy amendments focus on strengthening oversight and governance to ensure representation of the local community. We are making changes to improve the labour and budget arbitration process. We are focusing on police recognition and education to expand King's Commission appointments to include municipal and First Nations police officers, and providing clarification and alignment with other statutes. Through the CSPA and its regulations, our government will establish a legislative framework that modernizes Ontario's approach to policing and community safety that addresses changes to policing over the last 30 years, including improving accountability for the policing sector. This modernized framework is designed to advance policing that is fair, equitable, safe, transparent and effective.

Speaker, our government is also making changes to acts which fall under the purview of the Ministry of the Attorney General, including the Provincial Offences Act, the Courts of Justice Act, and the Justices of the Peace Act. We are proposing changes that build upon our work to drive transformation throughout the justice sector by strengthening court services, improving service delivery and supporting judicial education and resources.

Under the proposed amendments to the Courts of Justice Act and Justices of the Peace Act, let me be clear that our government will support the judicial education related to sexual assault law and intimate partner violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace. These changes underline the government's commitment to promoting a justice system in which gender-based violence and sexual assault matters are decided respectfully and fairly, with dignity and compassion for victims and survivors. These changes also established a consistent approach to the way judges are educated, in which they understood the risks of gender-based violence and the impact such violence has on children, their families, and the broader community. This also ensures that the judges possess the necessary awareness, skills and knowledge to handle cases involving gender-based violence, thereby instilling public confidence in the judicial system.

Speaker, we are making changes to make sure the people of Ontario can rely on a fair, equitable and resilient justice system as a cornerstone of community safety. We are providing those at the forefront of community safety with the legislative and administrative support they need to deliver the highest-quality services to the province. We are taking action to keep Ontario safe today, tomorrow and for future generations. Let's make all Ontarians feel protected and proud of the province we call home.

In conclusion, I urge all members of the House to support the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, as we work together to build a safer and stronger Ontario for all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Thank you. Just a point: Can the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke please come to order?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: My question, Speaker, is, is the job as easy as it looks? You make it look good, sitting in that chair. Thank you very much.

To the member: You talked about the rise in hate crimes and hate incidents, and it is shocking. There's a recent report that came from the Hamilton Police Service that says that Hamilton has a 61% increase in hate incidents in 2022—that's a police report. They also identify that the Jewish community and the Black community in Hamilton were most likely to be the targets of these hate crimes. Hamilton Police Service is doing what they can to address this, but my question to you is—you brought this up, this disturbing trend. What do you think is fuelling this?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you, member from the opposition, for asking this very important question. As the

parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, hate crime has no place in Ontario.

One of the reasons why we are recruiting more officers to serve the community is we understand that we need more boots on the ground to support the community. That's why, as we see an unprecedented rise in violence—not just hate crimes, but other repeat criminal activities—the safety of our families and children deserves action.

A lot of cars were stolen. Thank God that some of them are being arrested by our police officers, not by politicians. But we need to support our police officers so that they have more boots on the ground, they are more well equipped and they are—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Thank you. Questions?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to say thank you to the member from Markham–Unionville for his great speech. I just wanted to ask him—there's a lot of things in this bill, and you went over quite a few of them. What is most important for the members of your community? Is it supporting the police, is it the intimate partner violence piece, is it the changes to the Courts of Justice Act? What do you think is going to make the most difference for your community?

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for my colleague's great question. Basically, all directions—all directions. Of course, number one is police officers: We need more boots on the ground. There are more and more break-ins, more and more cars being stolen or even being seized in my community.

Let me share one of my experiences: My friend's wife one night was being followed to her driveway and three men jumped down from the car. She was so smart—she kept honking her car so that those people ran away.

We need more police officers, for sure. That's why we now are lowering, changing, the requirement for recruiting our police officers.

Actually, you know what, in the UK, the minimum—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Thank you to the member for his response. Questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I thank my friend for the presentation. Something you didn't mention that certainly is a very passionate subject in our community that this bill touches is animal protection. A lot of folks in our community are very passionate about the fact that we have a problem in this province where people abuse their pets, people abuse their animals. We have a fantastic organization in Ottawa Centre called Ray's reptiles—it's known across the country, across North America—that is a sanctuary for exotic pets often that are abandoned.

2040

I'm wondering if you think amendments to this bill could allow for the government to think about its relationship with animal sanctuaries like Ray's reptiles that can play a role in making sure that people make the right decisions for their pets, and when they make the wrong decision, that they're accountable for those decisions.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you for the question from the opposition. I love pets. I bought my first pet; it was a red-

eared reptile. Now, I'm still with another reptile at home, but that's my daughter's. I love pets. Uncountable—I have guinea pigs, I have a dog, I have birds, I have reptiles. Count it.

Since the ministry took on the enforcement of animal welfare legislation in January 2020 and created the ministry's animal welfare services, key areas have been identified where operational updates to the legislation are a priority to support the existing animal welfare enforcement framework in Ontario. At this time, proposed amendments are also focused on addressing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Matthew Rae): Thank you to the member.

Further debate? The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much, Speaker. Good to see you in that chair. Thank you so much to my colleagues for listening. I am really glad to speak to this bill and speak on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest.

It's always an honour when we talk about anything and everything that makes our communities safe, that allows for workers to be able to have the right equipment and the right training to do their jobs, because I think—we're talking about police officers; they're workers across the province. So I'm really honoured to speak to this.

I also want to give a big shout-out before I begin to the neighbourhood officers in my community, who are police officers who actually go into your communities and do some incredible work to make sure that they help youth at risk. They do programming like cooking, for example. We have round tables where kids can speak out and actually feel comfortable. It's a whole different world for some kids, so I just want to give a big shout-out to the neighbourhood officers in Scarborough. The work that you do really means a lot, so thank you very, very much.

I also want to first—I know the government always talks about, "The opposition always opposes," so I actually want to start off with a few things that I want to highlight in this bill that I think—just off the top of these points—point out because I think they're positive changes.

When I looked at the Bill 102 changes and the new section added—schedule 29, I believe—it talks about municipalities taking on reasonable steps, for example. I know the Solicitor General is here and he's listening, so I'm actually going to use this opportunity to show my appreciation but also give some criticism as well. I hope that he takes that feedback well after second reading.

When I looked at this, I thought, "Well, you know what? If the province does this, why shouldn't the municipalities?" It actually makes a lot of sense to make sure that we have the public available for board appointments to make sure that they are part of that. This requirement that the minister is a part of it as well—I thought it actually makes sense in both cases. So it's a positive change as well.

I also want to highlight the fact that it actually improves the current language for OPP strategic plan responsibilities to provide the adequate and effective policing part of it to

actually add a new part that says, “Interactions with persons who appear to have a mental illness or a neurodevelopmental disability.”

I personally wanted to actually point this out because I thought it was just a really effective—I know it’s small words, but it’s very important because we’ve had incidents across the city where we have the police who had to go into situations with mental health or development disability, and it’s traumatic. There needs to be impact on that as well. So I think that language matters, and I think that part was really important.

The other part of it is a new section that has been added in the Courts of Justice Act, and I know my colleagues talked about that as well, which allows the Chief Justice of Ontario to establish courses for new and existing judges. There are some specific things that have been added. For example, when we talk about sexual assault law, intimate partner violence, that’s something we talked about in the House extensively as well. There’s also talk about the social context and how do we make sure that our judges have that training. My colleague from London North Centre talked about a few next steps that could be done to make that better, and I just want to say this is a good change. There can be a little bit more to make that better as well.

Opposition doesn’t always oppose. There are also good things that I think need to be highlighted, and there are some good things in this bill that I think are very important changes and are effective changes that will make our province better.

