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CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 5 April 2023 / Mercredi 5 avril 2023

**Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, Bill 91,
Mr. Gill / Loi de 2023 visant à réduire les
formalités administratives pour une économie plus
forte, projet de loi 91, M. Gill**

Mrs. Robin Martin	3467
Ms. Sandy Shaw	3468
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff.....	3468
Mr. John Vanthof.....	3468
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	3468
Ms. Catherine Fife	3468
MPP Lise Vaugeois	3468
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy	3468
Ms. Jennifer K. French	3468
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu	3468
Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens.....	3468
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy	3468
Ms. Jennifer K. French	3468
Hon. Doug Downey	3468
Mr. Brian Saunderson.....	3468
Ms. Catherine Fife	3468
Mme Dawn Gallagher Murphy.....	3468
Ms. Catherine Fife	3468
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy	3468
Ms. Catherine Fife	3468
Mr. Amarjot Sandhu	3468
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	3468

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT
DES DÉPUTÉES ET DÉPUTÉS**

**Group of Seven Day Act, 2023, Bill 78,
Mr. McCarthy / Loi de 2023 sur le Jour du Groupe
des Sept, projet de loi 78, M. McCarthy**

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy	3468
MPP Jill Andrew	3468
Ms. Laura Smith	3468
Mr. Todd J. McCarthy	3468
Second reading agreed to.....	3468

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 avril 2023

Report continued from volume A.

1630

LESS RED TAPE, STRONGER ECONOMY
ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES
POUR UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

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

Bill 91, An Act to enact two Acts, amend various Acts and revoke various regulations / Projet de loi 91, Loi visant à édicter deux lois, à modifier diverses lois et à abroger divers règlements.

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

Mrs. Robin Martin: I want to thank everybody for the interesting debate here this afternoon. I want to start by thanking our Minister of Red Tape Reduction, Minister Gill, who has done a great job bringing forward this bill; and of course PA Sam Oosterhoff, who has also done a lot of work on it; and all of your team. I know you've got a great team that's been working to "herd the cats," I think is the way the Minister of Energy put it, to make sure that all the ministries are working on red tape reduction, collecting ideas from all of their constituents and stakeholders and bringing those forward so that we can make sure that Ontario is reducing red tape.

When we came to office in 2018, Ontario had years of increasing and compounding red tape. As a result of the anti-business mentality of the former Liberal government, supported by the NDP, which saw taxes increasing on everything and fees on anything that they could be attached to, which saw energy prices—which are a major factor in the cost of doing business—increasing year after year, Ontario businesses were being crushed by the regulatory burden. Ontario had more regulations than any other jurisdiction in North America, really. Businesses were fleeing from Ontario, and we lost a lot of jobs. That had a real effect on people here in Ontario. Our businesses were being lured to neighbouring jurisdictions; they were being lured across borders to avoid our high energy prices and all the red tape and taxes here in Ontario. We've heard from a couple of other speakers, but it bears repeating: In 2017, Ontario had the highest cost of compliance in Canada, totalling \$33,000 per business—\$4,000 more than any other province, not to mention the lower cost of regulation, the lower cost of energy in Michigan, New York and other nearby states. It was really crushing for

businesses here in Ontario. Everybody knows that Ontario lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and with them, Ontario families lost their security and their future careers.

But this government came to office in 2018, and we made a commitment to help Ontario businesses, to stand up for them, including not-for-profits, by reducing red tape by at least \$400 million in annual compliance costs by March 2022. Since 2018, our government has passed nine pieces of red tape reduction legislation—every fall and spring, pretty much—and reduced Ontario's total regulatory burden by 6.5%, leading to almost \$700 million in annual savings for Ontario businesses and exceeding that goal of \$400 million in savings. I think that's been great work done by a lot of people working in a lot of ministries, by a lot of staff working very hard to help make sure we can do that.

