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OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 March 2021

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 mars 2021

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PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE MOIS
DU PATRIMOINE PHILIPPIN

Ms. Begum moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as
Filipino Heritage Month / Projet de loi 217, Loi
proclamant le mois de juin Mois du patrimoine philippin.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French):
Pursuant to standing order 101, the member has 12 min-
utes for their presentation.

Ms. Doly Begum: It is an honour to rise on behalf of
the good people of Scarborough Southwest to debate Bill
217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino
Heritage Month. This bill has been championed by leaders
and activists of the Filipino community for many years,
and it is my privilege to stand here today and bring this bill
forward. I wish we could have had members of the Filipino
community here with us in the Ontario Legislature's
gallery, but unfortunately, with the circumstances, we're
not able to have them physically here today. However, I
do want to take a moment to say "Mabuhay" to the
community members who are watching this live. I want to
say thank you to all of you for the support that you have
shown for this bill.

Madam Speaker, Filipinos began migrating to Canada
around the 1930s and started building what is now a proud
and wonderful community that boasts over 800,000 mem-
bers across this country, with almost 40% of all Filipino
Canadians, approximately 330,000, living in Ontario.
We're so proud to be home to this community whose
contributions to our culture and economy have been enor-
mous. Filipino Canadians are an integral part of Ontario.
In fact, Tagalog is the fifth most-spoken language in the
greater Toronto area, and Toronto is home to the highest
percentage of Filipino Canadians as well.

Over the years, Filipino Canadians have built a strong
community here in Ontario, a closely knit community that
takes pride in their history, culture, heritage and language.
Filipino Canadians also take immense pride in serving and
uplifting our diverse communities.

I'm extremely fortunate to not only represent but also
live in Scarborough Southwest, a riding that is home to a

prominent Filipino community. I have had the privilege of
building close friendships and am fortunate to have
Filipino community leaders supporting our community.
From health care to hospitality to the restaurant industry,
Filipino Canadians have made enormous contributions.

I want to recognize Julius Naredo, who in our commu-
nity is known as "Kuya." In Tagalog, that's "big brother."
Through his work, he empowers and supports youth across
Scarborough.

I also want to recognize Hector Catre, who is the
founder and the chair of the Scarborough Bluffs Commu-
nity Association and has been working hard to help our
community remain informed and connected during this
pandemic.

We also have some famous Filipino Canadians from
Scarborough, like Eric Bauza, who made our community
proud by becoming the voice of the iconic Bugs Bunny,
amongst his many other notable roles.

Over the last years, I have had the opportunity to hear
from many Filipino Canadians from all across this prov-
ince. Just last week, as we met virtually with one group,
it was heartwarming to see Filipino Canadians from many
walks of life coming together and sharing their love for
their community as they took the time to share what
celebrating Filipino Heritage Month meant to them.

I was joined by Paulina Corpuz, a Filipino Canadian
community leader who has been working tirelessly to
make Filipino Heritage Month a reality in Ontario. Paulina
has been leading the Philippines Independence Day Coun-
cil and PATAC. Another strong voice for this bill has been
Ben Corpuz, the chair of the Filipino Workers Network,
vice-president, external, of the Philippines Independence
Day Council and vice-chair of the Kababayan Multi-
cultural Centre. Paulina and Ben are exemplary leaders in
their community and have continuously shown support for
this bill and celebrating Filipino heritage across this country.

I heard from Nena, who lovingly asked us to refer to
her as "Lola," or "grandmother" in Tagalog. Lola is the
past president of Philippine Centre Canada and an active
member in Ottawa's Filipino community. Lola shared how
happy she was seeing that Filipino Heritage Month was
close to becoming a reality in Ontario. People like Lola
have spent years organizing with the Filipino community
to create spaces for community members to succeed,
connect and have an opportunity to stay rooted in their
culture.

During this pandemic, I had the chance to also meet
with the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and some
incredible Filipino small businesses as they shared the
innovative ways they were helping the community and
how we can better support them.

