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Mercredi
6 décembre 2023

Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott
Clerk: Trevor Day

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott
Greffier : Trevor Day

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 December 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 décembre 2023

*Report continued from volume A.
The House recessed from 1203 to 1300.*

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): I'm going to recognize the member for Chatham-Kent–Leamington on a point of order.

Mr. Trevor Jones: On a point of order: Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the appointment of the next Auditor General of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice concerning the appointment of the next Auditor General of Ontario. Agreed? Agreed.

You can move the motion.

Mr. Trevor Jones: I move that, in accordance with subsection 2(2) of the Auditor General Act, RSO 1990, c. A.35, Shelley Spence be appointed Auditor General for a term of 10 years, as set out in subsection 4(1) of the act, commencing on January 8, 2024.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Jones has moved that, in accordance with subsection 2(2) of the Auditor General Act, RSO. 1990, c. A.35, Shelley Spence be appointed Auditor General for a term of 10 years, as set out in subsection 4(1) of the act, commencing on January 8, 2024.

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

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Fraser: Bear with me because my legislative kids are here today. I just want to introduce, in the Speaker's gallery right next to me—I'll go from left to right. Milena Basciano is an OLIP intern with me. She's been in my office now for a few months. She'll be there a bit longer, but I wouldn't have a chance to introduce her another time because she'll go to one of you guys—unfortunately.

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm sorry, I had to say it.

Veronika Seremet is a co-op student who is a legislative learner. I'm not sure what she's learned from us, but we've learned from her.

Mr. Mike Harris: We're not sure either.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. Okay. Eric Osborne was my OLIP intern. He has been my chief of staff and executive assistant for a few years now. He's a great help, and I just want to recognize him. Then, Carter Brownlee, who helps me from making mistakes in scrums every day, which is not an easy job. Welcome them to the Legislature. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Parsa: I see my friends are back again visiting. It's great to see you again.

I also would like to welcome the executive director from 211 Ontario, Karen Milligan. Karen, thank you so much for the work that you do in helping Ontarians connect to local community and social services. I invite everyone to join 211 Ontario tonight at their reception in the dining room. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I beg leave to present a report on Value-for-Money Audit: Outpatient Surgeries, 2021 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario, from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Rakocevic presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I would; thank you. As chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I'm pleased to table the committee's report today on the Value-for-Money Audit: Outpatient Surgeries, 2021 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the permanent membership of the committee and substitute members who participated in the public hearings and report-writing process. The committee extends its appreciation to officials from the Ministry of Health and from Ontario Health.

The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by the Office of the Auditor General, the Clerk of the Committee and legislative research.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Mr. Rakocevic moves the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CLIMATE CRISIS HEALTH ACTION PLAN ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 SUR LE PLAN D'ACTION SUR LA CRISE CLIMATIQUE ET LA SANTÉ

Ms. Karpoche moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 160, An Act to provide for the development of a strategic action plan respecting the impacts of the climate crisis on health, as well as the establishment of the Climate Crisis and Health Secretariat and a science advisory board / *Projet de loi 160, Loi prévoyant l'élaboration d'un plan d'action stratégique contre les effets de la crise climatique sur la santé et la constitution du Secrétariat de l'action relative à la crise climatique et à la santé et d'un conseil consultatif scientifique.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member like to briefly explain her bill?

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: Yes, Speaker. Thank you. This bill enacts the Climate Crisis Health Action Plan Act, 2023, which requires the Minister of Health to do the following:

(1) Develop and publish a strategic action plan that aims to ensure that Ontario's public health and health care systems are prepared for the health risks caused by the impacts of the climate crisis.

(2) Establish the climate crisis and health secretariat whose responsibilities include assisting the minister with the development, revision and implementation of the strategic action plan.

(3) Establish a science advisory board to advise the minister with respect to climate change science and health sciences and the impacts of the climate crisis on public health.

The act requires that the strategic action plan be reviewed and, if necessary, updated at least once every four years.

EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WEEK ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA SEMAINE DES CHRÉTIENS ORTHODOXES D'ORIENT

Mr. Rakocevic moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act to proclaim Eastern Orthodox Christian Week / *Projet de loi 161, Loi proclamant la Semaine des chrétiens orthodoxes d'Orient.*

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Would the member like to briefly explain his bill?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Yes, it's my honour. The bill proclaims the seven-day period in each year starting on Orthodox Easter Sunday as Eastern Orthodox Christian Week. Faith is a central part of many people's culture and identity. Proclaiming Eastern Orthodox Christian Week recognizes and celebrates the unique faith, culture, traditions and history of Eastern Orthodox Christians in Ontario and across the world.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Michael Parsa: Speaker, December 6 marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. It was on that terrible and that horrible day 34 years ago at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal that 14 women were tragically shot and killed, and 13 others were injured. These victims were targeted solely because of their gender.

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Today, we also remember the countless other women and girls who are victims and survivors of gender-based violence. We must learn from the past, continue to support survivors of violence and remember and honour the women and girls who have tragically had their lives cut short.

Speaker, if I may, I'd like to read the names of the women who died on that terrible day in Montréal: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault and Annie Turcotte.

Speaker, on that terrible day, 14 women were denied the opportunity to live a full life and leave their own unique imprints on this world because they were women. This tragedy is a solemn reminder of the violence women have experienced and continue to experience to this day.

Speaker, on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, we mourn the loss of these 14 lives and the impact this tragedy has had on the survivors and the community. It is also a reminder to reaffirm our commitment to ending gender-based violence in all forms.

The numbers on gender-based violence are shocking. One in three women will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. According to the government of Canada, women are three times more likely to be stalked and three and a half times more likely to be victims of intimate partner violence. Approximately every two days, a woman in Canada is killed as a result of intimate partner violence.

These statistics are simply unacceptable. Our government has zero tolerance for violence against women and

girls. We believe everyone should be free to live a life without the fear of violence, abuse or exploitation. Women and girls should always feel safe attending school, going to work, being out in the community or being at home. We must continue to work together to end gender-based violence in Ontario and across our country.

Speaker, we all have a role to play in ending gender-based violence. Our government will continue to work with community partners and across government to prevent gender-based violence, provide people impacted by violence with the supports they need and ensure those responsible are held accountable through the justice system.

Gender-based violence directly or indirectly impacts all of us. The majority of Canadians know someone who has been affected by this terrible crime, and we all need to continue to work together to end gender-based violence.

That's why earlier this year, we worked with the federal government to secure \$8 million over four years in additional funding for gender-based violence crisis hotlines, so that more Ontarians experiencing violence can get the support that they need. More recently, we signed an agreement with the federal government through the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence. This agreement provides Ontario with an additional \$162 million over four years to support the province in its efforts to address gender-based violence and fund initiatives and organizations that focus on:

- enabling ongoing and effective delivery of crisis response services, including shelters investing in early prevention and intervention measures like training for service providers to help them identify early signs and prevent the escalation of gender-based violence;

- assisting survivors and their families, including by investing in Ontario's crisis and victim support lines and crisis response shelters, and facilitating access to transitional housing and referrals to other community services;

- supporting women's economic security by providing employment training and entrepreneurship supports to equip women with the skills, knowledge and experience to find a job or to start a business.

It is a welcome addition to Ontario's investment of more than \$1.4 billion in gender-based violence services and prevention over the life of the agreement.

Earlier today, Minister Williams and I announced Ontario's plan to end gender-based violence—a plan that focuses on prevention and supporting the long-term needs of survivors, children and their families. Through the action plan, we will strengthen the sectors supporting survivors and people at risk of gender-based violence by enhancing existing programs and services. This includes investments to address staffing and operational challenges to help ensure survivors and their families have access to the services they need, when they need them: services like crisis response programs, affordable child care and safe housing, employment, pre-apprenticeship and entrepreneurship training.

This also includes enriching Indigenous-led approaches, such as educational efforts to help improve on parenting,

as well as trauma-informed initiatives including providing more than \$5 million in 2023-24 for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Fund grant, which addresses gender-based violence through healing, health and wellness programming and expanding programs that foster women's economic security, such as providing more training opportunities for women and removing barriers to participating in training through additional supports such as meals, transportation and child care.

It's essential that we work to support culturally responsive interventions and solutions to end gender-based violence and to end violence against Indigenous women. According to Statistics Canada, Indigenous women are three times more likely to experience violent victimization than non-Indigenous women, and they are two and a half times more likely to experience spousal violence. This is why the action plan supports prevention initiatives such as early intervention and educational supports, to promote healthy relationships and disrupt attitudes that foster gender-based violence. The action plan will focus on addressing the underlying issues and unique community needs to get to the root cause of gender-based violence, because preventing gender-based violence from happening is the best way to eliminate it altogether.

Early intervention means that those affected by violence have access to both timely support and the necessary long-term services that they need to heal and move forward. Long-term supports include the province's cost-matching of an additional \$11.5 million in federal funding in 2023-24 under the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit. The COHB program will provide direct financial assistance to survivors of gender-based violence to help with paying rent.

Gender-based violence requires our collective efforts in speaking up, providing a safe place for victims and survivors, intervening early and providing educational supports for men and boys to prevent it from occurring in the first place. This includes mandatory learning in every grade that teaches students about what healthy relationships look like and how to recognize exploitative behaviours. Men and boys must commit to building healthy masculinity that advances kindness, respect and compassion. We must pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence and discrimination against women and girls.