But we know that there is more work to do. Last year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimated that red tape costs small businesses in Canada \$11 billion every year. To make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family, our government will keep at it and get it done. We're going to reduce this red tape.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, which is our 10th piece of legislation to reduce red tape, has three key pillars: first, paving the way for better services; second, helping Ontario businesses grow; and, finally, saving Ontarians time. There are 42 burden reduction measures from 14 different ministries, 27 different schedules making up more than 200 pages.

Earlier, we heard about the seven guiding principles that our ministry draws on to direct our efforts to reduce red tape, and these are enshrined in the Modernizing Ontario for People and Businesses Act. I want to go through this again, because I think it's so important to reduce red tape. I think red tape really does crush the soul of businesses, and when it does that, it crushes the hopes of Ontarians.

I want to go through these guiding principles again:

(1) National and international standards should be adopted when possible, because harmonizing requirements across jurisdictions reduces costs and makes cross-border business easier. That's simple common sense as far as I'm concerned, and I think it would be to most people. That's what we should do, when we can.

(2) Small businesses should have less onerous compliance requirements when compared with larger businesses—also common sense, something I think everybody could support.

(3) Any entity subject to regulations should be provided accessible digital services wherever possible. Well, that

makes sense. We're in 2023 and we all kind of expect digital services to be available. Certainly young people do, and if we're not getting those things up to speed, modernizing and having digital services available, that will set us behind, so we've got to do that. That is a great principle. That's the third principle, which is making accessible digital services available wherever possible.

(4) Regulated entities that demonstrate excellent compliance should be recognized. I think, again, this is something people would say is common sense. We should do that.

(5) Unnecessary reporting should be reduced, and steps should be taken to avoid requiring regulated entities to provide the same information to government repeatedly.

Let me just stop here for a minute. We all know that this happens way too often, where we're having the same information demanded, we're filling out the forms over and over and over again, and it does slow us all down. It makes us all have to work that much harder to be able to submit information and get on with what we have to do.

So I think, again, this is something that everybody can support: reducing unnecessary reporting, making sure we don't have to do the same thing over and over again.

(6) Instruments should prioritize the user by using clear communication, setting reasonable response times and establishing a centralized point of contact. This, again, is something that everybody should be able to support. Clear communication is critical; we all know that. Certainly, as politicians, we've got to make sure people are hearing what we're saying, and what we say is only important—it's really what they hear that's really important. And getting the communication across, making it clear for people so they know what to do and can get to their result as quickly as possible, is so important. A centralized point of contact is important, because people don't want to go to several different points of contact. They want to find the one spot they need to go to, to get the results.

Finally, (7), an instrument should specify the desired result that regulated entities must meet, rather than specific methods used to attain that result. So where are we trying to get to, and then there are sometimes various methods you can get there. Again, I think it's a common-sense principle.

Part of the reason I wanted to go through those seven principles is because I hope out there in Ontario people are listening and can bring us some more ideas, because our government is not finished yet with this bill. We're going to bring red tape reduction bills on an ongoing basis, every spring and fall. We're going to keep Minister Gill very busy, making sure that we have more red tape reduction legislation, more savings for Ontario businesses. We're looking to Ontarians to help us, because you know your business better than anyone else. Help us find those things that drive you crazy that we can fix with a small change, often, in a piece of legislation.

Often, it's just that the legislation has not been looked at for several years, and it hasn't changed. We've certainly learned about a number of the provisions in this red tape bill, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. A number

of the provisions are about modernizing notices, modernizing meetings so they can be virtual or electronic, and making that a possibility in a number of areas, for many different ministries. That is something that I think is so obvious but will really make a difference for people.

That happened—it's also in here—in schedule 7, the condo act changes. The condo act changes—and we heard something about it earlier—allow for virtual or hybrid meetings and for notice requirements to be virtual or hybrid. These kinds of things are very important. And certainly, in speaking with condo owners in my riding, they don't understand why they couldn't do that already. So it's a change that really will help to make those kinds of meetings easier to do and bring that statute and many others that we can find that are amended here as well into the 21st century, into the year 2023, so that people can actually have those meetings, participate in those meetings—but also just make the meetings more convenient for people so it doesn't impose so much on their lives to attend.