Hearing about this bill, Steve Pagao, the president of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce, said the following: “Filipinos are resilient, dedicated, and most of all hard-working, they give their best in what they do, and will sacrifice their lives for others as exemplified by Filipino front-liners during this pandemic. It is in this spirit” that we’d implore “the kindest consideration from Ontario parliamentarians to provide the opportunity to Filipino Canadians to have the time to exercise, enjoy and embrace the rich culture and heritage of the Philippines.”

From Malaya Canada, Olivia Camacho also shared her support, stating, “I love my country as much as I love this new land we now call our home. We need to be in touch with our roots and we need to stay close to our heritage and culture, because there’s so much that we can share and need to share with the younger generation.”

We also heard from younger Filipino Canadians like Alia Rasul, the founding member of the Tita Collective and artistic director of the Tawa comedy festival. Alia, a young poet who writes as Super Filipina, also shared the importance of involving young Filipino Canadians in political discourse and the importance of representation in the arts.

I heard from Richmond Uy, a student from the University of Toronto and an active volunteer working hard on research and funding for the Filipino Youth Fellowship, a program that helps young Filipino Canadians find positions within city government and in public service. Richmond pointed out that Filipino Canadians are heavily underrepresented in politics, something that the Filipino Youth Fellowship is actively working to address.

Today I am grateful to be standing here bringing these voices, voices that have often been underrepresented in politics. Richmond shared how grateful he was to see that there is work being done to recognize Filipino Heritage Month in this province.

Now I want to bring your attention back to the current reality we are in, experiencing an unprecedented public health and economic crisis that has impacted every single one of us in many ways. I don’t think any of my colleagues here would disagree when I say that this pandemic has actually impacted our front-line health care workers the most: doctors, nurses, personal support workers, caregivers. Filipino Canadians make up a significant portion of the care and health economy in Canada and here in Ontario. This pandemic has shown us how strong and resilient our communities can be, but it has also made the difficult reality of anti-Asian racism even more prominent—racism and violence which have also impacted the Filipino Canadian community here.

Recently, I had the opportunity to connect with Annabelle Ragsag from Filipinas of HamOnt—or Hamilton, Ontario—an organization that centres on Filipino women, to discuss the latest horrifying incident of violence against Asian women and the impact this past year has had on the Filipino community and the Asian community at large. We must confront anti-Asian racism at every single opportunity, and as we take this moment to celebrate the work and service of Filipino Canadian health care and all essential workers, we must also acknowledge the impact this past year has had on them.

Having an opportunity to mark June as Filipino Heritage Month, especially this year, provides us with the unique and necessary opportunity to recognize the tremendous service and sacrifice that Filipino Canadian health care workers have made to keep this province going, people like:

—Jocelyn Mendoza from the Integrated Filipino Canadian Nurses Association. Jocelyn is a registered nurse who has supported our community for many years;

—Mary Grace, a registered nurse practitioner supporting health care workers through an RPN program here in Ontario;

—Veronica Javier, who is a registered social worker working on the front lines at Scarborough Health Network, an organizer for the Filipino/Filipinx Canadian social service workers network and also an instructor at York University.

I would also like to take a moment to remember the many incredible people, especially from the Filipino community, who have been working tirelessly in our health care sector, and to remember the life of Christine Mandegarian, a 54-year-old personal support worker, a Filipino Canadian from Scarborough who dedicated over 30 years of her life caring for people in our province and recently, during this pandemic, lost her life to COVID-19 as she went to work. This community’s sacrifice and their service throughout this pandemic to ensure our health and safety has been immense and must be recognized.