When I looked at this bill, I was also looking for things that go a little bit beyond, in terms of the support, that we heard from police officers who are really on the front lines and facing the crisis when it comes to addiction and mental health. I thought about the recent death of Gabriel. Before I even begin some of the criticisms that I want to talk about—and it’s constructive criticism, I hope—I want to talk about Gabriel and Gabriel’s mom. Gabriel Magalhaes was a 16-year-old boy who was stabbed on the TTC. He was actually coming from work, and he was sitting there minding his own business. When Gabriel’s mom spoke to the media—and I’m sure many of you watched this, actually—it was quite emotional; I can’t imagine. I’ve gone through traumatic experiences in my life with family, and there was a time I thought I was going to lose my father so I know what it feels like to think that you’re going to lose someone, but I don’t know what this mother would have felt and I hope no one ever has to feel this way.

But I just thought it was really beautiful how Gabriel’s mom, when she spoke with the CBC—this is what she said. She said she feels that it is important to speak out about the senseless violence on the TTC, and she said that she hopes that officials can hear the pain in her voice, and she wants them to imagine “it is your child that could be murdered on the subway.” She goes on, saying, “I am hoping that people will raise their voices so we can be heard. More needs to be done to help people in crisis. More needs to be done so that people don’t get to the point where they’re in crisis.” She also goes on to say, “We need more

social services. We need more investment into physical and mental health. We need more supports for housing. I feel like, as things go the way they are going right now, so many people are going to be suffering the horrible pain that I am going through right now.”

Speaker, if you could hear her voice, it was so powerful, but she was in so much pain and it really highlighted what we’re seeing in our city right now. And when you talk to a lot of police officers who actually go through being the first responders in these kinds of situations, you also know that there’s a lot of work that needs to be done to support them as well, because someone who is attending to this, there is trauma that they go through as well. So one of the first things I would say is, when we talk about supporting police officers, supporting our communities with a better justice system and supporting our communities in the crisis we’re facing with addiction and mental health, we really should take some notes from Gabriel’s mom, who talked about the fact we need to address addiction and mental health and we need to address the crisis in our housing, because that’s when we’ll be actually addressing the needs of our communities. The fact that a 16-year-old boy had to lose his life is just unacceptable and something we should not have happening in our province. We need to do anything and everything possible to make sure that we create a safe environment.

But that also means that we create a safe environment for those who are the first responders. When we talk about our police officers—my colleague shared data about how many police officers who have attended such situations—the ratio of police officers who go through PTSD.

2050

I want to give you another number, Speaker. There are about 33%, when we talk about the OPP, for example, of constables on long-term leave. Right now they make up 33% of the vacancies because of something related to this kind of—the trauma that they’re facing, PTSD they’re facing, for example. And when we look at the report from the Nova Scotia incident, the Mass Casualty Commission, there are specific recommendations that talk about what we need to do to make sure that our police officers feel like they have the proper training, the proper support to go into a situation, and then they have the support after, post that situation as well.

I just want to give you an example. There are programs that exist, and we can also support those as well. I remember, actually, before I came to this place, a few years before that, did I training for an organization called Victim Services Toronto. Victim Services Toronto is sort of an arm’s-length but independent organization with the Toronto Police Service and within the headquarters, but you can volunteer. So I chose to be a volunteer there, with victim services. But their training, the certificate that you get at the end, is from the police chief. And you actually get some rigorous training about the way you can become a volunteer counsellor to support somebody who’s going through something that—and it’s completely anonymous.

As counsellors, as volunteers, you would actually have the police officer call you and take you to an incident

where, for example, you would have to give a mom the news of her son or daughter's death, because sometimes the police officers would think, you know what? Someone with that training, someone who has a different approach will be able to do that job better or be the calming voice at that time, because at that moment—and we know for Gabriel, for example, when the police went to her door, Gabriel's mom actually fell to the floor, because she had heard the news and she thought something happened and he wasn't responding to her calls. So when the police finally knocked on her door, she just said, "I knew it," and fell to the floor. In those kinds of situations, you have someone who is a counsellor who goes with the police officers, and they actually support these kind of incidents. There have been homicides and there have been domestic violence cases where Victim Services Toronto does that work and does incredible work, and I'm just so incredibly proud of them—with complete anonymity, and it supports the police as well. I think the government needs to do a lot to support these kinds of organizations with funding, and maybe take lessons in terms of how we can make sure that within the police force we have the training that they can have for de-escalation, for mental health, all of those things that are rigorous where the officers feel like they have the life skills that are necessary to be able to do that job.

The other thing I want to point out is when we talk about supporting police officers, we need to make sure that we're also talking about communities where they are safe. The fact that we lost nine police officers, Speaker, over the last six months is heartbreaking. There were thousands of people who attended Constable Andrew Hong's funeral—thousands, including his family. His daughter talked about how her father was her biggest cheerleader and how wonderful a man he was. I believe he was 48 years old when he died and had given more than 20 years to service, and it's just incredible to see the dedication. But this officer, this constable, was at a Tim Hortons, just ambushed and killed. We have to really look back and see what is happening in our communities with gun violence, with, again, the mental health crisis, because even the first responders are not safe. Sometimes it shouldn't be the police officers who should attend these calls, because we know there are incidents where we need to have the people who are trained as social workers, who are trained for de-escalation, who are trained for dealing with someone who's going through trauma, going through mental health or needs a cultural way of looking at mental health support as well. That should not be the job of a police officer, but they can have that level of understanding and that training. Because if we're going to push them to do all of those things—which we are, right now, making them; their plate is huge—then we should make sure that they're equipped.

The other thing that I want to point out, going back to the level of life experiences that they need for their job: A lot of the officers that we have, for example—when we look at research, research suggests that police officers who have a greater degree of communication, problem-solving skills and social skills are less likely to be facing interdisciplinary issues, for example, and are the best ones who

come forward in these kind of scenarios that I just highlighted. They also are the ones who become community safety officers dealing with things like school violence.

I was just at a school a few weeks back, at one of our schools where we had violence. After the event, in the post-mortem conversation of it, we had a police officer who had to talk to the community, talk to the parents, and talk about whether parents can feel like they can send their kids back to school. Imagine that, Speaker. That is also part of their job. All of those pieces are part of their job—so making sure that we understand exactly how we're setting them up, so that we're not setting them up for failure and we're making sure they're not spread too thin when it comes to responding to the crises that we're facing.

The other thing that I want to highlight is making sure that, when we do the regulations for this legislation, for example, we should really look at the Mass Casualty Commission's recommendations, because there are some specific recommendations that the commission highlighted that would be really beneficial. Whenever I talk to—whether it's the police union, whether it's community safety workers, whether it's VST counsellors, for example, they will tell you that there are some specific needs that we have in our community, and we have to make sure that it's not just police officers who are responding to it, and, when they are responding to it, that they have the right training and the support; and then, when they go through trauma, they go through PTSD, that they have that support as well so they're not traumatized from a job that they wanted to do and they love doing.

Finally, the other thing I want to say, to wrap up, is that we have heard a term in this House, which is that this bill will put "boots on the ground." I disagree. With all due respect, I don't think our police officers are supposed to be boots on the ground. We're not going to war right now. The police officers have a really important job that they do, and they go back to their home, to their families, and we have to make sure that we set that up. We cannot be calling them "boots on the ground." I understand it may be, I don't know, some sort of term that flows really well for government members, but I don't see it that way. I think the crisis that we're facing right now when we talk about our first responders, when we talk about the need for WSIB, the need for mental health, all of those things, I don't see them as boots on the ground, I see them as the people who come to your door when you need them for an emergency, for a community safety issue. I see them—as I mentioned before, the cooking program they do in my Warden Woods community neighbourhood, where kids can finally feel like they can talk to a police officer without that fear inside them.

I see my neighbourhood officers and police officers as someone who should attend and be able to do the job without fearing what's going to happen to them. Are they're going to end up like one of the nine officers who lost their lives? To me, I think it's very important that we are careful about how we're setting them up. We should not be setting them up for failures, because it's really critical that we support them and we do anything and

everything possible to make sure that they have the right resources and they have the funding to do that. That means providing the level of community services as well.