1640

So I think those are really key provisions to bring us into the modern era—obvious, yes, but if nobody looks at those statutes or regulations ever again, they just sit there and they accumulate, and they strangle businesses, and they prevent businesses and people from being able to use their time as effectively as possible. So I think that is a really key area which—in this bill, there are several provisions which are addressing that.

There are some other provisions here that I'd like to talk about, as well, and I'm sure we're going to hear more about them, because I believe the Minister of the Attorney General is going to grace us with a speech later. He's got some provisions in here amending the Substitute Decisions Act, for example, and the Succession Law Reform Act.

On the Substitute Decisions Act changes—I think that is very important. That's schedule 35, for anybody who wants to look at it. I think it's a really important change, because dealing with advance care planning and substitute decisions and dealing with incapable people who need somebody to decide for them is so important. It's such a hard time in someone's life—if someone is incapacitated and they're not able to decide for themselves. It's so important to be able to make sure that the care decisions and even financial decisions, if they're a power of attorney for property—that those decisions are made with the person's best interests at heart, and also not making them more complicated than necessary.

An amendment was made in 2006 to the Substitute Decisions Act which granted the power to guardians of property or personal care to be entitled to require information about the incapable person to which they would have access, but it was not addressed that their attorney would be able to get access under continuing powers of attorney. To me, that is a critical thing. It comes up all the time, and it's one of those things that was just overlooked at the time, perhaps, and not dealt with, but we

can fix it here. So I applaud the Ministry of the Attorney General for bringing that issue forward.

It clarifies that an attorney has the power to access personal information about an incapable person and allow a substitute decision-maker to designate a beneficiary. Also, the amendments provide clarity, simplify processes, and make it easier for our substitute decision-makers who already take on an important role to do their important job.

I'm also interested about the provisions in here from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The provisions—I think there's schedule 27 implementing the Hague Convention; I believe that's correct. That's an international treaty that applies to obtaining, changing and enforcing spousal and child support orders when parents live in different countries. It would give the province reciprocity to collect support payments in 34 more jurisdictions, more than doubling the number of countries that Ontario has to work with to enforce child support. I can imagine that these changes will have a huge impact on people who are trying to enforce child support orders. It will streamline processes, reduce wait times and administrative burden, and I think that is so critical. It can make all the difference in the world for people. So I'm delighted to see those provisions in there.

I think part of that relies on the federal government continuing to do its part, but we can't ask them with any force if we haven't done the thing we need to do to make that apply. This is us doing our part, and then we can go to the federal government and say, "Now you do yours," to make sure we can get those support orders enforced around the world.

Also, I like the provisions with respect to the developmental disabilities act. Those are in schedule 33, which has a lot of provisions but, among others, amending the coming into force date of unproclaimed provisions to allow better alignment with the path set out in our Journey to Belonging. I think we've made great strides in the Journey to Belonging, and part of that plan requires work with our partners to make sure the changes are seamless, and that means amending this act, the services and supports to promote the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act—SIPDDA as they call it—to ensure we get it right.

We had a little bit earlier the Minister of Energy speaking to this piece of legislation, and I think he did a great job. It's always a pleasure to hear from the minister himself. But there are important measures here, including keeping administrative monetary penalties off rates for ratepayers because we're all worried about affordability, people being able to pay their energy costs and energy bills, and this is a provision that will help that. Administrative monetary penalties made to gas transmitters or distributors will be on be them and not on people's bills, which is important.

Also, we have an environmental regulation about the repeal of beverage container regulations, repealing outdated recycling regulations related to soft drink containers, changes ensuring consistency among producers and diverting materials away from landfill. So there is a lot of stuff in here.