1810

Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I didn’t recognize the work of many Filipino Canadians like Marissa Corpus, the national spokesperson for the Malaya Movement in Canada as well as a journalist for a Filipino Canadian outlet; Jewel Gomes, an urban garden enthusiast who works on building resilient gardens with Toronto Urban Growers; Nova De Leon from Philippine Advancement Through Arts and Culture, who has been a strong advocate for the arts; Maricris Sampang, a community service worker who finds ways to connect members of the Filipino community in Scarborough with the help and support they need; Nerissa Cariño, a community organizer in Pickering–Uxbridge; Linda Insigne from the Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan; Monica Krista De Vera, another young leader from the Filipino Youth Fellowship; Mauriene Tolentino, another one from the Filipino Youth Fellowship; and Zenia Castanos from the Urban Alliance on Race Relations; as well as Brampton city councillor Rowena Santos, another champion who is fighting hard for her community in Brampton; and of course, Dr. Eileen de Villa, the medical officer of health in the city of Toronto.

Speaker, the Filipino community’s sacrifice has been enormous, and it’s time to recognize them. It is in the spirit of these people, the stories of Filipino Canadians and the profound impact that they have had on Ontario throughout their community and their service that I ask my colleagues and members of this House from all parties to show their support and vote in favour of Bill 217, so that Filipino Canadians across this province have the opportunity to recognize and celebrate the month of June this year as Filipino Heritage Month.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Robin Martin: I'm delighted to rise in support of Bill 217, the Filipino Heritage Month bill. I think it's a great bill and I'm delighted to support it.

We all are blessed to know members of the Filipino community. They certainly are a very large and vibrant part of the community in Eglinton–Lawrence. I've been delighted to get to know Filipinos across the city, really, at various events over many years.

I have to single out a few people; there are so many—I recognized a number of the names that the member opposite read out as well: Senator Tobias Enverga, who was a great leader for the Filipino community in Canada and unfortunately passed away, tragically on a parliamentary trip, when he was only 61—I think he was in Colombia at the time with his wife—very suddenly. His wife is Rosemer Enverga. I've known them both for many, many years, and they are great leaders in the community. Rosemer is trying to continue the legacy of her husband, and her daughters as well are working hard to make sure that the community continues to organize such wonderful events and support for each other. I've certainly been blessed to get to know them.

Our Lady of the Assumption church is the main centre of the Filipino Catholic church in Canada. It is in my riding and it is the scene of many events, especially holiday events. But also, we spent a long time—I think it was 2013 when Typhoon Haiyan devastated the Philippines; they called it Typhoon Yolanda, I think, in the Philippines. But it was a week at least of us sorting through donations and packing boxes. I really enjoyed working with the Filipino community at the time doing that, because everybody felt like we were doing something to make a difference with the tragedy that had happened in the Philippines.

I went to every *salu-salu* picnic they had at Earl Bales Park. I know I saw you at some of those picnics, to the member opposite. I have just made so many wonderful connections.

Another great group within Eglinton–Lawrence is the Filipino-Canadian Community House, which is a group of ladies from my riding who get together all the time. They've really embraced me and they're so friendly—everybody—like a member of the family. They're always there and supportive.

It's such a wonderful community. I just have to say I am delighted to rise in support of this bill. I hope that it will be passed and we can all celebrate Filipino heritage.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Sara Singh: It's always an honour to rise here as the member from Brampton Centre. I want to commend my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing forward this very important piece of legislation, Bill 217, to help us celebrate Filipino Heritage Month here in the province of Ontario during the month of June.

As we heard from our colleague, Ontario is home to a vibrant and dynamic Filipino community. In Brampton, in particular, we have a very, very large Filipino community.

In Brampton Centre, in particular, we have some of the largest numbers of Filipinos—almost 5,000 folks living just in Brampton Centre alone and 57,000 across the city of Brampton. So we have a very proud and active Filipino community. A bill like this will help us celebrate their culture, their heritage, their contributions to our communities.

I'm so proud of the work that people like Rowena Santos, a dear friend of mine, has been able to accomplish as the first Filipino Canadian woman elected to city council in the city of Brampton. I want to give her a big shout-out because she has been a fierce advocate and just a huge supporter of the community.