We have worked across government and with the community and sector partners to respond to gender-based violence by:

- addressing human trafficking through Ontario's Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy;

- preventing and responding to sexual assaults through sexual violence policies at post-secondary institutions, sexual assault centres and sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres;

- building a comprehensive mental health and addictions system that is sensitive to the needs of Ontario's diverse population, including survivors of gender-based violence, through Ontario's Roadmap to Wellness;

—providing supports for survivors and their children through violence-against-women services, victim services, the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Strategy and the ongoing work to modernize the child welfare system through Ontario's Child Welfare Redesign Strategy; and

—responding to violence against Indigenous women and girls through actions in Pathways to Safety: Ontario's Strategy in Response to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

In conclusion, all of this shows that we, as a government, as a community, and all Ontarians can bring about change when we unite and when we work together, but we know that there's still more to be done. We must continue to have an open mind and honest conversations about violence against women and to encourage survivors to bring their stories forward as they feel safe doing so.

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I call on all Ontarians to stand up against this heinous crime.

If you or someone you know is a victim of gender-based violence, you can go to [Ontario.ca/safe](https://ontario.ca/safe) to find resources and supports, including a list of helplines and shelters.

I ask all my colleagues, all the members of this House, to join me in honouring the women whose lives were cut short by violence and to commit to building safer communities and a better future for everyone in our province.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): The Associate Minister of Women's Social and Economic Opportunity.

Hon. Charmaine A. Williams: Thank you, Minister Parsa, for your words today and also for your partnership in working to end gender-based violence and all the support that you give towards empowering women, being a strong ally to make sure that women are thriving in their careers as leaders in their communities and at home with their families.

We want women to be successful, but for women to succeed, they must first feel safe. Minister Parsa has already mentioned some of the important work our government is doing to root out gender-based violence in all of its forms, across all ministries, using an all-of-government approach, starting with the bilateral agreement we have signed with the federal government on the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence that will provide Ontario with \$162 million over four years. This is in addition to more than \$1.4 billion Ontario is investing in gender-based violence services and prevention over the life of the agreement. This culminates into Ontario's plan to address gender-based violence, which we announced this morning.

Earlier this week, I announced another important investment our government is making as part of our plan to empower women to be successful and to help build a stronger Ontario. Together, we're working to further build women's economic opportunities and support their financial independence, because when women succeed their whole family succeeds.

We're very pleased to announce a call for applications and an increased investment of \$5.5 million, including an

additional half a million this year for the Women's Economic Security Program, which will provide us closer to that goal. This program provides training for low-income women to equip them with the skills, knowledge and experience to find a job or start a business, all to increase their financial independence. Participants in the program can receive training in skilled trades, in entrepreneurship, information and technology or general employment, and the goal is to have them have the choice.

To help them to ensure their success, participants can also access important and necessary wraparound supports, such as child care, transportation, food and referrals to other services. This is in addition to specialized supports for women who have experienced or are at risk of intimate partner violence.

We know that the Women's Economic Security Program is working. Since its inception in 2018, the Women's Economic Security Program has helped over 2,100 women secure employment, become entrepreneurs or pursue further training and/or education, and this includes helping nearly 1,300 women start small businesses and 230 more women get jobs in the skilled trades. This is significant, because when you're empowering women, you're not just empowering her, but her kids and the family around her also are being empowered.

Our investment in the Women's Economic Security Program is supported by the federal funding provided under the National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, and it's a great example of what we can do when partners come together. This investment builds on the \$6.9 million I announced earlier this year to expand and enhance the Investing in Women's Futures Program. That investment increased funding to 10 new locations, bringing us to a total of 33 delivery sites, providing greater access for more women across the province.

Now, why is this so important for us to see women have financial independence? It's because in my career, I've helped women and I've heard the stories and have seen them make the choices to have to stay in unhealthy relationships, either because they've been emotionally abused so badly that they don't think they have the strength to survive on their own, or because they don't have the finances to survive on their own. So we need to empower women and encourage women, to build them up so that they can be successful in the way they choose.

As we stand together today to honour the 14 women who lost their lives on December 6, 1989, it's a solemn reminder of the violence women have experienced and continue to experience to this day. As Minister Parsa just indicated, the statistics on rates of violence against women are stark, and even more so for Indigenous women.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Ontario Indigenous Women's Advisory Council. The council's expertise is helping us better understand how violence and racism impact Indigenous women and girls, and ways to engage First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities in violence prevention efforts.

The council also plays a critical role in the implementation of Pathways to Safety: Ontario's Strategy in Re-

sponse to the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. As part of Ontario's progress, the mandate of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council has been extended to March 2025 to continue centering Indigenous women's voices and their safety in all program and policy improvements. Promoting economic security and financial independence for survivors is part of Ontario's plan to help prevent gender-based violence, to support survivors' recovery and increase women's economic opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, increasing women's participation in the economy is critical to their safety and well-being, financial independence, their families' prosperity and Ontario's economic growth. We know that fostering women's financial independence can also give vulnerable women at risk of gender-based violence more options and choices to stay safe. When we do this together, I am confident we can work towards a province that is free of violence and full of opportunities for girls and women. Because when women succeed, Speaker, Ontario succeeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott): Responses?

MPP Jill Andrew: Today is December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. We're also nearing the end of this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, which runs November 25 to December 10.

Speaker, 62 women and girls were lost to femicide in this past year, according to OAITH. Today, we remember the 14 young women, engineering students at École Polytechnique in Montreal, who were massacred over 30 years ago today—murdered because they were women.

I also ask us to remember the countless Indigenous women and girls whose names have never been called, who were killed in the same year of 1989 and beyond to today, without any media or political attention. They too must be remembered, today and every day.

At all levels of government, we must commit to the 231 individual calls for justice from the Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls—women and girls who will never come home.

1330

Femicide impacts entire communities and it requires an entire-government response. In our nation, women and girls and gender diverse community members face disproportionate, alarming levels of gender-based violence, and this was amplified during the pandemic. Government response must also be amplified. It requires deep investment to the front lines: the orgs, the workers, supporting women. It requires deep investment in the basic needs of women.

I've said this and many things like this before in this House, but today I want to share some words from constituents and organizations who are doing the heavy lifting and are desperate for more meaningful operational and sustainable support from this and, frankly, all levels of government who claim to want to help eradicate gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, and femicide. I introduce to you the executive director of Counterpoint

Counselling and Educational Cooperative, Clara Luz Castillo, who is a constituent of St. Paul's:

"According to a recent report by OAITH ... between 2022 and 2023 a woman was killed every week in Ontario for 30 weeks.

"Gender-based violence continues to be a significant and tragically even growing issue in Ontario. We applaud the municipalities in Ontario that are leading the way by naming intimate partner violence an epidemic"—but we need Ontario.

"I wanted to share some experiences from Counterpoint Counselling and Educational Cooperative....

"We have experienced worsening systemic problems in Toronto over the past three years...:

"—increase in high-risk cases coming to our program

"—increased poverty and marginalization

"—an increase in mental health problems further exacerbating the challenges of working with these individuals and creating the conditions of change

"—staff burnout

"—and our criminal justice system has not been able to keep up, with long wait times putting women at further risk.

"Last year, 86 recommendations for change were made at the Renfrew inquiry. There is an urgent need to implement these recommendations in the province of Ontario. The government's response to this inquiry was uninspiring and depressing to say the least.

"At Counterpoint, we are committed to working with male perpetrators of IPV through a re-education process.... We served 425 men and over 550 survivors annually with supportive counselling, referrals, and a supportive women's group and have been doing this work for over two decades....

"As long as the opportunity for re-education exists only within the criminal justice system response, we are not going to 'move the needle' on preventing gender-based violence. The government needs to recognize and support an all-of-government approach to actually address gender-based violence."

I thank Clara and her team.

I also want to express to you some words from executive director Harme Mendoza and her team at Woman Abuse Council of Toronto, and I'll probably revisit this in the House because I will run out today. They work collaboratively to eradicate gender-based violence through research, education and advocacy. They want the government to know that we must be tracking the number of women who are being turned away from shelters, since only 30% make it to the shelter. The other 70% are turned away or never make it there alive.

They have a program; it's called Safe at Home. They need a few hundred thousand bucks to help that program come into existence, a program that will help keep women in the house, safe, as opposed to having to experience homelessness—violence-induced homelessness. They want independent housing for these women.

I'll leave with these words—and these are mine: Losing one woman to femicide is one woman too many. I ask of

this government to repeal Bill 124; to walk the line with front line workers, with survivors; go without staff, without cameras, as I often have. See their work. See the gutted lives of women who feel desperate and alone and scared, but must still be the biggest heroes in their children's eyes, exuding hope and optimism for their kids' sake, when they stand as shells of themselves. Listen to them and fund this sector accordingly.

Today, we recognize the many we've lost, but I beg this government to course-correct so we can work on saving those who are still here.

MPP Andrea Hazell: Madam Speaker, it gives me great honour to speak today on the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Today, our collective presence here signifies a powerful commitment to eliminate gender-based violence from our communities.