I just want to take a moment to go back to Alexis de Tocqueville and Democracy in America, where the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Red Tape Reduction took us earlier in the day, in a great exegesis into philosophy, which always makes me feel so happy. I think it was really important, though, in truth, because I do think that with red tape there is always a really great tendency to crush freedom and to crush people's ability to develop and change things. He was giving us a great quote about despotism, and I do think that we get the soft despotism through red tape. It does start to choke all of us.

The parliamentary assistant was telling us about how de Tocqueville had foreseen this possibility. I always think we should listen to these great thinkers and read those books again, which I do—I've read Democracy in America a couple of times. I think de Tocqueville has a lot to tell us. In fact, fighting despotism and that kind of tyranny is the reason I got into politics, it's the reason I'm interested in politics at all.

I appreciate that the parliamentary assistant shares my passion for philosophy and brought up Alexis de Tocqueville. He said that this kind of soft totalitarianism, if you will, doesn't break the will, but it softens it, bends it, directs it; it reduces each nation to flock of followers or sheep. I think that one of the things we need to do is to fight against that and to make sure that we're freeing businesses and people to succeed here in Ontario.

I hope the members opposite will support this legislation. I think there are a lot of good things in here. I know the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was sharing with us that he thought there were many good things in here, and so I hope that means that the others will join in and support this bill. I want to thank you all for the time.

1650

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

Ms. Sandy Shaw: Thank you very much to the member.

It's very interesting that we're quoting an 18th-century, possibly French revolutionary figure in the House, de Tocqueville.

I just would also like to say, if we're going to be talking about these things, that carved right here on the wall in the Legislature, in Latin, is something that says, "Good government bears fruit." But I have to say, this legislation is not an example of that—not at all, because right now, this is what you're focusing on. We said that you failed to meet the moment with the budget. You continue to show your complete tone-deafness when it comes to what's happening in the province.

In Hamilton, we have 1,500 people living on the streets, with only 500 shelter beds. Right now, we have 6,000 families waiting on a social housing list because they have no place to live and raise their families.

So how in heaven's name is this bill helping anybody who is struggling in this province?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much to the member from Hamilton West–Ancaster–Dundas for the question.

I think this bill helps people struggling in this province a great deal, because what this bill is about, what red tape

reduction is about, is making sure that we are attracting businesses to Ontario and that businesses can succeed in Ontario, because when businesses succeed, they hire people, and then people have good jobs.

I remember going door to door in the 2018 election, and a lady said to me, “I want a higher minimum wage.” I said “No, you don’t. You want the highest wage—not a minimum wage—that you can get.” She agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Niagara West.

Mr. Sam Oosterhoff: I know we spoke about Alexis de Tocqueville. I was also wondering if we could speak a little bit about Thomas Jefferson. One of his quotes with regard to his vision of government was quite simple. He said, “A wise and frugal government, which shall restrain men from injuring one another, shall leave them otherwise free to regulate their own pursuits of industry and improvement, and shall not take from the mouth of” the worker “the bread it has earned.”

I’m wondering if you could speak a little bit about how our vision of ensuring that we’re able to unleash the potential of entrepreneurialism here in the province of Ontario, build a more prosperous future for the hard-working workers of this province and ensure that they’re able to spend more time with their family and less time filling out paperwork, especially when it’s duplicative and unnecessary, reflects not just the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville but also, of course, his contemporary Thomas Jefferson.

Mrs. Robin Martin: This is why I enjoy talking with the member from Niagara West so much. He can pull out all these great quotes from all these people I admire so greatly—Thomas Jefferson, Alexis de Tocqueville. He’s right; these are the very principles on which our society is founded and on which our democracy is founded.