But we also have some delicious Filipino restaurants in our community as well. I've had the pleasure of visiting Elsa's Lutong Bahay, where they make some of the most delicious desserts and halo-halo that you can even think of. Not to mention, Fan 'D' Flame—they have open family-style dining that I've had the pleasure of being able to enjoy with my family as well. And I can't forget Mitch Arrojado, the president of the Federation of Filipino Canadians of Brampton. I know COVID has definitely changed the way we celebrate, but, man, do they know how to party. It would be a great time and not just a party, but also giving back to our local community in every single way that they can.

So I'm really proud to support this bill, because it's going to help us celebrate the rich and vibrant history of the Filipino community. It's time that we do this. I want to thank my colleague for bringing this forward, and I'm looking forward to supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It is a pleasure for me to rise in this House today as the MPP for Scarborough–Guildwood, because it is home to a vibrant Filipino population. Madam Speaker, I absolutely support the member from Scarborough Southwest's bill to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. Mabuhay, everyone.

Scarborough has an amazing and active Filipino community. What I love about the community is how much they care, and really, many of the people on the front lines right now fighting COVID-19 hail from the community. I just want to say thank you and honour the service and the sacrifice that they have made for all of us at this time.

With over 274,000 people of Filipino heritage living right here in Toronto, we know that this is an important part of our community. Many individuals, our lawyers, our bankers, our doctors—of course, Toronto's Dr. Eileen de Villa—are from amongst the community.

There have been a number of distinguished elected members from the Filipino community who have served our country with distinction. Most notable among these is Dr. Rey D. Pagtakhan, who served in the cabinet of Liberal Prime Ministers Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin and as a member of Parliament from 1988 to 2004. In Manitoba, we have Florfina Marcelino who became the first woman of colour to be elected to the Manitoba Legislature, in 2007.

I remember very well, in 2018, when my colleague former MPP Mike Colle brought this very bill, Bill 10, to

the Legislature, and I had the chance to speak to it then. I remember that day, because it wasn't like we are today, with COVID. It was actually filled—our galleries were filled with friends from the Filipino community. I want to say thank you to Ben Corpuz and Paulina Corpuz, because they have championed that bill. Of course, there were many other friends: Monina Lim-Serrano—she's a dear friend—was here, her and her entire family; Rolly Mangante, founder of Taste of Manila; Antonio San Juan; Norma Carpio—have you met the force Norma Carpio?—Ramon Estaris; and many, many others. So I want to just say thank you to this wonderful community for all the work that you're doing. There are so many others that I could name: Megan Festin, who is a volunteer member of my local riding association; Grant Gonzales; Paul Saguil. I'd also like to congratulate Justice Steve Corroza, who was appointed to the Court of Appeal for Ontario just in April.

1820

Speaker, the Mabuhay Philippines Festival was the first event that I attended as part of the Filipino community. It was 2013, and what struck me was how many people knew me as I walked through the crowd. The Filipino community is active. They are attentive, and they are engaged. There are many other events that I've participated in since: of course, Mabuhay basketball—many of you know my younger brother played professionally, and I was thrilled to see the passion of the Filipino community for the sport—Taste of Manila, fabulous; and of course the Mabuhay Philippines Festival gala hosted by Norma Carpio and the Philippines Independence Day Council.

I'm always amazed by this community: the talent, the fashion. I dare not go to an event without paying attention because everyone will turn out and turn out beautifully. Even during the pandemic, these community celebrations and engagements continued in the community.

I want to recognize the Filipino Centre of Toronto, which has moved to Scarborough. I was at the grand opening, and I've attended scholarships and student recognitions there because education and progress is very important to the community.

Of course, Toronto's famous food culture—I know you've mentioned restaurants in your riding. In Scarborough, we have Lola Sally's cuisine, we have Jollibee—if you haven't had it, go and get it—and of course, Max's Restaurant, which is located right in the centre of my riding at Markham and Ellesmere.