It has been 34 years since the murder of 14 young women at the École Polytechnique de Montréal. One year after I arrived, in the country called Canada that is beautiful, 14 young women lost their lives. It just feels like yesterday to me, and this saddens me, to get up to speak about it. We must not forget them. We must never forget them.

Now, let's recognize the harsh reality: After 34 years, we are still experiencing unfortunately a high number of gender-based violence. Since 2022, there have been 55 femicides in Ontario. The recent tragic event in Sault Ste. Marie—let's not forget that, October 23—where a woman and three children lost their lives. That shook all of us to the core. These are not just numbers. They are lives that demand our collective action and commitment.

I've heard from women's shelters in my riding that there are no beds and there are waiting lists up to months long. Where do you think these mothers and young women that are waiting for beds—where do you think they are waiting? I know for a fact, and I've spoken to many of them, they are waiting in their cars. They are living in their cars while a space in the shelter becomes available.

All women's shelters across Ontario are facing the same challenges with providing beds for abused women. To me, Madam Speaker, this is an epidemic. Let's call it what it is. It's our collective responsibility to bridge these gaps and create a society where safety, equity, justice and freedom prevails for all of us.

I am very close to the ground to gender-based violence. I am taking action. I've been taking action since 2020, when it hit home really hard to me. One of my employees—because I'm coming from a small-business background—experienced gender-based violence. I did not walk away. I created a safe space for that employee. I brought her back to Canada. I went through the shelter system with her; it's an ugly process. I experienced it. If that individual didn't have someone like me that just supports humanity first, she would not have gotten through the system with her two young children. I followed her through until she got a safe home. The reason why I'm sharing this story: because I believe all of us that are sitting here can look out in your network, can look out in your

community and also be involved, because when women and children go through these situations, it takes a village to bring them back to sanity, to life, to a good life that we all are sharing in this chamber today.

I'm going to say this again: We must collectively forge solutions that establish safety, equity, justice and freedom for all.

Let us not forget the importance of the four Rs. I want to educate you a little bit today, because I did not see it with my employee, and I did not see it with a lot of my friends. It goes unnoticed until they end up not living, and that's when we know about it. Let's get educated. We need to recognize and report. We need to record, and we need to refer to the cases of women and children abused. Check on your neighbours. Check on your friends. You have daughters; check on them. Check on every female who you know who is around you and in your network, because who is experiencing gender-based violence—guess what? It's an embarrassing moment for them to speak about it. They do not speak about it.

1340

These principles are our guiding compass—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): My apologies to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

Thank you, everyone, for those really passionate presentations on a very important subject.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Neil Lumsden: I move that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be authorized to meet during the winter 2023-24 adjournment of the House at the call of the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Minister Lumsden has moved a motion that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs be authorized to meet during the winter 2023-24 adjournment of the House at the call of the Chair. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Victor Fedeli: I move that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Tuesday, February 20, 2024.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Minister Fedeli has moved that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's a routine motion. I believe I can debate this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Debate? I recognize the member.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much, Speaker. Often we use political rhetoric in this House, and I'm not going to do it—I'm going to try not to do it. We are not in favour of this motion, but this motion is going to pass.

Let's be frank with each other: No one wants to be here after today. We're all tired, and maybe people who have never had jobs like this don't understand it—and not just the people who are allowed to speak, but everyone is beat.

But people in Ontario are hurting. I understand it's the government's job to put the best face forward; it's our job to criticize. But in the last year, I think we can all agree—in the last election, we all agreed that housing was an issue and is an issue. We heard today from some of our members that people are being forced out of their homes.

One of the hallmark achievements of this government was to eat up the greenbelt for housing, to change urban boundaries for housing, to allow three severances per farm lot for housing, and then they were all reversed. We passed legislation to reverse them, and the government is still saying they're on track, so obviously that legislation wasn't about improving housing. So we're not going to be here tomorrow, but we sure collectively—but particularly the government, who sets the agenda—wasted an awful lot of the last year pushing forward legislation that had nothing to do with housing.

Now, I don't think the government wilfully backed up on this; the Auditor General had a role in it, the Integrity Commissioner had a role in it, we had a role in it and the RCMP will continue to have a role in it.

This morning, it was royal assent on a bill about Ontario Place, where the government hasn't learned their lesson, because in that bill, there were clauses that made the government—you are unable to launch legal action against the government regarding Ontario Place, even if it's due to malfeasance, bad faith or breach of trust. The government hasn't learned.

Speaker, I drive a lot, because of where my riding is, and I personally listen to a lot of classic rock radio—it may be my age bracket; I like the DJs. And do you know what plays a lot on classic rock radio?

Mr. Anthony Leardi: The Who.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, ads from this government talking about—you hear hammers in all the houses that the government is building as they're retracting the bills.

Hon. Greg Rickford: So much for not being political.

Mr. John Vanthof: Wait a second. Just give me a second. The end—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, you need to hear this. Ontarians need to hear this.

The last part of that ad—and I'm not being partisan, because Ontario taxpayers' money is paying for this ad. It's not the Conservative Party paying for this ad, so I have every right to talk about this ad. The last part of this ad gets quiet, and they say something: "And that's the sound of electric cars." Okay. I don't criticize that. But do you know what? When I hear that sound, when I hear that quiet, do you know what I hear when I hear that quiet? When I hear that quiet, I hear closed emergency rooms,

which are also quiet. I hear people who don't have doctors and end up in those closed emergency rooms. I hear that.

Hon. Victor Fedeli: Worst speech in 12 years.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member of Nipissing doesn't like my speech, and that's fine.

And what else I hear and what else Ontarians hear when it goes quiet is people shuffling their feet in lines in food banks. Food banks now, since this government has come into power—did you know that food banks are open on evenings and weekends? And do you know why? Because people who have jobs need to go to food banks.

Now, is that all the government's fault? No; let's be honest. But it is the government's responsibility to make sure those things are addressed, and we don't see that they're being addressed. When one in 10 people with jobs have to go to food banks, so you come home from your job, pick up your kids from school and stand in line in a food bank—"Everything in Ontario is rosy, folks"? Well, that's not the case.

Ontario is a great place, and I wish—we wish, as official opposition—that we would have focused more, that the government would have focused more on those issues; would have focused on Ontarians—on all Ontarians, not just some. And I hope in the future, when we come back—and, I hope, before we come back—that the government will focus on those issues, that they will accept or talk about proposals that we have put forward. Maybe use them, maybe not, but at least—at least—look at those issues. Because one thing we won't disagree on is that if one in 10 Ontarians is depending on a food bank in a province as rich—and not just rich financially—as this province, there is something going wrong. I think we all can agree on that. We have to agree on that. We have to—we have to.

1350

I've had the fortune of being in this House for, I believe, 13 years now. When I got here, I don't believe tent encampments were a thing. And you know—there were things, but tent encampments weren't a thing. Homeless people weren't a thing—not big, not like it is now, all over.

The member from Sudbury was talking a couple of question periods ago. He was talking in question period about the crosses for people dying from overdoses. I'm not blaming this on the government of the day. I'm saying we need to look at this. We need to look at those issues. And I hope, I pray that we collectively, but you as the government—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: You are the government. You have a super majority. You can do anything you want without us—anything you want. And you are trying to do that—what you did with the greenbelt, what you're doing with Ontario Place. You have that ability. You won a majority. But you have to look at the whole province.

Now I'm going to close on—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: The member from Nipissing is really heckling me, and I don't mind that. So you want to

talk about the Ring of Fire? The Ring of Fire is something that we all agree could be developed responsibly—

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, it could be developed responsibly. But there's an issue. Did you realize that—I believe he's—what is he president of? Good Roads or—he's from Monsieur Bourgouin's riding. He brought up a very good point, that with the state of Highway 11 and 17—the road to the Ring of Fire, that's one thing, but the road from North Bay to the Ring of Fire is not going to get there either. So we need to look at that.

Northerners—when we heard that the government was going to upload the Don Valley Parkway and the Gardiner Expressway, you know what? A lot of people who aren't from Toronto are on those thoroughfares, and you know what? I don't think that's a bad idea. But for those of you who haven't been on 11 or 17 north of North Bay, you don't understand that that road is not designed for the amount of traffic it has to carry. And so if you want to invest to get to the Ring of Fire, if you truly want to develop northern Ontario, have roads going across it; have roads going across it that actually service northern Ontario.

None of us want to be here tomorrow. But all of us want to make Ontario better—all of us. And I don't think I've raised one issue that Ontarians wouldn't have questions about or wouldn't want to talk about—I don't think one issue.

With that, we are opposed to this motion on that fact. I'd like to thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the time to express the views of the official opposition.

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

Mr. John Fraser: You all need to get comfortable. I'm just kidding, folks. I guess everything the Premier said after question period—all bets are off now, right?

I agree with my colleague from Timiskaming. There's so much more—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: We're all tired. Five-week sessions are long. When I got here, I have to say, I said, "Why do they break every four weeks?" And after the first four-week session, I understood why. Because there's a lot of contention and conflict in here, and that's hard. It's hard on all of us.

But we do have to say to the people of Ontario, what did we get done? You're going to say, "We got all these things done." As my colleague said, it was more like the getting it undone things: the greenbelt, urban boundaries, MZOs.