If government isn’t doing something useful, if it’s just compounding problems for people, then it needs to take a step back. There are things that government does need to do, and government does do a lot of those things. But there are places where government needs to make sure it is not intruding and stepping on people. That’s what Thomas Jefferson’s quote was saying, effectively—that we need to make sure that we let people be free to achieve.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: I listened intently to the member’s speech; specifically, the six pillars of trying to reduce regulation, and number five was unnecessary reporting. And then she went on to quote authors about crushing freedom and choking all of us. I wonder what her comments are, then, for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, which requires ODSP people—people who are living below poverty level—to report monthly whether or not they travelled out of the province. Wouldn’t that be choking them, as well? And yet, your government has implemented this.

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for the question.

Obviously, we can reduce red tape in every area, and we certainly are looking for great ideas about where we can do that. You have said yourself today, I believe, in speaking to this bill, that some regulations are necessary, and so the question is that you look at each regulation and decide, “Is this something we actually need? Is there a better way to do it that would make it more efficient and less onerous for people?” And that includes all people: people on ODSP, people who are not on ODSP, everybody. We don’t want to put more of a burden on people than necessary, but what we do want to make sure is that we have the regulations we need for safety and for running the government properly, where we need them. Other regulations, we should get rid of.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: Thank you to my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence for her presentation. At the beginning of your presentation, you talked about the problem that we were experiencing: Our businesses were being lured away. That was prior to our government coming into power in 2018. You talked about how the red tape “crushes the soul of businesses.” My question to you, to the great member there from Eglinton–Lawrence: What are the expected benefits of the Building Ontario Business Initiative for businesses?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you very much to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for the question and for all her hard work. I know she works very hard to make sure that our health care system is working as well as we can make it, and I appreciate all of her efforts every day.

Look, this red-tape-reduction bill is all about making this a great place to do business. The way we’re going to do that is we’re going to be saving businesses from having to fill out forms unnecessarily, from not being able to conduct their business remotely, by modernizing those kinds of meetings and things. There are a whole lot of other provisions in here that do specific things, but we’ve already saved businesses about \$596 million annually, I think the minister said, based on his last bill, and now it’s going to be \$700 million.

The bottom line is, it helps businesses’ bottom line.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think it’s really interesting that de Tocqueville has entered the debate. It’s certainly worth noting that democracy in America is a mess right now, but the member will know that de Tocqueville’s views on the United States took a darker turn after 1840: “Tocqueville observed that social mechanisms have paradoxes, as in what later became known as the Tocqueville effect: ‘social frustration increases as social conditions improve.’ He wrote that this growing hatred of social privilege, as social conditions improve, leads to the state concentrating more power to itself.”

I ask the member, given her affectation for this particular philosopher, what kind of government takes its people to court to fight the very Constitution and Charter of Rights and Freedoms that the people of this province depend on?

Mrs. Robin Martin: Thank you to the member from Waterloo for the question. de Tocqueville is a great writer, no doubt. He always foresaw problems in the way America was developing, and tried to address those in his writing and suggest things that could be changed so that they don't go there.

One of the things that he didn't like at all was the concentration of state power, and the concentration of power generally in the state. What he believed in was those great intermediary associations in civil society like churches, like Rotary clubs: things that you can belong to that are not you as an individual, or even you with your family. They are not the government doing everything for you, but rather those things in the middle, where people voluntarily got together and did things to help each other. That is the ideal that Tocqueville applauded and was working on.

As a lawyer practising law and litigation, a lawsuit is brought when somebody disagrees with the application of a principle or a law—

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

Further debate?

1700

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Well, I've heard quite a lot of different things talked about today, but what really intrigued me was hearing Thomas Jefferson referred to as a friend of labour. I'm not sure that the members of the House realize that Thomas Jefferson owned 600 slaves and had no interest whatsoever in emancipation. So he doesn't seem like the right person to be quoting in favour of workers, looking after the needs of workers.

There are some housekeeping things in this bill that are probably easy to agree to: doing meetings online, that sort of thing. But really, I don't see the priorities of my constituents anywhere in this document. For example, I'm hearing regularly from seniors who can't afford to live. They need care. They're actually spending a lot of money on for-profit housing, but they can't access home care unless they pay for it privately. Well, the money's not there for them to do that. So that's an effect of privatization that was done by this government and is harming seniors right now.