Having a Filipino Heritage Month is an opportunity for all Ontarians to celebrate the wonderful, warm, rich, passionate heritage of the Filipino community and to give this community its due, because it has given all of us so much. Thank you, of course, to my former colleague Mike Colle for bringing this forward and to the member for Scarborough Southwest for bringing it back.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Vijay Thanigasalam: I rise today to support the private member's bill Filipino Heritage Month Act, brought forward by the member for Scarborough Southwest, to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. Today's debate is an important reflection on the

great contributions that the Filipino community has made, not only to our great province but to our entire nation.

Speaker, there are hundreds of thousands of people of Philippine origin in Ontario, and many of these individuals and families have called my riding of Scarborough—Rouge Park home. Among the Filipino community in my riding there are two community leaders I would like to highlight in this House.

The first individual is Rosemer Enverga, wife of the late Senator Tobias Enverga, who represented the greater Toronto area in the red chamber. He's remembered for his steadfast service to the Canadian Filipino community. Rosemer and Tobias founded the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation, an organization with a vision to relieve poverty in developing nations, provide the necessities of life to victims of disasters, and support the welcoming of immigrants and refugees with language instruction, employment training and job search programs.

Because of her efforts, Rosemer has been named one of the 100 most influential Filipina women in the world by the Filipina Women's Network. Additionally, here in Canada, Rosemer was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for her commitment to giving back to the community. Rosemer, thank you for what you do. You are a true champion for the Ontario spirit that brings us together.

The next leader from my riding that I would like to highlight in this House is Ma Sherry, an advocate for healthy living in Scarborough, Canada and the Philippines. Sherry founded the group Seeds of Hope, which is a distributor of seed packs to help others plant a backyard vegetable garden across the world. Sherry started this organization to increase access to food and overall promote a healthy and active lifestyle. With every pack sold, Sherry donates the proceeds to the Home of Hope, a place of healing for abused and abandoned children, and towards school and community garden programs. Thank you, Sherry, for giving back and for your commitment to these causes.

Madam Speaker, Ontario is truly lucky to experience and honour the rich heritage and culture of the Filipino community.

I'm proud to rise today in support of the private member's bill, the Filipino Heritage Month Act, to celebrate the many accomplishments of the Filipino community across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest for introducing a bill to proclaim June as Filipino Heritage Month in Ontario. I'm proud to support it.

Speaker, I want to dedicate my brief time today to my dear friend Adolfo Tigley, who immigrated here from the Philippines in 1974 with his wife, Rose. Sponsored to Canada by his sister, the late Jodofreda, Adolfo joined his brother Tomas here, and later welcomed his brothers Lamberto and Giulito. So much about the vibrant Filipino culture and cuisine I learned from him, whether in conver-

sation or at his home or at cultural events he helped organize. Last year, Adolfo turned 80, but you would never know it if you met him. This incredibly active former president of the Fountainhead tennis club can still run circles around guys my age.

Arriving in Canada at age 34, Adolfo worked hard in many different jobs while he studied to later become a realtor. He bought a home in our Humber River–Black Creek community and raised two wonderful daughters. His daughter Giselle is a nurse, and Arlene is a teacher at our local Driftwood Public School. He's also the proud grandfather of Lelani, Aden, Maleia, Kailen and Kaleia.

Adolfo has played a big role in keeping Filipino culture vibrant and strong here in Ontario. He is a long-time member and former president of the Ang Bisaya Association of Ontario. Over 500 members strong, they continue to promote culture and sport and fundraise generously to help others in need.

In our community, Adolfo served as president of the Driftwood community centre advisory council in the Jane and Finch area, and is an active member of the St. Augustine Catholic parish, and more.

In fact, every July, following the yearly mass in honour of St. Anne of Barili, Cebu, Adolfo would host everyone for a generous feast in his backyard, complete with a live band and karaoke, at which you will catch him singing an incredible rendition of Elvis Presley.

Speaker, Adolfo was incredibly excited and appreciative to hear about this bill. He said, "This will help keep Filipino culture strong here in our wonderful new home, and make new immigrants from the Philippines feel so welcome."

Adolfo is a community leader and a remarkable, generous and kind-hearted man who has made his community, and our country, a better place for us all.