This is the point I want to make. We're adjourning debate today. We time-allocated three important bills to one hour: half an hour for the government, half an hour for the official opposition. For two million Ontarians who now 16 MPPs represent, not one word. Ten minutes—

Mr. Nolan Quinn: Sixteen? Where's your math?

Mr. John Fraser: Sixteen independent members. I'm speaking for all of us. In actual fact, you should try out an independent caucus sometime—you may have the oppor-

tunity—because we all work really well together, except we all have different viewpoints.

My point is it was wrong to do that. It was wrong to exclude these people, all of them behind me—and we don't all agree. It was wrong to do that. And quite frankly, in this session, we have rolled back what was in the last session, which I thought was good representation, great representation for the people who elected the independent members. There were about 16 last time around. That's my beef.

All the reversals and stuff, I'm not going to debate that right now. But the thing I think that's most important to us and the two million people we represent from ridings actually across Ontario is that they get a voice and that when the government moves to take away that voice, that's wrong.

I think if you were on this side, of if you were somebody who was watching at home right now in Ottawa South or in Ottawa-Vanier or in Guelph or any one of the 16—Scarborough-Guildwood—I'm not going to list them all off, folks, because I said I wouldn't be that long. They'd be asking themselves, "Why can't my member speak? Why is my voice shut down on Ontario Place?"

I'm going to say one last thing, and then I'm going to sit down because I'm sure somebody else has something to say. That Ontario Place bill: I have never, ever, ever seen a government commit in legislation to something as valuable and hard to achieve as a discussion. For God's sake, we voted on giving a discussion to the city of Toronto. I thought the city of Toronto had won, and then when I saw that in the bill, it's like, "They're just going to talk? There's no money? There's no commitment?"

That's why it was important to have something to say about that bill. That's why it was wrong that we were shut out in time allocation. It shouldn't happen in this province, shouldn't happen in this Legislature. That's all I've got to say. Merry Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Further debate?

Mr. Trevor Jones: I'm going to endeavour to bring the temperature down a little bit from that last impassioned speech. It was interesting. I did agree with the House leader of the opposition on one thing, and that's Ontario is a great place.

Our constitutional monarchy and our system of parliamentary democracy are great things that allocate certain seats to certain members to represent people across Ontario—their views, their interests. Sometimes, that just so happens that you're on the outside looking in, and your voice is maybe not as strong as you'd like it to be, but we have a system and it works. We're prosperous, we're safe and we're improving, and we continue to work.

1400

Ontario is a great place. It's going to remain a great place for generations to come, in part because of the work that 124 elected members do here. They do it here, and I'd like to think that in small part we have some connection to the successes that are happening right now across Ontario—a small part.

The bigger part, the lion's share of the part, actually comes from the entrepreneurs, the small business owners, the farmers, the greenhouse growers, the people who are advancing industry, and that, in part, comes through the work that parliamentarians do to attract that investment, to attract generational investment, to attract jobs for the future so that our sons and daughters and our next generation of Ontarians can have a great place to live and work, in safe communities and a secure Ontario. They can pay their taxes and contribute. They can be proud going to work. They can afford to buy a home.

Our young pages here have lots of experience now listening to our debate and forming opinions, and I think that at some point they'd like to buy a home, would like to afford a future for their future lives.

Transit is expanding. Roads are being built throughout Ontario. I want to remind the Leader of the Opposition that roads are being built across Ontario. In southern Ontario, central Ontario and northern Ontario, they're being built, they're being expanded, because those transit lines, those connectivities, are required for prosperity and for safety.

We've had a vigorous sitting this fall session. We've had, by my quick count, at least 10 public matters, public bills, debated and passed because of the work of all the people in this House, but our work doesn't stop just because we're not in this place. This is one place, one snapshot. I'll guarantee you that as eloquent, as convincing and as articulate as my friend from Essex is, he gets far more work done being connected while at home in his communities, being informed by his farmers, his small business owners, his greenhouse growers, the people expanding industry and investment in his riding of Essex, my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington and my friend's riding in Kitchener-Conestoga.

When we're connected to our communities, we're informed by our communities; we're listening to our communities. We take that back to this place. We use our time wisely and efficiently to pass good bills, to debate vigorously. But as I said, we've passed a number of important bills to move Ontario forward after having heard from, according to our system of parliamentary democracy, all elected members—

Ms. Sandy Shaw: You cut the debates.

Mr. Trevor Jones: We've heard from all elected members in this House.

Mr. John Fraser: Not on the last three bills.

Mr. Trevor Jones: We've heard from all members of this House, and my friends from across all know that that's the case.

We've had a number of night sittings that I've endured, that we've endured. We've enjoyed it. I myself am not tired. I go to bed early. I wake up early. I come in with a sense of mission, a sense of purpose. I'm not tired. But I also miss my connectivity to my family, my community and the people who want to hear from me. The people who come into my office come into my office and they say, "Is that MPP Jones sitting there?" I invite people into my office to connect with me so I can learn from them, hear from them and take those stories back to this place.

So the unprecedented work doesn't stop. Our committees, as you've heard, are going to continue to engaged, continue to provide input and continue to advance the agenda of all Ontarians. So the work doesn't stop just because this place rises for a short time. I'd even argue the work might be more intense, might be more laser-focused and much more relevant for all our families, all our constituents, our residents, our neighbours and our communities across Ontario.

I've been very blessed to be a part of and to live in moments of time across all parts of Ontario. I've seen the Northern Lights from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. I've been on Pelee Island doing front-line policing. I've helped people from the National Capital Region to downtown Toronto to all parts of this beautiful province. So the work doesn't stop. The work is going to continue.

With that, I'd like to have the last word, perhaps, and say have a wonderful safe, productive holiday season with your families, with your communities. I know that my work won't stop. I know the member from the now two-member Green party—his work won't stop. We're aligned on a number of different things. We have ideas we're going to hatch. We're going to work together collaboratively in the new year, and that work will probably begin as early as next week.

With that, have a safe and merry Christmas. Have a happy Hanukkah. Have a wonderful and happy and safe new year. With that, I thank you, Speaker, for your time.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: I must get up and speak on this motion on behalf of the tens and tens and tens of thousands of people across this province who fought to protect the greenbelt, who demanded that the Premier keep his promise not to open the greenbelt for development. I'm wondering what those folks are thinking right now, because they wanted committee hearings on Bill 136, the greenbelt bill, but instead there was one hour—one hour of hearings. And that hour did not include any of the thousands and thousands of people, farmers, environmentalists, community activists, housing advocates, who said they wanted the greenbelt protected. They wanted an opportunity to comment on Bill 136, to have input on ways that bill could be improved.

I worked with the member from Beaches-East York on putting together some amendments for that—I think nine of them, if I'm not mistaken. But citizens wanted an opportunity, Speaker, to talk about the bill. That's what democracy is all about: giving people an opportunity to participate in parliamentary debate. It's fantastic that we all get to have these debates, but I think people want to participate as well.

And so, what are they thinking right now? We are going to rise a week and a day earlier than expected, but yet, we couldn't find time—the government could not find time to allow for sufficient committee hearings for people to actually be heard.

We just received an Auditor General's report that, over and over again, talks about the fact that the government

fails to listen to people, to consult with people, to actually care what people have to think about a whole range of issues. Here's what the time allocation motion that closed down debate on Bills 154, 136 and 150 this week, said to the people of Ontario: "We don't care what you think about these things either. We're just going to ram it through."

Earlier today, Speaker, the gallery up here was full of people who have been working hard to ensure that Ontario Place, the public lands of Ontario Place, remain in public hands. They don't want a pay-to-play luxury spa at Ontario Place. They want Ontario Place to remain as a family-friendly, affordable place for people across the province to be able to access the Toronto waterfront. Yet, with Bill 154, which was one of the bills time-allocated this week, that bill didn't even go to committee.

I've been to rallies at Ontario Place with hundreds and hundreds of folks there. A whole bunch of them came here today. They would have appreciated an opportunity to at least be heard at committee, to at least take the time for them to be heard at committee. So I think that's the importance of debating this particular motion: to create time and space within our legislative process and procedures, committee being an important part of that, to actually listen to what ordinary Ontarians think about the province they want to live in.

Speaker, that's why I'm upset about us rising early. I'd be fine—I think many of us do want to get home. I want to get home to my family. Many of us want to get home. But we surely, surely could have found time for these folks to have their say on Bills 154 and 136 in particular.

The one thing I will agree with the member from Chatham-Kent-Leamington on is that when we're not in this House, many of us are working extremely hard, and that work in our constituencies is incredibly important. I'm looking forward to being able to have more time to reconnect with people in Guelph, and I know all members from all political parties do that.

1410

The one thing I do want to say to the public—sometimes I hear people say, "Oh, when they're not at Queen's Park, they're not working." But I'll say I know each and every one of us are working incredibly hard when we're not here. That's one thing I hope we can all agree on.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Yes, we can agree with each other on that, right? We are working hard. I disagree with you; there weren't committee hearings. We should have taken the time for that, but we definitely agree on how hard we work when we're back in our ridings.

Speaker, I'm going to close by saying that the Ontario Greens will continue to be the voice of people who are being shut out and not being given a voice. We'll continue to push for procedures and processes in this House that empower the people of Ontario to be heard and to have a voice.