The final point that I want to talk about before I end is something that I see in my community. In Scarborough Southwest, we have recently seen a lot of violence in our schools—we've talked about the TTC as well—and on the subway.

2100

In the past, we've also seen issues where there is a sense of trust that we have to build, and with this bill one of the things that I fear is—going back to the reason why I was being critical of the language—we have to really make sure we build relationships and trust. This is something that I talk to police officers about, as well. When we do the big circle in one of our community centres, or when I talk to any of our youth or when I attend an event at one of our community centres called Guitars not Guns, we talk about how do we build trust, because there is a huge gap that we're facing right now when we talk about policing and when we talk about the community that we have. And I have a very diverse community that I represent, some marginalized, in a low-income neighbourhood where poverty is increasing and a lot of mental health needs, and this is across the city as well.

So how do we bridge that gap? How do we make sure that we have the right resources? That means funding for our schools, funding for our community services, funding for addiction and mental health services, making sure that we have first responders who do other parts of that job who are equipped and have that support, and making sure that our police officers are well trained, have the support they need, and if they end up in a situation where they are dealing with PTSD, they are dealing with an injury, that they have the right support and we're not abandoning them.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for your time. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Mike Harris: I always appreciate hearing from the member for Scarborough Southwest. I think she brings a lot of interesting community perspectives to debate here, even at this late hour tonight.

I did want to say a couple of things when it comes to investments by this government, and the Solicitor General can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think our government, since 2018, has actually made more investments in policing and mental health in and around policing than any other government in the history of this province. So there is a lot that has been done.

I'm a huge supporter of our IMPACT program that we have in Waterloo region where we actually have mental health clinicians that are embedded with police officers that are able to go out to some of those calls. A great little by-product of that is that police officers are also able to speak with those clinicians, where it doesn't necessarily—someone was using the terms earlier, “get flagged,” “go on

their file.” They're able to have those casual chats. There are a lot of good things happening.

I wanted to go back a little bit and talk about the community aspect. Solidifying removing barriers when it comes to tuition costs and post-secondary education, I think, opens up a lot of opportunity for people from your community that may not have—that want to get into policing and want to do great for the people of their community. This helps open some doors for them. I'd just like to get some comments on that.

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for the opportunity, because I actually ran out of time so I didn't get a chance to talk about this. I 100% support the ability for so many youth to be able to get an education without that burden of tuition fees, and I think it should go beyond just police officers. I think the second—we've talked about this already—should be health care workers. There is—

Mr. Mike Harris: Paramedics.

Ms. Doly Begum: Paramedics as well—

Mr. Mike Harris: Tradespeople.

Ms. Doly Begum: And tradespeople. I think we've got some really good lists that we can go through. I hope, with the giant majority that you have, you would look into this, because tuition fees can be a burden for so many people who would be incredible at these jobs, but unfortunately can't do it. Some of them end up actually working at a very early age or, if they're immigrants, they end up working just to put food on the table and don't end up getting an education. I appreciate the ability for anyone to get an education without that—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you for what you brought to the House today. This bill is about keeping communities safe, and we agree that anything that we can do to invest in the community to keep people safe is important. Our police officers are on the front line, but what we are doing is unfair and unsafe for police officers. As you describe, police officers do not want to be the first responders when someone has died by suicide because of an opioid addiction. They don't want to have to carry naloxone kits because the opioid crisis is out of control in this province. They don't want to have to escort a woman or a family fleeing domestic violence to a shelter, to find that there's no place for them to go. That is not the job of police officers in this province.

We see by the numbers of officers who are suffering from PTSD that this must be a result of the things that they have to do and have to face that should never be part of their job, that we should be doing in the other kinds of supports in the community.

Despite the government talking about their investments, homelessness is getting worse, and the opioid crisis is getting worse.

So what can we truly do so that police officers on the front line aren't doing everything to keep our communities safe?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for that question. You're absolutely right; our goal should be to make sure that we

set our first responders up for success, to make sure that they feel like they're ready to go to any door or any situation and do their job, but also to make sure that not only are we doing the policing part of it but—why is something happening? Why are we facing the situation that we're facing across our province? The fact that we've got a huge opioid crisis—prescription and outside of prescription. The fact that we've got a huge mental health crisis—and I know my colleague on the other side also talked about mental health supports.

The mental health community asked for an 8% increase in their funding, but the government is only giving 5%. That's not meeting their needs. That will just keep them at status quo, which is not okay because we know that the status quo is not enough, and we need to do much better to support them.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I want to thank the member opposite for her remarks. I was listening, and she's 100% correct that we need to do everything we can to have the backs of everyone who keeps us safe, especially because of the experiences that they encounter when they're on the job.

So I want to pose a question to the member: Would she agree with us that by removing the barriers to becoming a police officer and to keeping our communities safe that we will attract new candidates who bring their life experience with them to serve our province and to keep us safe?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you very much to the Solicitor General for this question.

I actually highlighted a few things in the beginning, as well, which was—100%, we should remove the barriers, and I talked about the tuition fees being one of them.

I know there are some specific parts of this bill, which was implemented in 2019, being removed now. So if you look at precedence and if you look at the way that it's being formulated, there are actually very little changes in that sense.

If you look at the Mass Casualty Commission's report, for example, and look at what's happening across our city and our province, we really should be making sure that the police service has that training that the commission has called for and some of the police unions and the police associations are calling for and police officers are calling for. We don't have anything in this bill talking about that, and that could have been a big part of that, as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Although police officers are eligible to work—they're eligible to work also as peace officers, and a peace officer is not eligible to work as a police officer. There's kind of a difference there.

One of the things the member talked about was boots on the ground, and that's kind of where it got me to look on the Internet and find out, what does "boots on the ground" mean—and I compared a peace officer to a police officer. "Boots on the ground" means combat troops deployed in a foreign country. It's very militaristic. When I

call the police, I expect help; I don't expect boots on the ground. How is that interpreted by people at large in her community?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you for that question from my colleague. This is precisely the reason why I wanted to point out the specific wording of that and why I think it's problematic, especially when we're trying to bridge that gap between police officers and many communities. They shouldn't be called "boots on the ground." When there is that sort of connotation of the militarization—and when you're going to war and the way it is.

It's very important that we have the idea of when you call 911, you're looking for help. I know a lot of police officers I've talked to in our community have a relationship, for example, with businesses and community organizations where these organizations know who to call. These specific officers serve that need and they have worked really hard to make sure to build that relationship.

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If you call them boots on the ground, I don't think they would be very happy either, because they're not. They are the first responders who go to make sure that our community is safe and to provide that support and to make sure that they're secure.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest. Just now, you asked a lot of whys when you were responding to the—

Mr. Mike Harris: Daisy Wai's?

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Not "Wai's"—not Daisy Wai—but whys.

In fact, you can find a lot of the solutions. That's why we are bringing forward this bill. You can find a lot of solutions right here in this Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act. We have served Ontario for many decades with the Police Services Act, and this bill is to modernize it. Can we count on your support by voting for this Bill 102?

Ms. Doly Begum: Thank you to my colleague opposite for her question. I know that on this side, we heard about how, "Well, this is only a few pages, so why didn't you read the whole thing?" I'll tell you, I was at Queen's Park yesterday doing my duties, and then when I got the bill, I took a look at it. I'm a slow reader. Maybe some members opposite have really fast reading skills and have a legal background. I don't have that. For me, I take my time to read the document and understand it and make sure that it does serve the community, and if I have anything that I want to provide constructive criticism for, I want to be able to do that. I really appreciate the opportunity to do that for the Solicitor General.

Mr. Mike Harris: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order?