Thank you, and God bless you, Adolfo.

And congratulations to Ontario's Filipino community.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Miss Christina Maria Mitas: It's my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to Bill 217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. As the MPP for Scarborough Centre, this is a very special bill for me, as not only do I have the honour of representing one of the most diverse ridings in our great province, but I'm also proud that the Filipino community is one of the largest communities in my riding. They always welcome me with open arms, and I am proud to call many in the community friends.

I also had the privilege of visiting the Philippines and spending time in Makati city while I lived in Asia for two years. I was so struck by the kindness I was shown while I was there, by the great food, by the deep respect and love for religion. Their churches and monuments were so beautiful and serene. I look forward to going back one day and getting the opportunity to see even more of this beautiful country.

In the meantime, I'm very lucky to live in Ontario, a place that is home to over 330,000 people of Philippine origin. The positive cultural and economic impacts that

this community has made to our province are simply amazing. I have seen first-hand how impressive this community is, both in my own riding and in Ontario more broadly.

In Scarborough Centre, there are people like Mel Galeon, who runs FV Foods, a very successful business, while always looking for ways to bring both the Filipino community and the broader community together through initiatives, even during COVID-19. He has done outdoor events and drive-throughs. Mel, I'm always in awe of you.

We also have Jollibee, a great Filipino fast-food chain that I have visited in both countries, and I urge everyone to go visit.

More broadly, I've had the very distinct pleasure to work with Steve Pagao and the Philippine Chamber of Commerce over the last year very closely on issues that have affected the community directly due to COVID-19. I have been so impressed by the strong way that the community advocates and connects during this time. It's truly impressive.

It's my honour to get to work with them and represent so many of the members of this community who call Scarborough Centre home in this Legislature.

1830

I also naturally draw parallels between my own heritage and what the passing of this bill would mean to this community. My own community, the Greek Canadian community, has been fortunate enough to have a bill passed in this House proclaiming March Hellenic Heritage Month. I only say this because I know what it means to have the place that my family now calls home recognized and to have our history recognized and a commitment to celebrating our heritage together. It's a feeling like no other, and I think that every community in Ontario needs to know that feeling. So I wholeheartedly support this act to proclaim June as Filipino Heritage Month.

I can barely wait to come together as a province to celebrate with the community. I know that in celebrating, Ontarians from all walks of life and cultures will also learn about Filipino history and culture. They will learn about the meaning of June 12, when the community celebrates Philippine Independence Day, and what its significance is. They will taste some of the delicious foods the community is known for, like halo-halo. They will learn about past and present contributions that the Filipino community has made to Ontario. In my riding of Scarborough Centre, we will picnic and eat, dance and sing, of course, at Thomson park.

In coming together to mark June as Filipino Heritage Month, we become more united as Ontarians who celebrate and recognize all of us and our histories. Celebrating our cultures and our histories is a very beautiful thing, and I look forward to celebrating with the Filipino community every June in the years to come.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Marit Stiles: It really is an honour to rise today to speak on behalf of this important bill. I want to start by thanking the member for Scarborough Southwest for

bringing forward this bill on behalf of Filipino Canadians in my riding of Davenport and across the province.

The Filipino community brings a rich and vibrant culture to Ontario, great food—thank you, Eglinton Fast Food—and celebrations of their unique identity happen every year in June. But June should not be just a time for the Filipino community to come together and celebrate, it should be a time for all of us to acknowledge and commemorate the significant contributions this community has made to the province.

Madam Speaker, on a personal note, I want to send some love and thanks to Lorei de los Reyes, a steelworker, an incredible young mother, a Filipino Canadian, who was my campaign manager in the last election—a powerful presence and one of the sharpest political and strategic minds I know.

Indeed, I am so fortunate, in the riding of Davenport, to have a growing and thriving Filipino community, many of whom have been on the front line in the last year in the fight to save lives from COVID-19. They've made many sacrifices to ensure those who need it get the help and the support they need, and for that, we should all be extremely grateful.