I also want to say happy holidays, happy Hanukkah, happy Kwanza, merry Christmas. I hope everyone has a fantastic holiday, has some time to spend with family and

friends. And when you're out, if you can afford to buy gifts for your family, shop local and support local Ontario businesses.

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

Minister Fedeli has moved that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until 10:15 a.m. on Tuesday, February 20, 2024. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, 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): Carried, on division.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of Ontarians. This is in addition to the petition that I tabled recently on this issue. This petition is signed by residents from Warsaw, Omeme, Seagrave, Port Perry, Stouffville, Markham, Brampton, Toronto, Newcastle, Concord, Leamington, Peterborough, Ennismore, Campbellcroft and Lakefield. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of compassionate citizens bring wildlife to authorized non-profit wildlife rehabilitation centres;

"Whereas on September 26, 2023, according to traumatized staff and volunteers of Mally's Third Chance Raccoon Rescue and Rehabilitation centre, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry launched a massive military-style raid on the non-profit organization; and

"Whereas this is not the first time such unjustified actions have occurred; indeed in 2002, the ministry conducted a similar raid at the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre, seizing their raccoons;

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

"Explain why ministry staff conducted such a raid, if, as reported, there had been no site inspections for 18 months; and

"Transfer the raccoons seized from Mally's Third Chance Raccoon Rescue and Rehabilitation Sanctuary to a licensed rehabilitation facility at the cost of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry."

Speaker, there are so many Ontarians who are simply looking for answers. They deserve answers, and I urge the government to be transparent and explain what happened.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Mary-Margaret McMahon: I have a petition here and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,308 for ODSP;

“Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

“Whereas small increases to ODSP have still left these citizens below the poverty line. Both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a ‘basic income’ of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.”

Happy to sign this petition and send it with page Chloe on her last day here.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: It’s my honour to present the following petition. It’s entitled “CEBA Forgivable Loan Deadline Extension.” It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) was a financial lifeline during the pandemic that kept small businesses solvent and enabled them to pay their rent while keeping staff employed;

“Whereas after a long wait, the federal government announced a woefully inadequate 18-day extension on the forgivable loan deadline, from December 31, 2023 to January 18, 2024;

“Whereas all 10 Canadian provinces have called on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to extend the CEBA repayment deadline until December 2024;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sustain political pressure on the federal government to extend the CEBA forgivable loan deadline until December 2024 and support small businesses with bridge financing programs if the federal government fails to extend the deadline.”

I fully support our small businesses, will affix my signature to this petition, and deliver it with page Peter to the Clerks.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Just a reminder to the House, I still need to hear the petitions.

The member from Ottawa–Vanier.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

M^{me} Lucille Collard: I want to thank Michelle Goodman for providing me with these petitions. This particular one has 3,296 signatures, and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas transgenders are the most marginalized and suicidal group in our society;

“Whereas timely, critical life-saving health care needs to be accessible and readily available;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should establish a transgender health advisory committee by adopting, passing and approving Bill 42.”

I support this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Shahan to bring to this table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is signed by residents from Innisfil, Pickering, Cobourg, Codrington, Peterborough, Minden, Longford, Whitby, Oshawa, Bowmanville, Toronto, Scarborough, Thornton, Erinsville and Port Hope.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): I just want to remind the House—my apologies to the member—to please remember just keep the noise down. Thank you.

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: The petition is titled “To Raise Social Assistance Rates,” and it reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s social assistance rates are well below Canada’s official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,308 for ODSP;

“Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

“Whereas small increases to ODSP have still left these citizens below the poverty line. Both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

“Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a ‘basic income’ of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

“We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP.”

I couldn’t agree more. I will affix my signature to it and pass it to page Brooke to bring to the table.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Terence Kernaghan: I'd like to present the following petitions on behalf of Dr. Sally Palmer. It is entitled "To Raise Social Assistance Rates." It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's social assistance rates are well below Canada's official Market Basket Measure poverty line and far from adequate to cover the rising costs of food and rent: \$733 for individuals on OW and \$1,308 for" people on ODSP;

"Whereas an open letter to the Premier and two cabinet ministers, signed by over 230 organizations, recommends that social assistance rates be doubled for both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

"Whereas small increases to ODSP have still left these citizens below the poverty line. Both they and those receiving the frozen OW rates are struggling to survive at this time of alarming inflation;

"Whereas the government of Canada recognized in its CERB program that a 'basic income' of \$2,000 per month was the standard support required by individuals who lost their employment during the pandemic;

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to double social assistance rates for OW and ODSP."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and deliver it with page Emma to the Clerks.

1420

INJURED WORKERS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: "Whereas the purpose of workers' compensation is to provide income replacement and other benefits to workers or their survivors when workplace accidents and occupational diseases harm or kill workers; and

"Whereas section 43(4) of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, operates to deny benefits to permanently injured workers, even when they do not actually have any new jobs and income; and

"Whereas this statutory provision has caused unjust and irrational financial loss, hardship and ruin to persons suffering from permanent disabilities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to immediately amend section 43(4) of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, by voting in favour of Bill 57 on an urgent basis." I will add, that is to remove the practice of deeming.

I agree with this petition and will hand it over to Henry after I sign it.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: This petition is entitled, "Stand Up for Early Years and Child Care Workers."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas child care centres across the province are closing rooms and limiting enrolment because they cannot retain staff in their programs; and

"Whereas child care experts and advocates estimate Ontario may need as many as 65,000 new child care workers to meet the expected demand for \$10-a-day child care; and

"Whereas without a strategy to recruit and retain child care workers through setting a salary scale, increasing wages, and implementing decent work standards, parents will lose access to affordable child care; and

"Whereas early years and child care workers have long been overlooked in child care policy-making discussions; and

"Whereas the vitally important work of early years and child care workers has been historically undervalued, with low pay, poor working conditions, and high turnover;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately establish an Early Years and Child Care Worker Advisory Commission to develop recommendations on how to support the early years and child care workforce and address staffing shortages, including through a salary scale, increased compensation and improved working conditions."

I support this petition. I will be signing it and giving it to page Alina.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled, "Pause the Expansion of Methane-Fired Electricity Generation," and it reads:

"Whereas the earth just passed through the hottest three months on record;

"Whereas Canada is experiencing the most severe wild-fire season on record;

"Whereas the Ontario government is preparing investments for electricity supply for the long term;

"Whereas in light of recent reports by the RBC Climate Action Institute, Dunsky Energy and Climate Advisors, and the Sustainability Solutions Group;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pause the expansion of methane-fired electricity generation and evaluate the role of renewable energy and storage, conservation, distributed energy resources, and municipal net-zero plans in meeting Ontario's electricity needs."

I want to thank my constituents who have signed this petition. I will affix my signature to it.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

MPP Lise Vaugeois: This petition is entitled "Pass Legislation to Increase Funding to the Developmental Services Sector.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas developmental services workers play a critical role in our communities, supporting individuals

with developmental disabilities to live with dignity and independence;

“Whereas their work remains low-paid, precarious, undervalued and under-resourced with many working two to three jobs to make ends meet;

“Whereas full-time positions are needed to reverse the damage of a sector dependent on precarious, part-time labour;

“Whereas additional training and professional resources are needed to better serve transitional aged youth who enter the adult system with dual diagnosis and addictions issues; and

“Whereas workplace health and safety incidents are rising due to inadequate supports and staffing resulting in risks to the health and safety of workers and the people they care for;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly ... as follows:

“That the government urgently increase funding to the developmental services sector so that full-time positions, with a living wage, benefits and a pension, can be offered to developmental service workers so that they can, in turn, support individuals with developmental disabilities to live with dignity and independence, leaving no Ontarian behind.”

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

INJURED WORKERS

Ms. Bhutla Karpoche: This petition is titled, “Workers’ Comp is a Right,” and it reads:

“Whereas about 200,000 to 300,000 people in Ontario are injured on the job every year;

“Whereas over a century ago, workers in Ontario who were injured on the job gave up the right to sue their employers, in exchange for a system that would provide them with just compensation;

“Whereas decades of cost-cutting have pushed injured workers into poverty and onto publicly funded social assistance programs, and have gradually curtailed the rights of injured workers;

“Whereas injured workers have the right to quality and timely medical care, compensation for lost wages and protection from discrimination;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to accomplish the following for injured workers in Ontario:

“Eliminate the practice of ‘deeming’ or ‘determining,’ which bases compensation on phantom jobs that injured workers do not actually have;

“Ensure that the WSIB prioritizes and respects the medical opinions of the health care providers who treat the injured worker directly;

“Prevent compensation from being reduced or denied based on ‘pre-existing conditions’ that never affected the worker’s ability to function prior to the work injury.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature to it and pass it on to page Jessy.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: Good afternoon. Speaker, if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The deputy House leader has requested to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

HARVEST SEASON ROAD SAFETY WEEK ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LA SEMAINE DE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE PENDANT LA SAISON DES RÉCOLTES

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to proclaim Harvest Season Road Safety Week / Projet de loi 143, Loi proclamant la Semaine de la sécurité routière pendant la saison des récoltes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Mike Harris: It is an honour to rise today to begin debate on my private member’s bill, the Harvest Season Road Safety Week Act.