Mr. Mike Harris: Yes. There are some interesting terms being used in the House right now towards other members—from the opposition towards our members on this side of the House. I think it's quite inappropriate. I'm

not going to say what it is or who it was, but I think the decorum in here tonight has maybe devolved a little bit, even further past my standards, Madam Speaker, which take things to a whole other level—just some comments that are being made that I don't think are appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you for bringing that forward. Members, we are debating. Please continue to be respectful. I didn't hear a comment, so I can't speak to your point of order. Just reminder that as we get a little later, we get a little saltier, but let's please remember decorum.

We'll move on to further debate.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: It's always an honour to be able to rise and speak in the House on behalf of my constituents in Ottawa West–Nepean. Tonight, I'm rising to speak to Bill 102, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act.

I just have to comment on the process that's led to this debate before I get into the substance of this bill, because this is a bill that we first saw yesterday after 3 p.m. It was tabled after 3 p.m., so less than 24 hours' notice before beginning the debate on second reading. It's quite a substantial bill. It makes changes to seven different acts, and of course no time for the opposition parties to be able to do any outreach to stakeholders or our constituents on the impacts of this bill, which I find incredibly anti-democratic. Unfortunately, it's kind of a pattern we have seen from the government over my 10 months in this House, for sure.

What I find kind of surprising about this is that we've just seen Bill 98 tabled, the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, which the government said they needed to table because they needed to see more transparency and accountability from school boards. That bill includes a new requirement for school boards to produce reports on the minister's priorities and to meet with parents twice a year to discuss progress on meeting those priorities. I'm not sure that members on the other side of the House, if a school board posted a 91-page report at 3 p.m. and told parents that their only opportunity to speak to it would be the next day, would consider that sufficiently transparent and accountable and democratic. So it's very interesting that this is the strategy that the government has chosen regarding its own legislation.

I think the subject matter makes this process question even more important, because this is a bill that touches on some very important topics: sexual assault, intimate partner violence and coercive violence between partners. All of that I think means that we should be giving more weight and more time and more consideration to this topic.

In the United States, there was this horrible abuse scandal where Larry Nassar, the gymnastics coach, was allowed to abuse young girls and women for years without any kind of consequence. When that case came to trial, there were actually nine days spent hearing statements from 204 women giving their survivor impact statements, because the judge in that case really understood that healing from sexual abuse and sexual assault requires giving the subject time. You have to give survivors time to share their stories and experiences.

I feel that rushing this bill through means that survivors in Ontario aren't being given the time and respect that this issue deserves. Survivors are not being given the opportunity to have their stories heard in this Legislature. I would have loved to be able to bring the stories of some of the survivors from Ottawa West–Nepean, but, sadly, there has been none of that time to be able to consult with them and to be able to bring those stories to this House.

Training for judges on sexual assault, intimate partner violence and coercion is an incredibly important topic. There has definitely been a demand for it for multiple years, so I also don't understand why not put that in a stand-alone act if it was such an urgent priority that it needed to be adopted quickly? Then we could have spent more time giving the topic due diligence, instead of needing to debate animal welfare alongside intimate partner violence.

What we saw at the federal level, in fact, was that federal Conservatives introduced a bill calling for mandatory sexual assault training for justices in 2017 and that bill has been in place for two years already. So it's not like the impetus has not been there for that kind of training or that there haven't been calls.

We also have seen there have been legislative changes at the federal and provincial level to recognize the importance of coercive control, which does not always include threats of physical violence. Yet Professor Lori Chambers, of Lakehead University, who studies intimate partner violence, says that coercive control of the other parent can be one of the biggest risk factors for parents killing their own children.

There have been changes to Canada's Divorce Act to include coercive control in the definition of family violence. Then Bill 207 was tabled in this Legislature by the Attorney General to bring Ontario's family law into line with that definition, adding coercive control into the definition of family violence here in Ontario as well. When that debate took place, which was more than two years ago now, witnesses, including Keira Kagan's family, called for training to be included in that legislation at that time. So it's incredibly disappointing that that opportunity wasn't taken to listen to family members and advocates who said that training was necessary at that time. What we have seen is that simply having the definition in our legislation doesn't make a difference for the decisions that are made in our courts of justice when judges do not understand the legislation, do not understand what that actually means in concrete terms, and so are allowing parents to maintain custody of children even when there are concerns raised about coercive control.

There have also been concerns raised by the community that there's not enough funding for legal aid to support victims of intimate partner violence when they go to court to try to raise concerns about coercive control. There are not enough supports for community partners and advocates who support women throughout that process. That's something that I hope the government will also consider this evening, that if we truly want to make sure that we're protecting children and we're protecting women

against family violence, those wraparound supports need to be there as well.

2120

Similarly, with the section of the bill that's about community safety and policing, obviously, training is one part of being able to recruit additional police officers, but we also know that there are so many other factors that affect whether or not someone is willing to take a job as a police officer, whether or not they're willing to move to communities that need police officers. We know things like the cost of housing and many of our communities have a real challenge providing deeply affordable housing. We know access to local schools—and many rural and remote communities do not have adequate access for schools and support for schools, and people don't want to move to communities where their children won't be able to attend the local school.

We also know that supports for police officers when they're doing the work are incredibly important. Sadly, rates of PTSD are on the rise among police officers. The Auditor General tabled a report two years ago that looked at challenges within the police service, and she identified that 33% of officers who were not in their roles currently were on long-term absences, because we're seeing an increase in the number of officers who are experiencing PTSD, who are experiencing workload burnout issues.

This is something that's very familiar to me, Speaker, from my work at CUPE prior to being elected, where I looked at the paramedic sector in Ontario. Paramedics are burning out because of workload issues, because of the kinds of intense situations that they're being put into without adequate resources, without being able to take time off after a traumatic call.

We're seeing police officers who are being expected to bear an incredibly heavy workload because of the shortage of officers, but also that the mental health supports aren't there when they've had to deal with a traumatic situation and a traumatic call. Simply recruiting more police officers is part of the solution, but not the entire solution, because you're not dealing with the reasons why people are likely to experience mental health challenges and burnout on the job. We have to also be willing to provide those mental health supports in the workplace and things like critical incident leave that actually allow people to get the help that they need.

Finally, we also know that simply putting police officers in the community doesn't build a safe and healthy community in and of itself. We need supports for people living within the community. Unfortunately, we just learned today that Ottawa is getting a mere fraction of the homelessness funding committed in the budget. And if the government doesn't change course and actually give Ottawa its fair share of the homelessness funding, then Ottawa is actually going to have to cancel 54 supportive housing units, which means that 54 people in Ottawa, on an ongoing basis, are going to have to go without crucial mental health and addictions supports. And we know that when people are suffering mental health challenges and addictions, that they are more likely to be involved in the

criminal justice system and there are more likely to be harmful outcomes for them, for family members and for police officers.

So it's really important for us to be investing in the community supports as well so that we are resolving issues before they reach a crisis level, before police have to get involved, especially given the fact that we know that too many situations in Ontario that have involved police being called to a mental health situation have not ended well for the person who was in the mental health crisis. I don't think we want to see that continue in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: My question to the member opposite concerns one particular feature of this proposed legislation pertaining to the Courts of Justice Act. We know that to combat the delays in the courts, one of the most important things that we can target and focus on is the question of the use of judicial resources. Every time that a judge of the Superior Court, for example, has to deal with something that is contested between or among parties, a judge has to have a hearing or consider submissions and then make a ruling. That takes the judge's time away from other cases. So this bill proposes that as many as 9,000 cases that are before the Superior Court would no longer be there because of the jurisdiction of the Small Claims Court, under \$35,000, where it ought to be.

My question is, why would His Majesty's loyal opposition oppose a measure like that which frees up judges' time on something as simple as traversal of matters to the

Small Claims Court—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you, sir. Response?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to the member for the question. I guess my question back to the member would be: If this measure is so excellent, simple and straightforward, why does the government want to ram through second reading debate on the legislation in question before partners in our legal system, such as the Law Society of Ontario, actually have an opportunity to weigh in and provide opposition parties with their feedback and input on this situation?