By recognizing June as Filipino Heritage Month, we will be officially recognizing those important contributions of this community to the very fabric of our province.

Although we are fortunate, as a province, to be able to honour these communities, their histories and their futures, we must still be, I think, tragically reminded of the proliferation of anti-Asian racism and hate that exists against individuals and groups from many of our Asian communities.

I can think of no better time than now to remind the Filipino people of Ontario that they are valued, they are respected, they are celebrated here in the province of Ontario for their role and their contribution.

I urge all members to stand in support of this bill to officially recognize Filipino Heritage Month in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Khanjin: I rise to support June as Filipino Heritage Month.

Filipinos have been making much impact in Canada, and especially Ontario, for decades, be it in different fields like education, research, visual arts, entertainment, sports, and politics—like the late Honourable Senator Enverga.

There are also Filipinos in Barrie–Innisfil, like some of my favourite community members: Elmer Flores, the president of Pilipinong Migrante sa Barrie and Mely Titus, the president of the Bayanihan Club of Simcoe County. These two organizations do everything they can to make sure Filipinos, especially the youth, are enriched with their roots, and of course they're helped throughout the community. They also assist Filipino families who have just migrated to Canada through different ways of finding jobs and connecting with the community. It's how I met Rolando, who's watching today. Hi, Rolando. He actually did model Parliament in this very Legislature.

But it's not just those community members; it's also the Barrie Filipino community that just celebrated a third-year

anniversary at the Heritage Baptist Church, where we have Pastor Norella and his wife, Shirley, so thank you for the work you're doing.

But we also have health care workers from the Filipino community who are doing so much, like Edwin Ng and his family, who have sacrificed so much. He's a PSW. My prayers certainly go out to him for a fast, quick recovery.

We also have the workers at IOOF, who I met with over the holidays. Gloria, Ida, Helen, Zeny, Analyn, Mary Ann and Addy, thank you for everything that you're doing at IOOF and all your efforts.

The Philippines has always been very close to my heart—as early as high school, when my best friend and I held a fundraiser for the disastrous typhoon that happened. It really shows you that no matter what happens in the Filipino community, no matter where they are, they'll never forget their culture, their country or their kababayans, meaning “fellows” in the Philippines. They exercise their bayanihan, their spirit of civic unity, in every way you can imagine. Speaker, mabuhay to all of the Filipinos in Barrie–Innisfil and Ontario. Maraming salamat.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Ms. Rima Berns-McGown: I'm absolutely delighted to be speaking to this bill today and very grateful to my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing it forward. My riding of Beaches–East York is home to a beautiful community of Filipino Canadians.

Filipino culture is something to be celebrated. In Toronto and across the province, we owe so much to the Filipino community. We cannot take for granted for a moment the hard work and labour that members of this community contribute to our collective well-being.

In a country and a province where we continue to import workers, we need to draw attention to our dependence on the Filipino community. A year into the pandemic, it's vital that we acknowledge the work and the effort that Filipino people, by and large women, have put in as nurses, personal support workers and caregivers, just to name a few of the important and essential roles they fill. Filipino Heritage Month is only a starting point and a token of our deep appreciation for them.

The Filipino community breathes life into everything they touch, from their food and culture to the warmth they offer in every interaction to the sacrifices that so many have made for us and for their loved ones, both during and before this pandemic.

One wonderful aspect of the community is a growing body of Filipino youth in our city. I see them putting in the hard work, the important work to celebrate their heritage and to acknowledge their histories. They are justly enormously proud of who they are. These youth influence Toronto's popular culture, from food to fashion to music and, importantly, politics. I look forward to them playing an increasingly important role in politics as time goes on.

Filipino culture is a glorious aspect of Toronto's culture, but I think it's really important that we acknowledge that at a time when racism against Asian Canadians and Pacific Islanders is at an all-time high, it is so very important that we take this moment to recognize the

contributions of the Filipino community, to make sure that they know that we stand with them and that we support them. We need to show our support and solidarity with them and to fight back against any and all hate that they experience. An important first step is to pass this bill and to enact it into law in time to celebrate this June as Filipino Heritage Month.