To keen observers of the order paper, they may have noticed my bill previously appeared as Bill 115. That version was introduced by our current Associate Minister of Housing. The minister is a passionate advocate for rural Ontario, and when the minister was appointed to cabinet, I was happy to take the torch and help move this initiative forward by introducing its current version, which is, again, Bill 143.

During my remarks today, I intend to give a brief technical explanation of the bill, and I’ll also spend a few minutes highlighting the realities of rural roads at harvest time. Finally, I’ll share some tips for motorists to keep our roads safe.

The goal of this legislation is to promote awareness of the unique risks on our roads at a critical time of year, and we can raise awareness through that debate here today. I hope all members of the House, whether they are participating in debate or not, take a moment to reflect on rural road safety. We all have platforms as elected officials, and we can work together to promote safety.

At this time of year, as the session winds down, members are starting to look forward to getting home safe. Everyone deserves to get home safe, Madam Speaker. Road safety is an issue that is very important to me. The truly tragic thing about accidents is that they are often preventable. I was very happy to receive support from all parties for my previous bill to add amber warning lights to our school buses, and I hope they will support this road safety bill as well.

Members across party lines support our farmers because of the vital work that they do. They work hard to ensure that we can put good, safe food on our plates. In the Harris household, that's seven plates, so we have quite a few farmers to thank every day.

1430

Our government has taken steps to promote agriculture, including the recent Grow Ontario Strategy, designed to increase production of food grown and consumed in the province. If we want to increase food production in the province and protect our food supply chain, we also need to keep our farmers safe.

For members who have not read the bill, I'll give you a quick summary. As you can see, this is not a long or complicated piece of legislation. If passed, the week beginning on the third Monday of September in each year would be proclaimed as Harvest Season Road Safety Week. The act would come into force the day it receives royal assent. This, quite frankly, concludes the technical breakdown. It's pretty easy to get across.

But why is it so important to promote road safety during harvest season? I want to talk a little bit about the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the director there, Tracey Arts. She posted an article about harvest season road safety back in September. The OFA does a great job of advocating for farmers around the province every day. They also promote safety on rural roads with billboards, radio and social media messaging.

As harvest time ramps up each year, rural communities across Ontario see a lot more tractors, combines and other farming implements on the road. In the case of my riding, you can often add horses and buggies to the mix. Not only are rural roads busier; they're darker. Unsurprisingly, this can be a recipe for disaster.

Some of the statistics found in the article that was posted were truly shocking. According to federal government data, slow-moving vehicles are almost five times more likely to be involved in a fatal collision per kilometre. OPP statistics show that slow-moving farm vehicle injuries and other fatalities are mostly related to rollovers. These generally occur while entering, exiting or crossing roadways or veering off the shoulder.

This is something that residents of my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga are very familiar with. Our community is home to several rural townships with farms across the riding.

I would like to quickly highlight a local initiative that explains what it's like to drive on rural roads, especially around harvest time. In 2019, members of Waterloo Regional Police Service, the Workplace Safety and Prevention Services and the Ministry of Transportation came together as an informal group to raise awareness of rural road issues in Waterloo region. Eventually, they made things a little bit more formal by selecting a name, the Rural Road Safety Alliance.

While rural communities only represent 11% of the region's population—this is a staggering number, Madam Speaker—they account for a disproportionate number of fatal accidents. Are you ready for this? In 2022, 46% of

fatal injury collisions in Waterloo region were in a rural location. When you only have 11% of the population in rural Waterloo region, it's a staggering number.

Waterloo Regional Police Services went on to explain in an article in the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association—I'm just going to quote and paraphrase a little bit here:

“The intersecting of differing road users at drastically different speeds, like motorists, tractors, horses and buggies and cyclists can often make for deadly combinations. On rural roadways, higher speeds, reduced lighting and the driver's perception of reduced danger mean a fatality is more likely.”

Madam Speaker, I'd like to thank the hard-working men and women with the Waterloo Regional Police Service and the Rural Road Safety Alliance for keeping our communities safe. But there are things that individuals can do to keep our roads accident free. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture listed a few tips in their article that I mentioned previously.

Motorists, here's what you can do to prevent road accidents during harvest season. Watch out for orange triangles on the back of farm equipment. These are slow-moving vehicles that legally can't go more than 40 kilometres an hour. I think that's something that we need to remember: You may want them to go faster, but they're not allowed.

Pay attention to indicator lights and remember that a gap between a slow-moving vehicle and an oncoming car or truck can close very quickly when you're going to pass. Be patient and only pass when it's safe. Farm equipment is much larger than it used to be, and many rural roads have narrow shoulders that often prevent farmers from pulling off to the side to safely let motorists pass. If we keep all these things in mind, we can prevent accidents and save lives.

Any time you take steps to promote road safety, you end up hearing from some great people. Scott Griffiths, staff sergeant with the traffic services unit at the aforementioned Waterloo Regional Police Service, was kind enough to send a quote to my office, and I'd like to get it on the record here today, Madam Speaker. I quote from Scott: “By designating the third Monday of September each year, the Harvest Season Road Safety Week Act will bring useful public attention to this matter and hopefully is coupled with improved safe driving behaviour.

“Waterloo Regional Police Service joins with others to ask that during Harvest Season that all motorists please slow down and be patient while waiting until there is enough room ... to safely pass.”

I was pleased to receive additional supportive comments from the Ontario Produce Marketing Association, Farm Fresh Ontario, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Beekeepers' Association, the National Farmers Union, the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, the OFA and, of course, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Hopefully, I can add the members of this House to the list of supporters for this bill.

We know that when accidents occur in rural areas they're often devastating, if not deadly. We also know that slow-moving vehicles are more likely to be involved in serious accidents. This is why promoting road safety during the harvest season is so important.

I want to thank members in advance for their participation here in debate today, and I'm looking forward to the remarks. I hope that I can count on all of your support.

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

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I thank the member for this bill. All respect to the farmers moving from field to field on busy roads. They don't have a choice about driving slow vehicles on thoroughfares so it's important for the public to know that farmers will be on the roads, that they are vulnerable, and that slowing down and giving them space is an important part of bringing food to our tables. I'm very happy to support this bill.

That said, I wish the government and the Ministry of Transportation would bring the same amount of attention to the trucking industry and transport driver training, which has an impact on road users in every part of the province, but especially in the north.

This morning's Auditor General report on driver training repeats the same criticisms named in Auditor General reports going back years and years: "limited oversight of driving schools and instructors; questionable training or business practices at the schools; non-compliance with standards; ineffective and inefficient oversight of driver examination service providers; awarding non-compliant providers with new contracts through a non-competitive process." Doesn't this sound like all the other insider contracts this government loves to award to its friends, say, for example in long-term care?

To be clear, the government is responsible for making sure that new drivers receive the full training they are paying for, with all the necessary hours spent behind a wheel; that the fraud at DriveTest Centres is stopped; that drivers are trained to drive with full loads in snow; that drivers have the right to pull over, without wage loss, when driving conditions are dangerous; and that drivers are not sent out in unsafe vehicles.

Drivers also need fully serviced rest stops and paved shoulders, particularly on Highway 11, where transports can't pull over to rest without the risk of rolling over.

In northwestern Ontario, we see the deadly trucking accidents taking place on our highways, along with highway closures. This is happening daily. But let's be very clear: The situation is not the fault of new drivers. The fault lies squarely with dishonest carriers and the provincial government's refusal to monitor the industry.

The ministry has only eight inspectors to cover over 500 training schools, 260 or so of which are driving schools, so the minister's statements about regulating the industry, looking after drivers, or caring about safety on our highways are demonstrably false. And with next-to-no inspection stations operating, all road users are at the mercy of unsafe vehicles.

Things are so bad in the trucking industry, in particular, for new immigrant drivers, they have formed organizations to fight back. Naujawan Support Network and Justice for Truck Drivers know how badly new immigrants are being exploited as cheap, expendable labour, easy to exploit because of their need to get permanent residency status. Wage theft is rampant, and frankly, they are being sent out in unsafe vehicles with inadequate training, forced to "beat the clock" in order to get paid, thus pushing drivers to keep going when fatigued or facing unsafe conditions. The result: Transport drivers and other road users are dying.

To conclude, I'm happy the government will declare a week in September to draw attention to farmers and the importance of giving farm equipment a wide berth on our roads, but the Auditor General's new report is clear: The ministry is doing a bad job of regulating the trucking industry. We need trucking safety in order to get food across the province, so it is related to this issue of safe roads.

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We need you to act now—make sure drivers are receiving their full training, staff inspection stations across the province, and make sure that workers are being paid their wages in full.

Until the government is willing to acknowledge and address these issues, we will continue to see carnage on our northern highways.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour to take my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I want to commend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for bringing in An Act to proclaim Harvest Season Road Safety Week. I'm going to encourage the member to look at my statement from this morning, where I highlighted the importance of road safety audits. We were all visited and lobbied about a week ago by Good Roads, and it's a good starting point, because—I agree with you—many of our roads were built 30 to 40 years ago, if not more, and those roads were not designed for the heavy equipment that we have now, for the new equipment that we have on our roads.