I think when you have a really good bill, there's really no reason to play these kinds of games, except to mess with democracy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from Ottawa West–Nepean for that terrific address to this House and that contribution to the debate.

Towards the end of the debate, you mentioned what we're just learning today back in our city. I liked the way you framed it. I think about the loss of those 54 assisted housing units of now being the direct responsibility, more than likely, of first responders. Some first responder is now going to have to deal with a neighbour in crisis, because we didn't marshal the resources of the province to help someone or put someone in a home. Instead, we're

going to be putting that person in a police cruiser, or an emergency room, or perhaps a correctional facility.

I'm just wondering if you can appeal to the members opposite, particularly given that this bill is about, ostensibly, trying to help first responders like police officers do their jobs. Why is it a good decision to make sure that affordable housing, supportive housing, is available for neighbours in need?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from Ottawa Centre for that excellent question. We know that poverty is incredibly expensive, and we also know that people who are in deep poverty are more likely to be criminalized and to have experiences with the criminal justice system. We also know that people do better in all situations when they are housed first.

But we know that people who have mental health and addictions issues are unlikely to remain housed unless they are getting those wraparound supports that supportive housing provides, which help them to deal with those mental health and addictions issues. When they are not able to get those supports, then frequently, unfortunately, we see people spiralling or we see people continuing to self-medicate with drugs that they buy on the street, which are incredibly dangerous and bring them into contact with the health system, which is incredibly expensive.

But we also see an increase in both criminalization of those people and disruptive behaviours from those people. And so it's definitely less expensive for the province to invest in supportive housing than to let these people spiral.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions? The member from Durham.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Thank you, Speaker—

Interjection: Oh, come on.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I appreciate the recognition, Speaker, because the member opposite—let's have a real debate. I was a deputy judge at the Small Claims Court for nine years. I was practising before the Superior Court for 30. Every time a judge's valuable time is taken up with an unnecessary contested matter, it takes away from child protection, family law matters and criminal matters. There's only so much one level of government can do. It's up to the federal government to deal with the effects of Jordan, and they have the advice—my advice—on that, which they failed to act on two years ago.

So I ask the member: Does she not understand, does the opposition not understand, the urgency of getting this passed, to get this kind of straightforward, simple measure in place, so that we can save the justice system from needless delays and protect the valuable time of judges, who do such excellent work—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you. Response?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Apparently it's not just the Minister of Sport who likes to mansplain in this House.

If the judges' time is so incredibly valuable that they can't possibly waste a moment of it, I do wonder what a judge would do if the crown tried to provide a significant amount of disclosure at 3 p.m. and told defence to be ready to go at 9 p.m. the next day, and the trial was going to wrap

up by midnight. Would the judge think that that was a fair situation and was giving both sides of the case a fair opportunity?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for that. I just really was pleased to hear your response to the member. We do understand what's at stake here. We don't need to have it explained by the member, and we didn't really need to hear your LinkedIn account of what you've done in your life. I think we should be actually focusing on what we have in front of us.

As we know, this is a very significant bill. It opens up the Community Safety and Policing Act, the Courts of Justice Act, the Coroners Act, fire and protection, Justices of the Peace Act, Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act—

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Hon. Paul Calandra: On a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Point of order.

Hon. Paul Calandra: Madam Speaker, if the member for Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas is unable to conduct herself in a professional manner without resorting to personal attacks on other members in the place, perhaps the Speaker would consider asking her to recuse herself from the chamber until she can get herself in the frame of mind where she can respect not only the debate in this place but the other members in this House on both sides.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Okay, the point has been raised and is duly noted.

Continued debate?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you, Speaker. Given that all these significant acts have been opened and the bill was dropped at 3 p.m. yesterday—my guess is that the government didn't just finish inking this yesterday at 3 p.m. when they dropped the bill. So my question is why, with a bill that has such significant implications for policing, for the community, are they trying to ram this through and hide this bill in the cover of night rather than allowing people to comment on it and other community members have the opportunity to weigh in on this bill?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member from Ottawa West—Nepean.

Ms. Chandra Pasma: Thank you to my colleague from Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas for that excellent question. I would love to know why the government loves to do this, because this is a repeat pattern that we see with many, many bills. I think the more important the subject matter, the more important it is that we actually give the people of Ontario the opportunity to have their voices heard as part of the debate, the more important it is that we take the time to properly debate the legislation and to make sure that we get the text of the legislation right. Unfortunately, this is a lesson that the government refuses to learn over and over again, and that's why we see them having to repeal bills a week after they were passed, like what happened with Bill 28.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Quick question?

Ms. Goldie Ghamari: I listened intently to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean’s debate, and I have a very simple yes or no question for her. I actually took the time yesterday to reach out to the Ottawa police chief, Eric Stubbs. I also reached out to the Ottawa police union president, Matthew Cox. I asked them about this legislation, and I asked about what we’re doing to support policing in Ottawa and across the province, and they were both in favour of this legislation. My question to the member from Ottawa West–Nepean is this: Do you support the Ottawa police? Do you support policing in Ottawa, and will you vote in favour of this bill, yes or no?

Ms. Chandra Pasma: And my question back to the member for Carleton is, did you also reach out to the transition houses and domestic violence survivor support agencies in Ottawa? Did you also reach out to the Law Society of Ontario to find out what they think about the legislation, or are you no longer on speaking terms with the Law Society of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Okay. I did not hear that response. I did not.

Interjection: You didn’t miss anything.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I did not. I will remind the members again to be respectful of your members and your fellow colleagues in the room. It is late. We will continue debate.

Further debate? We have the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you, Speaker. It’s always an honour to rise here, no matter what time of day or night.

I want to begin my brief discussion of this bill with a story about a friend of mine who became a police officer. A lot of the conversation about this bill, especially in the media—and it is an omnibus. It discusses many different things, but definitely I think what has really been the headliner on this has been changes to policing a little bit—with some regards to that.

I want to talk about my friend; his name is Miguel. He worked, I believe, at Home Depot for many years. He’s a strong guy. He had a way with words, very friendly. He got along very well with everybody. One of these days, he came to some friends and he said that he wanted to become a police officer, and so he did. He set about a path to becoming a police officer. He volunteered; he did many different things. And he had a rich history behind him, experiences, and he eventually became a police officer.

I didn’t see him for many years, until one day when I saw him at a barbecue. It was a barbecue of a mutual friend that we had. I saw him, and I said, “Congrats. I’d heard that you’d become an officer.” He had now been serving for at least a year or more—a couple of years, I think, at that time. I asked him, “What was it like? How is it?” And he said to me, “It’s really great. It turned my life around. I love it.” When he said it, he sold it, but I could see that there was more to the story. I asked him, “Really, how are you feeling? Are you okay? Are you really enjoying it?”

And he kind of slumped his shoulders a little bit, and he said, “Last week, I answered a call to be there at an accident, and it was a fatality.” He didn’t get into the grisly details of what he saw, but he did say that he was having trouble sleeping at night.

Policing, being a first responder is an incredibly hard job. We are seeing now shortages in many different fields. Certainly the ones in which you see the most are the ones in which the workers are dealing with traumatic experiences. Policing is definitely one of them. Nursing, health care—we are seeing that in those fields.

I want to believe that the legislation that all governments put forward is always with the best of intentions. We may not agree on everything, but I think that we can all agree on the fact that we want to see a safe Ontario, that we want to see people going home safe to their families, that we want to see everyone in this province prosper—and this country and this world. The difference between us lies in the road to getting there and what we need to do. I think, for the most part, that’s what we often disagree upon.