Finally, I want to acknowledge Janessa Duran, who it is my privilege to work with and who wrote this for me. Her mom's Filipina and she's Filipina. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Further debate?

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the residents of St. Catharines. I would like to thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for bringing this bill and this designation forward today.

On June 12, it is Philippine Independence Day. It's always my pleasure, and I look forward to celebrating with this vibrant, warm and connected community once again this year.

Our province is home to more than 330,000 Filipino Ontarians. This makes Ontario the largest Filipino community in Canada. Filipino Ontarians have always made tremendous contributions to our province through their faith, rich culture, values and love for family and for their community.

This year, I am especially grateful to all the Filipino Ontarians who have and continue to do the much-needed essential work during this pandemic. Many of our front-line workers, health care and long-term-care staff are from the Filipino community, and they have been working tirelessly alongside their co-workers to ensure that all Ontarians have been kept safe throughout this whole pandemic. We are extremely grateful and thankful.

I am proud to stand with the Filipino leaders and my caucus to bring forward this legislation that enshrines and recognizes Philippine heritage within the month of June. Ontario's Filipino community embraces hard work, family fun and solidarity. We need these values in our everyday, now more than ever.

Every year in Niagara, those values are on display with the Filipino contributions to the Niagara Folk Arts Festival. For over a decade, I sat on the Niagara Folk Arts board. It was always a pleasure to see the Filipino-Canadian Association of Niagara and activists like Nancy Lucerna set up a youth dance which is called the tinikling.

When I worked in health care, I worked alongside amazing Filipino men like Ian Aerro and wonderful, kind Filipino women who contributed to health care and the economy. It is also important that we recognize the values and contribution from the Filipino community that make all of Ontario a better place.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): I return to the member from Scarborough Southwest, who has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Doly Begum: I want to thank all the members from all different parties for their support and for their remarks. As we have heard, June 12 is celebrated as Philippine Independence Day across the world. It's a significant month for the community, and that's why we're asking for Filipino Heritage Month to be recognized for June as well.

The federal government actually proclaimed the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month in 2019. It is also proclaimed in Manitoba, British Columbia and the city of Montreal, as well as in the city of Toronto, which was declared in 2017.

Speaker, a number of Filipino Canadians have been on the front lines during this pandemic, many as health care workers and caregivers in all different essential service roles, which makes this an opportune time for this recognition. I think it's well deserved for the Filipino community. Over 90% of migrant caregivers are Filipino Canadians; 5.6% of all health care workers in Canada are Filipino Canadians.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge that in 2017, it was my colleague from Toronto–Danforth, the NDP member from Toronto–Danforth, Peter Tabuns, who brought this bill forward initially, as well as the member from Scarborough North from the government side, right now the minister of accessibility, who brought it forward later on. As well, in 2018, the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was a Liberal member who brought this bill forward. So I acknowledge all-party support. I find that since all parties have brought this bill forward in the past, this will be something that we can make happen this time in 2021.

Speaker, this is for the 330,000 Filipino Canadians who call Ontario their home. It is important that they have this recognition and opportunity to have their culture and identity celebrated across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Begum has moved second reading of Bill 217, An Act to proclaim the month of June as Filipino Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Which committee?

Ms. Doly Begum: The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Jennifer K. French): Is the majority in favour of the bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills? Okay.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Monday, March 29, 2021, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1844.

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| Gélinas, France (NDP) | Nickel Belt | |
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| Hassan, Faisal (NDP) | York South—Weston / York-Sud— Weston | |
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| Simard, Amanda (LIB) | Glengarry—Prescott—Russell | |
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| Singh, Sara (NDP) | Brampton Centre / Brampton-Centre | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
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| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC) | Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte | Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires |
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| Wilson, Jim (IND) | Simcoe—Grey | |
| Wynne, Kathleen O. (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | |
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