I do want to recognize many of the organizations across my riding in Algoma-Manitoulin: Manitoulin Cattlemen's Association, Algoma Cattlemen's Association, Christian Farmers Association of northeastern Ontario, Manitoulin-North Shore-Sudbury West Federation of Agriculture, Algoma Federation of Agriculture, Manitoulin Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Algoma Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Manitoulin West Sudbury Milk Producers' Association, Algoma Dairy Producers Association, Algoma Sheep Producers Association, Algoma Maple Syrup Producers' Association, Rural Agri-Innovation Network. These are all associations that help me perform and bring the knowledge that is needed in order to debate some of the bill.

I want to give you the wish list from these organizations that I wish was in this bill and that I would encourage you, as a government member, to bring forward. The wish list from the agricultural family is:

- investment in market development and processing capacities in Ontario, including processing in small and rural communities to bring down transportation costs;

- investment in community pastures to grow Ontario food's land base and allow flexibility so that farmers can access crown land for food production;

- a provincial commitment to preserving farmland—more than 317 acres are lost each and every day in Ontario;

- an alignment with the Provincial Animal Welfare Services Act, the PAWS Act, with farm practices, specifically around animal seizures and removal; and

- the big one for the agricultural sector and farm families: a commitment to increase the Risk Management Program to help mitigate risk and ensure sustainability for farmers.

It's Christmas. Let's provide it.

I wish everybody a merry Christmas.

Good on the member for bringing that bill forward.

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

Hon. Rob Flack: Obviously, it's an honour for me to speak to Bill 143, An Act to proclaim Harvest Season Road Safety Week. When we tabled it in the last session, I wasn't expecting to not be speaking to this, but the member from Kitchener–Conestoga took up the cause, and I'm very proud and happy that he's doing it. He's a great colleague, and his riding, like mine and many in this chamber, shares a big component of agriculture and agri-food, that do such a wonderful job in this province.

Those of us with an ag background would understand, I think—and, I know, a few in the House—that I knew how to drive a tractor before I knew how to drive a car. As a kid, your grandfather, your uncle, whoever, would put you on the tractor, and you would be raking hay or whatever it would be, but you were taught safety.

In my adult life—at least, since high school, I would say—I've seen the population in this province more than double. The roads in this province have not more than doubled. The widths of the roads in this province have not doubled.

I can tell you, the tractor that I learned to drive, a little John Deere—what would it be? I see the member across—the John Deere, the little Ford, the grey one? What were they?

Interjections.

Hon. Rob Flack: Whatever—small.

When I was a kid, a 100-horsepower tractor was massive; today, it's small. I have a 115-horsepower tractor for my farm up in the Ottawa Valley, and I'm pretty proud of it. I think it's pretty big, but it's pretty small compared to many of my friends' in the commercial ag business. So farm equipment is bigger, and why I really was motivated to bring this forward, originally, is because there are just a lot more accidents. And you listened to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga—it's true everywhere.

On November 16 of this year, three people were in an accident on Ferguson Line in my riding, in Elgin county. What was happening? A farm tractor was going down the road, with an implement behind it. A car came up from behind, hit it from behind—the tractor moved into the west lane; the car hit it. Nobody was killed. People were hurt. It's an example of what goes on year in and year out during harvest season, which is really from spring planting right on through. We're using this week to recognize it. It's paramount that people recognize that this is a real risk on our roads.

I'll conclude by thanking everyone for supporting this, on this side of the House and across.

The member from Guelph and I have talked about this extensively since we were bringing it forward, and I thank him for his support. I know he's going to speak to it in a minute. He's a great champion for agriculture, not only in this province—but having some American roots, he understands this cause well.

When I was spending a lot of time in the US, this was a big issue in the United States, as well, so it isn't just Ontario—it's pan-Canadian; it's a North American issue.

Well done. Thank you for bringing it forward.

Please support it. It means a lot. Saving one life means everything.

Merry Christmas.

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

Mr. Mike Schreiner: It's an honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 143. I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for bringing it forward. I want to thank the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for initially championing this bill.

I actually drive through and cycle through—I love to cycle, too—the member from Kitchener–Conestoga's riding, and I will say that not only is there a lot of farm machinery, but there are a lot of horses and buggies we have to look out for, as well. It's a very important point.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Schreiner: Pardon? No GHG emissions from those horses and buggies too, actually.

I want to take a minute to talk about this from an operator standpoint. As many of you know, I grew up on a large grain-and-cattle farm. We moved equipment between fields. I would say that the safe, secure, confident work I would do would be when we were combining or driving a tractor in the field, and the stressful, terrifying thing I would do would be taking that equipment between fields. I don't know; I should talk to my—well, my dad passed away. But sometimes I wanted to ask him, “Dad, why are you having a 12-year-old kid moving machinery between fields?” It's a pretty scary thing to do. So I think it's important that we educate drivers on the importance of looking out for farm machinery, understanding that, as an operator, you oftentimes don't see other vehicles, and road safety on rural roads is critically important. I also want to say that it's important—why I'm such a strong advocate for protecting farmland, why I've been such a strong advocate for the greenbelt, why I think we need a food

belt—because one of the ways that we can reduce these types of interactions is to have as much connectivity of farmland as possible. If we can minimize urban encroachment on farmland, it just means less traffic that farmers moving machinery between fields have to deal with.

I can tell you, in the work I've done with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the GTA Agricultural Action Committee, Christian Farmers, NFU and so many others, we always talk about the importance of connectivity, the importance of ensuring that we don't create kind of Swiss cheese of our farmland in the province. This is one of the reasons why I want to thank the member for bringing this bill forward.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to speak in the House. As many people know, I love to talk about agriculture.

I'd like to commend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for bringing this bill forward—Bill 143, Harvest Season Road Safety Week Act.

Coming from a farming background and having moved lots of machinery on the highway—and as equipment gets bigger, it gets scarier and scarier and scarier. I had two farms a mile and a half apart on Highway 11, so I did a lot of that. You try to go a little bit on the shoulder, and that's even more dangerous, because then they try to push you all the way off. The safest is right bang in the middle of the highway—not in the middle, but not over the yellow line, but equipment now is so big that you are going from line to line. And because everything is so big—the member from Guelph was right; farmers don't want to be on the road, but they need to be on the road to move from field to field. To take the crop you harvest to your elevator, to your storage, you need to be on the road, and it is very scary.

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So anything that we in the Legislature can do to bring a focus on this, to help farmers to be able to drive their equipment on our roads more safely is a good thing.

As a former municipal councillor, one thing that we're facing in my part of the world is that as farms get bigger and there are less and less homes, your tax revenue is going down, but you need to improve your roads because the equipment is getting so big. It really is a problem. This bill doesn't talk about that. You need to have safe roads to be able to drive safely on them. So that's another issue.

Saving farmland is not in this bill, but that is another issue.

I would like to commend the member for bringing this forward, allowing us to have the time to talk about it.

This is the last time I'll get to speak in this session, and it's great that I get to speak about agriculture.

During the holiday season, there are people who have to work to keep us safe, like first responders. But often, we forget about the people who have to work, and who do work because they love it, to keep their animals, to feed them, to care for them, to milk them—you don't milk a chicken, I realize—but also the people who process that,

because food is produced every day. I remember, when we ran the dairy farm, there was a lot of planning involved because a lot of other things stop over the holidays, so you have to make sure certain supplies—you have to think about that ahead, because you just can't run to the store, even to the farm store, on Christmas Day, and you never know what's coming up.

I also remember vividly—and I'm sure this still happens, because I still work for some of my neighbours sometimes—that if something is going to break, it's going to break on Christmas Day, guaranteed. I have spent several Christmas Days 60 feet up, trying to fix a silo loader, at minus 25 or minus 30. It doesn't matter how good a job you do at maintenance; if something is going to break, it's going to break, on a farm, when you have to go—Christmas Day, or to a wedding or something. That's when it's going to break. It may sound like a small thing, but people who work in agriculture—it's not just them, but that's what I know. It's a huge commitment. Every farm family knows the things that they have missed out on—the school kid's concert you missed because something broke, because you were tending to a cow that was having a calf, because you were harvesting your last few acres. You harvest most crops when the sun shines, and you don't pick when the sun shines.

On behalf of all of us here, I would like to wish everyone in the agriculture sector happy holidays. I hope that nothing breaks and that everyone stays healthy and—

Mr. Mike Harris: You just jinxed it.

Mr. John Vanthof: I can't stress it enough. My kids just knew that something was going to go—and I didn't do it on purpose; believe me. There are some things I missed on purpose, honestly. But my kids knew that if something was going to happen, it was likely going to happen that day.

I'd like to close—it didn't happen to me, but I watched it happen. We were sitting in the house, and we could see Highway 11 from the house, and there was a farmer driving down the highway the way he should. He had a bale thrower rack full of hay. All of a sudden, the bale thrower rack exploded. A car had just—whoosh. My condolences to the family of the person who was driving the car. It was just instant and through no fault—so if there had been a bit more education, hopefully that wouldn't have happened. It still happens.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

Mr. Dave Smith: I'm happy to speak to this bill as well—Bill 143, the Harvest Season Road Safety Week Act.