So I think the changes that are being prescribed here with policing are to deal with what are shortages, to address that. But that situation is a lot more complex than what this legislation is really dealing with. The Auditor General spoke in 2021; she said, “The OPP is losing front-line officers, and officers still on the force are experiencing traumatic stress and related wellness issues.” She talked about that, PTSD affecting our officers. This is an issue—and I’ve spoken to officers at many different levels many times throughout my time as an MPP and in my work in municipal politics prior to here, whether they were front-line officers, superintendents—many different levels. And we did talk about the effect of PTSD, the effect of the mental health of the officers themselves. What I heard was very sobering. Many, many officers have to take time away.

So I guess I ask simply this question: If the government really believes that they’re going to get more officers in by simply reducing the educational requirements, I think there’s a lot more pieces of that puzzle. The Toronto Star wrote an article about it. The legislation was dropped just yesterday, and we’re debating it 24 hours later. It said, according to Julius Haag, a police reform expert and assistant professor at the University of Toronto—and this was reported in the Star: “Research suggests police officers with university or college degrees have greater communication, problem-solving and social skills and are less likely to use force or get into disciplinary trouble ... such candidates will be the preferred candidates for policing jobs at a time when police conduct is under intense scrutiny.” Those were the words of the professor.

Now, I made a number of phone calls today to try to reach out to people that I know within policing. I reached out to former retired officers; I reached out to current officers. And I was able, in the number of calls that I made, to at least reach one. This is a friend of mine who is—he’s not a police recruiter; he’s a police recruitment ambassador. And I talked to him about this. He said, “I didn’t see

this legislation coming, but in defence of the government, I guess maybe I'm not high enough in rank to be able to see that it's coming." It wasn't a criticism of it; he just didn't know that it was coming. And so we talked a little bit about. He took it with interest, because he was seeing it in the news. There wasn't enough time for him to actually look up any of this that's happening that's affecting him. And it's going to be affecting him very quickly. It's going to be passing very quickly. And he had actually addressed that. I asked him the same question: "Do you believe that the lowering of the educational requirement is a positive thing?" He said—and you can take this very anecdotally—“Within my experience, no.” He said that when he was reaching out to prospective candidates, he thought that experience and the experience that does come with education was very important. That was his position.

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He actually said—and I just want to share it with everybody in this House, because he is a recruitment ambassador. He said that what he thought was one of the biggest barriers was the physical requirements, to which I replied, “I can see why you probably don't need to put into effect those requirements, the training that you had to pass, on a daily basis. Maybe you have to deal with it a small percentage of the time, but you might need it every once in a while.” He said to me, “Well, if it was so important, then why aren't we re-tested? Why is it that we simply have to pass this test and there's no follow-up with regard to that along the way, if that was so important?”

He also mentioned—and I have heard this before from other officers—that he was getting feedback that the job at times felt thankless. Those were his words. And I've heard that in many professions—that officers felt like they were under a lot of intense pressure. You couple that with the fact that their job is so difficult, that they're going out there dealing with emergencies—I mentioned that earlier today. Our first responders are there to go in when we're all running away. They deal with things on perhaps even a weekly basis that many of us probably haven't dealt with a single time in our lives. Rushing to a scene to watch a child die—imagine.

So what I wanted to do is take that time to say that there are a lot of things we need to do to retain those officers being in the force, and I think there are supports that need to come with it. I know that this legislation does speak about bringing more training to justices and judges, and I think that's positive, obviously. I think we can all agree on that. But I think we need to do everything we can, if we want to continue to maintain officers within the force, to provide them the supports that we need.

We talk about mental health supports. One of the things that the officers—in the many conversations I have had, they've said that it's not easy for them to especially rush out and deal with a situation when it's involving mental health. I know that the city of Toronto has brought in a pilot program to be able to deal with that through 2-1-1. This is very, very important. But we can't forget the mental health of our first responders, and we have to provide them every single support.

There was mention in that same Star article about an inquiry that happened as a result of that mass shooting in Nova Scotia. The recommendations there were not actually to take away education and training and experience. In fact, they actually discussed that—one of the recommendations said, “Public Safety Canada work with provinces and territories to establish a three-year degree-based model of police education for all police services in Canada.” It actually went into more education and it went into more training to prepare perhaps the officers—what they're facing that leads to the PTSD and the mental health challenges they face.

There is a Globe and Mail article that goes back to 2022 and it actually compares the hours of training required to be an officer here in Ontario, as an example, of around 1,000, whereas in other jurisdictions, it's in the thousands. It actually compares it to trades. For instance, you need 9,000 hours of training to become an electrician, 4,000 hours for roofing, 6,000 hours for a welder.

All I'm simply saying is, I'm not telling you this is how much it needs to be, but it's things to consider, because all the education and training that you can—at least from what I'm hearing—front-load will help prepare those officers along the way, to give them all the training they can while they're there to support them, because we all care about them, and they're doing their best job to keep us safe every day.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Hon. Michael S. Kerzner: I know my friend loves his community, just as we do—because we're both from the city of Toronto. In the last minute of his remarks, he talked about it. He talked about—he quoted the report from Nova Scotia.

As I've said—and I've said this throughout this whole debate in the evening—there are other factors that bring life experiences to being a police officer. There's the competency and the character and the courage. I wonder if he would agree with me that we have to understand that these experiences that we obtain throughout our lives, at different ages of our lives, are equally as important. That's why we don't want to have more barriers.

I also agree with him that the training is essential, but I want to ask the member, does he believe that there are other life contributors and experiences that will make a better cadet to keep our communities safe?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to say to my friend, of course I agree with that principle—of course. But in the limited time that we've had and the conversations I had, that same recruitment ambassador said that this wasn't a positive step. He actually cited the education as experience. The reality is I don't see education as red tape. I never do. I see financial barriers as red tape to education, and I know that, in part, you're addressing that with this legislation.

At the end of the day, I always think that more education is very, very important. I think we can all agree on that. Policing and being a first responder is skilled, skilled work, and we have to give them all the tools to get there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Joel Harden: I want to thank my friend from Humber River–Black Creek for that great presentation. I’m just thinking about what the Solicitor General just asked, and I take it seriously. It makes me think about my first job as a professor at Nipissing University in North Bay, where in sociology we had many students come into the class with the criminology stream going into police foundations. I asked the gentleman on one occasion at the end of class what made him want to be a police officer. He told me a story about growing up in community housing in Toronto and seeing people make bad choices, and wanted to help people make better choices. I was inspired by that.

I want to ask the member, given that you’ve had a lot of consultations with people in Humber River–Black Creek, people you know who get into first response as police officers, what are the motivations that you’ve heard of? When we think about those salutary motivations, those optimistic motivations, what can we do to make sure that that good will gets turned into a good trip home at the end of every shift?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you so much for that question. I undoubtedly believe that first responders get into the field because they want to protect people, because they love people, because they want to make people safe. I think, as you had mentioned, what we owe them is to allow them to be able to get home safe every single day. What’s required, I think really, again, is the mental health component, the PTSD. What officers, what all first responders, are having to deal with on a daily basis can be literally mind and heart destroying.

I’m actually really happy to know that—within policing, that there has been, in many of the fields, a stigma to be able to acknowledge that mental health component, the PTSD. I know that successive leaders within the field have done everything they can to continue to destigmatize that and provide the supports. We, as legislators, have to do everything we can to provide those supports as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: The member from Humber River has talked about mental health, and I wanted to just reiterate some of the training with the basic constable training program that police officers go through. I’m not going to go through every detail, but, specifically, ethics, mental health for first responders and for people in crises—several other things—use of force and de-escalation techniques, and officer safety. In addition to that, I know in York region they go through all kinds of additional training while they’re on the job, so, after they finish their program, it’s ongoing training. I have witnessed first-hand the type of mental health training that they do in de-escalation.

My question to the member: They’re going through a lot of training; would you not agree that now the program we’re putting in place to support paying the tuition for these officers is a good thing?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I’ve said it before, whether it’s in this field or any field, I don’t think financing should ever be a barrier to education. It should never be that way. Within all legislation that the government puts, there will be elements that are positive and supportable, and sometimes not. What I raise about the education requirements, I’m not necessarily saying positive or negative. In the time that I’ve had since this bill was tabled here, and in the conversations I’ve had—and I will rely on the officers as experts beyond me on these fields—I’m hearing that they don’t believe it’s a positive step forward with regard to that.

I believe it was said that it was—I don’t know if the Premier had mentioned that it was a pipeline from high school to policing. I don’t know if that’s a direct quote because I’m hearing it second- or third-hand. But even what was said by the recruiting ambassador—he said, “I’m hoping that people will come in not just straight out of high school, but they will have those experiences of more years coming in.” He thought that they would make for some fulsome candidates to have that. Thank you for the question.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions.

Mr. Anthony Leardi: I’m from the riding of Essex. We have a lot of farms in the riding of Essex. That means we have a lot of farm animals, so I have a particular interest in schedule 6, paragraph 3. Schedule 6, paragraph 3, reads, “Whereas the current provision” of the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act “authorizes the inspector to supply the animal with necessaries to relieve its distress, the re-enacted provision authorizes the inspector to take any reasonable steps to relieve the animal’s distress.”

I think that’s important. I simply invite the member to offer his views on that.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: All right. I agree. I think anything that we can do to improve animal welfare in Ontario is important. As I’ve said before, when we’re presented with legislation as an opposition, there are things within it that are agreeable and there are things that are disagreeable. So I appreciate the question.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further question.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: I just want to pick up on the notion that education is a barrier for officers, for police training. We have a lot of other front-line heroes, as we call them, who need to pay for education. We saw PSWs—the crisis in long-term care. We know we have nurses that have to pay for tuition. There’s all kinds of people that serve on the front line, and the tuition, the cost of education, is a barrier.

I’ve heard the Minister of Energy suggest that he thought this was a good idea, that we expand this to other first-line people that need training. What do you agree about that—free tuition for some of these other important occupations in our province?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you so much for the question. As I said earlier and I’ll continue to say, money

and finances should never be a barrier to education. They call it the great equalizer. I want to simply state this: Even with regard to this legislation, we all come from diverse backgrounds, different levels of education, and we've had different experiences. I come from a background of education in the sciences. I didn't study political science. But every day in my life, what I learned—maybe I don't have to remember all the elements of organic chemistry that I learned on a daily basis, but it taught me a way of thinking, a way analyzing problems. So I'm never going to understate the importance of education, because no matter what field you go into, no matter what you're doing, that education serves you very well.

And so I will say again: We should make it easier and encourage people to get more and more education, to make it affordable, and to give people the best opportunities. I think each and every one of us is best served as a society by doing so.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: I am pleased to speak on behalf of my great community of Newmarket–Aurora this evening on a very important piece of legislation, the Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023. If passed this act would transform policing and other community safety and justice legislation to support modernization and build safer communities. This is also one of the final steps needed to bring the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019, the CSPA, into effect.

The legislation in the CSPA will establish a modern and robust legislative framework that advances safety, transparency and effectiveness of the community safety system.

Madam Speaker, it has been almost one year since I've been an elected MPP, and it has been four years since I've been working in a constituency office. One of the common themes that I would hear from my constituents is about public safety. That has always been a common theme. When I look at that, I also look at the times we're living in. There was a time when people would let their children walk or take the public transit to school. I don't see those days anymore. We used to feel comfortable leaving our front door unlocked when leaving our homes. Nowadays, it's natural for us to check the door. In my case, it's natural for me to go two blocks, drive back and make sure my garage door is shut.

In the last few years, there has been a drastic increase in serious and violent crime, repeat offences as well as complex cases. Since 2014, the overall crime rate has increased by 9%. There has been a 20% rise in violent crime, a staggering 129% increase in the use of firearms, as well as a 29% increase in opioid drug offences from 2020 to 2021.

These increases have been mainly caused by social issues such as addiction, mental health problems and poverty. The stresses of the pandemic have really caused these issues to multiply. Without a modern and comprehensive piece of legislation, improving public safety and the justice system will be challenging. One thing is clear:

We need to take action so that we can build safer communities.

Créer des communautés sûres est une priorité pour ce gouvernement. Récemment, il y a eu une augmentation drastique du taux global de criminalité, de l'utilisation d'armes à feu et de la consommation de drogues. Des problèmes plus généralisés comme la toxicomanie, les problèmes de santé mentale et la pauvreté sont en grande partie responsables pour cette augmentation.

Le stress de la pandémie complique ces problèmes, et elle a permis aux criminels d'exploiter notre système judiciaire. Nous ne pouvons pas laisser cette situation s'aggraver sans rien faire. Si nous le faisons, nous laissons la criminalité gagner. Il faut renforcer les services de police et les lois qui appuient nos services de police afin de soutenir nos premiers intervenants qui risquent leur vie tous les jours pour protéger nos communautés.

The Strengthening Safety and Modernizing Justice Act, 2023, will also clear the path for more people to consider a career in policing, strengthen animal welfare laws and increase access to the court system by reducing backlogs.

As with other types of workplaces, many police departments are finding it difficult to find new employees, thus causing a shortage of police officers. When police departments face a shortage of trained police officers, not only does community safety suffer; the very lives of these police officers are put at risk when they are forced to work longer hours or are unable to take time off.

It is truly unfortunate that potential policing candidates are discouraged from following their dreams of becoming police officers and serving their community. This proposed legislation will remove several barriers in order to boost the number of eligible candidates. We will remove tuition fees for basic constable training at the Ontario Police College and expand the number of recruits that can be trained each year at the college. We will also remove the requirement of post-secondary education for police officers. By implementing these changes into legislation and increasing the numbers of police officers, we will be able to make our communities safer places to live.

The proposed legislation will also provide statutory amendments to the PAWS Act. The PAWS Act sets out standards of care and prohibitions against causing animal distress, ensuring that animals in Ontario are protected and treated in a humane manner. These amendments will lead to improvements in enforcement, compliance and animal welfare.

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This legislation will also make changes to the Courts of Justice Act and the Justices of the Peace Act. These proposed changes will support judicial education related to gender-based violence for provincially appointed judges and justices of the peace. This will ensure that there is a consistent approach to the way judges are educated about gender-based violence, as well as its impact on children, families and communities. This proposed legislation will ensure that judges are educated on domestic violence and are better prepared to understand court cases where domestic violence is involved.

The chief justice will establish courses which focus on sexual assault law, intimate partner violence, coercive control in intimate partner and family relationships, as well as systemic racism and systemic discrimination.

I'm happy to see that the private member's motion of my colleague the member from Oakville North–Burlington has resonated with lawmakers in our province.

As well, the proposed bill will also make certain changes to the Coroners Act. The regulations would enable the collection, retention, storage and disposal of tissue samples, including for DNA testing, by the chief coroner and chief forensic pathologist. These DNA samples will provide invaluable information to continue supporting advancements in medical technology and disease identification.

Similar to my colleague the member from Carleton, I did reach out yesterday afternoon to our chief of police for York region and this morning to our fire chief at Central York Fire Services. I thank them both for their feedback. Chief MacSween of York Regional Police had this to say: "York Regional Police supports any measure that improves the efficiency of the judicial system as a whole. By way of our partnership with the York Region Centre for Community Safety, our members are committed to educating our community on the challenges victims of intimate partner violence face and we welcome further insight on these important issues from the judiciary."

Chief Ian Laing said, "The passing of this legislation will assist fire services across Ontario by clarifying some administrative changes required to streamline and modernize the Fire Protection and Prevention Act."

Chief Laing goes on to say, "The cost recovery process related to materials, which make a property safe and secure after an emergency situation, has the potential to save communities the expense of undertaking those measures at local taxpayer expense and contributes to a safer community."