The Associate Minister of Housing mentioned a couple of things that made me think of this—it's not uncommon, in any part of Ontario where there's a big agriculture business, for young kids to be involved at a very early age. I actually learned to drive in kindergarten, on a 1942 Cockshutt 20 tractor.

In the 1980s, I worked on a number of different farms. I drove a Massey 820 combine, and the reason I bring this

up is—the road allowance that we have in Ontario is 66 feet, so 33 feet for each lane, basically, is what you’ve got. The reason I bring up the Massey 820 is, the header or the piece on the front that cuts the crops and feeds it into the back of the combine, which then gets blown into a truck—the header on that was about 17 and a half feet wide, so you could drive down the average road without too much trouble because you were 17 and a half of a 33-foot road allowance; that 33 feet also includes the shoulder of the road. I bring it up because the newest John Deere X9 can have up to a 45-foot-wide header on it, and if you’re on a regular country road that is 33 feet per side, you’re not staying on just one side of the road. The shoulders on a lot of the country roads are vastly different than they are on a well-kept highway; they’re going to be softer because they’re not used as often. So when someone is driving along behind you and they’re expecting that you’re going to move your farm equipment off to the side of the road so they can get by you, that’s just not possible in a lot of cases.

I’m going to bring up, in particular, a farm in my riding, the Leahy farm. The reason I bring up the Leahy farm is because the Associate Minister of Housing—the reason I use the Leahy farm as the example is because his wife is actually the lead singer of the band Leahy, and it is her family’s farm in my riding that I’m talking about. The family farm is larger than most of the ridings in Toronto. One of their locations is actually larger than the Toronto Centre riding. Toronto Centre has 103,000 voters in it, give or take. But there’s no one living on that property—zero people living on the property. There are 10 separate properties across my riding that the Leahy family owns as part of their farm, and they have to take all of their equipment to each of those locations, and when you’re looking at something that could potentially be the entire size of the road, it presents a challenge.

1500

And the real challenge is, when farmers are doing a lot of this work, it’s not an eight-hour day. They’re going out, sometimes, before the sun rises, and they’re coming home after the sun sets. I don’t know how many people have driven on country roads, but there are no street lights.

So having a week where we’re talking about safety and awareness of harvest equipment and farm equipment in general is a great thing, because if you didn’t grow up around this type of equipment, you really have no idea what the dangers and challenges can be.

A lot of people are very impatient now. They get behind a slow-moving vehicle that can’t go faster than 40 kilometres an hour—and it may only be a 50-kilometre section of road, but they’re used to travelling 70 or 80 on it. They get impatient, they go to pass them, and they have a head-on collision—because you can’t see around the front of that combine; you can’t see past those large tractors.

So I commend the member for bringing this bill forward, because I think that any awareness that we can make to make the roads safer is something that’s very good.

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

Mr. Trevor Jones: It’s such a privilege to rise in the House today to speak to an important issue to my riding of Chatham-Kent-Leamington and to communities across Ontario. As a former first responder, I’ve had to personally attend and investigate multiple collisions between farm vehicles and implements and other motorists, and one salient feature in nearly every event was that they were preventable.

If passed, this act would proclaim the week beginning on the third Monday of September as Harvest Season Road Safety Week. And this act, if passed, would effectively raise the profile and awareness of the increased presence of larger, slower-moving, awkward and unique-type farm vehicles that must access many of our rural roadways to transport Ontario’s harvest to our processors, grain elevators, warehouses and markets. It’s imperative that all drivers take extra care and precaution during this time to ensure all motorists and road users remain safe, particularly in a world where road users are increasingly distracted, in a hurry, and less patient with other drivers.

Speaker, our government is proud to listen to and be informed by a wide range of stakeholders who share their experience, expertise and perspectives on this and other matters. In each instance on this matter, we heard overwhelmingly positive feedback, and I’d like to share some of that today.

Some of that hits close to home, because growing up in Leamington, late summer and early fall coincides with the field tomato harvest. The very nature of this harvest necessitates that fresh tomatoes be transported from hundreds and hundreds of acres of area farms across Chatham-Kent, Leamington and Essex, into the centre of my community of Leamington, where the flagship H.J. Heinz Co. stood, and where Highbury Canco Corp. now assumes the very important role of fresh food processing. I consulted president Sam Diab and a close friend of mine, vice-president John Krueger—two community leaders with combined decades of experience in food processing, first at Heinz, and now at Highbury Canco. They receive over 5,100 loads of fresh tomatoes and other vegetables from the 6,000 acres of area farms, into the centre of Leamington, but their priority is not for the tomatoes to get there safely and on time; it’s the people driving them there. Speaker, 5,100 opportunities for something to go wrong; for a farmer, a farm family, a transporter to be injured, to lose their life—a tragedy that, again, is preventable.

This act raises that profile; it raises that level of awareness, to make people take a moment, take a step back from our busy lives and our hurried worlds, to be less distracted, so that during harvest season, when we see these unique, important vehicles sharing lawfully our access roads, our rural roads to bring food to market, to Ontario tables across the province—to take a pause and yield that right of way; to watch for those amber lights, watch for that triangle sign, and say, “This is a farming family taking food from their farm to market, so let’s give them a break and give them the right of way.”

That is the priority of both Sam Diab and John Krueger at Highbury Canco. They said they can't support this enough.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and other area farm groups wholeheartedly endorse this motion.

As you've heard today from multiple speakers from across the aisle, this bill takes a positive step in the right direction, that will actually take a tangible opportunity to benefit all road users.

I look forward to the passing of this motion from all parts of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Debate being completed, the member has two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Mike Harris: Thank you to everyone for sticking around this afternoon and participating in debate. I know that today is our last day here, but I do wholeheartedly appreciate the effort that everybody has put in to take part in debate this afternoon.

I don't have much else to say. It sounds like everyone is going to support this. I hope that we'll be able to do some good and raise some awareness around harvest season.

I just want to take the next minute to wish everyone a merry Christmas and happy holidays. A big thank you to everybody here—not just my colleagues, but, like we heard after question period today, thank you to the Clerks, thank you to the ushers, thank you to the pages. Thank you to all the staff here at Queen's Park who help make this place work—of course, broadcasting, recording; translators—they're translating me right now, but I can't hear them; hopefully they're saying nice things about me. But—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Harris: No, no.

Thank you again, everyone.

I look forward to, hopefully, having this pass today—and to committee, in third reading.

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

Mr. Harris has moved second reading of Bill 143, An Act to proclaim Harvest Season Road Safety Week. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Pursuant to standing order 100, the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House.

Do you have a specific committee?

Mr. Mike Harris: Committee of the interior. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on the Interior.

Thank you, everyone.

I just want to say, for all the members, my greetings as well. Have a merry Christmas. Happy holidays. Thank you to all the pages for being with us for this long haul of four weeks, and to all the staff who have really held us up with these long days of night sittings.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 20, 2024, at 10:15 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1509.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Edith Dumont, OOnt

Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Deputy Clerk / Sous-Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Julia Douglas, Meghan Stenson,

Christopher Tyrell, Wai Lam (William) Wong

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Tim McGough

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Anand, Deepak (PC)	Mississauga—Malton	
Andrew, Jill (NDP)	Toronto—St. Paul's	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London—Fanshawe	
Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
Barnes, Patrice (PC)	Ajax	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Begum, Doly (NDP)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Bell, Jessica (NDP)	University—Rosedale	
Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)	Pickering—Uxbridge	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Blais, Stephen (LIB)	Orléans	
Bouma, Will (PC)	Brantford—Brant	
Bourgouin, Guy (NDP)	Mushkegowuk—James Bay / Mushkegowuk—Baie James	
Bowman, Stephanie (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Brady, Bobbi Ann (IND)	Haldimand—Norfolk	
Bresee, Ric (PC)	Hastings—Lennox and Addington	
Burch, Jeff (NDP)	Niagara Centre / Niagara-Centre	
Byers, Rick (PC)	Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound	
Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)	Markham—Stouffville	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Legislative Affairs / Ministre des Affaires législatives
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough North / Scarborough- North	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Minister of Long-Term Care / Ministre des Soins de longue durée
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes / Leeds— Grenville—Thousand Islands et Rideau Lakes	
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, Hon. / L'hon. Rob (PC)	Elgin—Middlesex—London	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario Premier / Premier ministre Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques 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	
Hazell, Andrea (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	
Hogarth, Christine (PC)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	
Holland, Kevin (PC)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	
Hsu, Ted (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Jama, Sarah (IND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Health / Ministre de la Santé Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
Jones, Trevor (PC)	Chatham-Kent—Leamington	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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 législative
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, Hon. / L'hon Andrea (PC)	Barrie—Innisfil	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs 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
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, Hon. / L'hon. Todd J. (PC)	Durham	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
McCrimmon, Karen (LIB)	Kanata—Carleton	
McGregor, Graham (PC)	Brampton North / Brampton-Nord	
McMahon, Mary-Margaret (LIB)	Beaches—East York	
Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)	York—Simcoe	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones
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 Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development / Ministre du Travail, de l'Immigration, de la Formation et du Développement des compétences
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, Kaleed (IND)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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	Deputy Speaker / Vice-Présidente Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	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 Small Business / Ministre associée déléguée aux Petites Entreprises
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Hon. / L'hon Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Vaugois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	
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	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Vacant	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	