By strengthening the legislation supporting our first responders, we will help ensure that they are able to deliver the highest quality services to all Ontarians. As my colleagues from the Solicitor General's office concluded in their earlier speeches, I will reiterate: Let's keep Ontario safe.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Questions?

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much for your comments today. We've been talking a lot about the cost of education as a barrier. I'm asking if your government's waiving of tuition for police services is a step toward waiving tuition for all other first-line responders, like PSWs and nurses in our hospitals and in our long-term-care facilities.

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for the question. In fact, our government is paying the tuition for nurses. That has contributed to a record number of nurses going into the nursing program. We also introduced a similar type of program for paramedics, as well as for medical technicians. We are doing that program and this one was

just common sense because we need more police officers there to keep us safe, and thus this program. As the chief said: a great program.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Mr. Sheref Sabawy: To my colleague who presented earlier: How do you see that the changes in this legislation will allow us to clear the backlog in the court system and try to overhaul the Supreme Court in regard to all the cases that are waiting and can be addressed by different routes like Small Claims Court. Can you give us an idea, please?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you very much for that question. Yes, absolutely, by moving approximately 35,000 cases that are caught up with the Supreme Court and moving them to the Small Claims Court, that's going to allow the Supreme Court to really focus on some high-priority cases right now. We heard my colleague from Durham say to the members opposite that by doing this, they can get at these very important cases that are in a backlog right now. That's going to help us immensely. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further questions?

Sorry. The member for Ottawa Centre?

Mr. Joel Harden: Sorry. Responding to a late text from a boy who wanted to talk to his dad.

I want to ask the member, given the presentation—you're passionate about the rights of first responders, and you're happy to be helping people get into first response; you think it's a noble thing. As we've been debating tonight, a lot of us are worried about the conditions we're putting people into insofar as the circumstances they will often see, and we've been asking, to the extent that this bill could be reformed at committee, what could the bill do in a realistic way to help people get home at the end of every shift safe, given what we know they're going to be seeing at the doorstep when they make those critical calls?

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you very much to the member from Ottawa Centre for that question. As I mentioned in my earlier response, or whenever, in basic constable training right now, there is emphasis on mental health, training the officers for different types of situations with crises with people, as well as their own protection.

In my riding, in York region, I've been to the training facility where there's ongoing training. Also, in the stations themselves, they have places where the officers can go and speak with people. So there's all kinds of things that we are doing ongoing, not just during the training, but ongoing for our officers. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Further debate? Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Kerzner has moved second reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend various Acts relating to the justice system, fire protection and prevention and animal welfare.

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

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

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Orders of the day.

Hon. Paul Calandra: No further business.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): There being no further business, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 2209.

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| Byers, Rick (PC) | Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound | |
| Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC) | Markham—Stouffville | Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC) | Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord | Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité |
| Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC) | Willowdale | Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports |
| Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC) | Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Coe, Lorne (PC) | Whitby | |
| Collard, Lucille (LIB) | Ottawa—Vanier | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Crawford, Stephen (PC) | Oakville | |
| Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC) | Mississauga—Lakeshore | |
| Dixon, Jess (PC) | Kitchener South—Hespeler / Kitchener-Sud—Hespeler | |
| Dowie, Andrew (PC) | Windsor—Tecumseh | |
| Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte | Attorney General / Procureur général |
| Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord | Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités |
| Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC) | Nipissing | Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique, de la Création d'emplois et du Commerce |
| Fife, Catherine (NDP) | Waterloo | |
| Flack, Rob (PC) | Elgin—Middlesex—London | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---|
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario |
| Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC) | York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston | Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiles et du Multiculturalisme |
| Fraser, John (LIB) | Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | |
| French, Jennifer K. (NDP) | Oshawa | |
| Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC) | Newmarket—Aurora | |
| Gates, Wayne (NDP) | Niagara Falls | |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
| Ghamari, Goldie (PC) | Carleton | |
| Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC) | Milton | Minister of Red Tape Reduction / Ministre de la Réduction des formalités administratives |
| Glover, Chris (NDP) | Spadina—Fort York | |
| Gretzky, Lisa (NDP) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | |
| Grewal, Hardeep Singh (PC) | Brampton East / Brampton-Est | |
| Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Oxford | |
| Harden, Joel (NDP) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| Harris, Mike (PC) | Kitchener—Conestoga | |
| Hogarth, Christine (PC) | Etobicoke—Lakeshore | |
| Holland, Kevin (PC) | Thunder Bay—Atikokan | |
| Hsu, Ted (LIB) | Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | |
| Hunter, Mitzie (LIB) | Scarborough—Guildwood | |
| Jama, Sarah (NDP) | Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre | |
| Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC) | Dufferin—Caledon | Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé |
| Jones, Trevor (PC) | Chatham-Kent—Leamington | |
| Jordan, John (PC) | Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston | |
| Kanapathi, Logan (PC) | Markham—Thornhill | |
| Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP) | Parkdale—High Park | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Ke, Vincent (IND) | Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord | |
| Kernaghan, Terence (NDP) | London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC) | York Centre / York-Centre | Solicitor General / Solliciteur général |
| Khanjin, Andrea (PC) | Barrie—Innisfil | Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Kusendova-Bashta, Natalia (PC) | Mississauga Centre / Mississauga-Centre | |
| Leardi, Anthony (PC) | Essex | |
| Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC) | King—Vaughan | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | |
| Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC) | Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek | Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport |
| MacLeod, Lisa (PC) | Nepean | |
| Mamakwa, Sol (NDP) | Kiiwetinoong | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Mantha, Michael (IND) | Algoma—Manitoulin | |
| Martin, Robin (PC) | Eglinton—Lawrence | |
| McCarthy, Todd J. (PC) | Durham | |
| McGregor, Graham (PC) | Brampton North / Brampton-Nord | |
| McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB) | Beaches—East York / Beaches—East York | |
| McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC) | Lambton—Kent—Middlesex | Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences |
| Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC) | York—Simcoe | Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |
| Oosterhoff, Sam (PC) | Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| Pang, Billy (PC) | Markham—Unionville | |
| Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC) | Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill | Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Pasma, Chandra (NDP) | Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean | |
| 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 |
| Pierre, Natalie (PC) | Burlington | |
| Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC) | Timmins | Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines |
| Quinn, Nolan (PC) | Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry | |
| Rae, Matthew (PC) | Perth—Wellington | |
| Rakocevic, Tom (NDP) | Humber River—Black Creek | |
| Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC) | Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville | Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises |
| Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC) | Kenora—Rainy River | Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord |
| Riddell, Brian (PC) | Cambridge | |
| Romano, Ross (PC) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| 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 |
| Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC) | Glengarry—Prescott—Russell | |
| Sattler, Peggy (NDP) | London West / London-Ouest | |
| Saunderson, Brian (PC) | Simcoe—Grey | |
| Schreiner, Mike (GRN) | Guelph | |
| Scott, Laurie (PC) | Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock | |
| Shamji, Adil (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Shaw, Sandy (NDP) | Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas | |
| Skelly, Donna (PC) | Flamborough—Glanbrook | Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente |
| Smith, Dave (PC) | Peterborough—Kawartha | |
| Smith, David (PC) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC) | Parry Sound—Muskoka | Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC) | Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte | Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie |
| Smith, Laura (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP) | St. Catharines | |
| Stiles, Marit (NDP) | Davenport | Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario |
| 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 Housing / Ministre associée du Logement |
| Taylor, Monique (NDP) | Hamilton Mountain / 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 | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Vaugeois, Lise (NDP) | Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord | |
| Wai, Daisy (PC) | Richmond Hill | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| West, Jamie (NDP) | Sudbury | |
| Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity / Ministre associée des Perspectives sociales et économiques pour les femmes |
| Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
| Yakabuski, John (PC) | Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke | |
| Vacant | Kanata—Carleton | |