Health care: Of course, I'm hearing constant worry about the privatization and sell-off of our health care. Frankly, I learned today that Thunder Bay can no longer do autopsies because the money isn't there to support staff to do them. They have to send them to Toronto. But guess what? Between Kenora, which also can no longer do autopsies, and Thunder Bay, it cost \$2 million last year to send bodies to southern Ontario for those autopsies. It's nonsensical, but it is part of a pattern of underfunding and depriving communities of the services they need.

The other thing I learned about yesterday is that in the entire region of northwestern Ontario, which is as large as the country of France, the only place where you can get dialysis right now is in Thunder Bay, because the other three hospitals that have dialysis—and three hospitals is not much in a region of that size—are completely overbooked. So it's creating incredible hardship for people

who need that service to actually have to pick up and move to Thunder Bay at enormous cost.

So, looking at what's here and what's not here, thinking about red tape, when red tape gets in the way, eliminating red tape—to me, this whole notion of red tape is very much an ideological mantra that we've been hearing for an awfully long time.

I'm going to read a bit from an article from the National Observer:

"It's not like Canada is beset by burdensome regulations, either. According to the 2022 Index of Economic Freedom from the Heritage Foundation"—now, the Heritage Foundation is a "right-wing think tank dedicated to advancing conservative ideas." So, according to the Heritage Foundation, we rank 15th in the world"—ahead of Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan, which I would say puts us at a competitive advantage and not really in dire straits concerning so-called red tape.

I'm going to continue to read this: "If anyone needs an example of the dangers associated with cutting back on rules and regulations, they need only look at...the mid-1990s, when Mike Harris and his" so-called "'common sense revolution' took over the province," and "cutting regulations was at the top of the new conservative government's to-do list...."

"But as Ontarians quickly found out, letting the private sector regulate itself can have unintended consequences. An outbreak of E. coli from improperly treated water at a nearby farm in Walkerton ended up killing six people and sickening more than 2,000 others, and eventually led to stricter water treatment guidelines—you know, regulations—in the province...."

"There are plenty of other examples of how regulatory failure, or regulatory absence, can cause and amplify harm to the public. The pandemic exposed deadly flaws in Ontario's long-term-care system that were made far worse by the province's refusal to enforce its regulations on private and public care homes."

Well, that certainly takes me back to when long-term care was privatized, and guess what? People very closely associated with the Conservative government hit pay dirt because of the privatization of those long-term-care homes. The sell-off of the greenbelt? Well, some people closely associated with the Conservative Party are going to hit pay dirt big time when those luxury homes are built there. It's all a matter of priorities and we can see what the priorities are and what they are not.

Some of my colleagues have raised the issue of ODSP and the treatment of people with disabilities. Now, there are over 800 regulations that constrain the lives of people with disabilities if they need financial supports—800 regulations. In fact, they can even come to your house and inspect to see if you're living with somebody because they can claw back money if you become romantically involved with someone—something that does not happen to any other category of person in the country, but it's done to people on ODSP.

So when we talk about choking the life out of people with regulations—unnecessary regulations, regulations

designed to actually punish and be cruel—yes, they do choke the life out of people, but it boggles my mind that the government can put so much effort into certain kinds of red tape removal while even adding more to those without the ability to fight back. One of the reasons they can't fight back, of course, is because legal aid was so drastically cut; they don't have any means to fight back.

Now, I happen to know also that people on ODSP right now are having to re-verify their disabilities. So they're being told, "You've got to go to a doctor and get a new certificate explaining that you have a disability." Guess what? How many people on disabilities—how many people in general—do not have family doctors? Where are they going to get these from? It creates an enormous burden. Let's say you've got a significant disability. So now you're going to go to a walk-in clinic, you're going to sit there for hours—if you are immune-compromised, you are putting yourself at risk—you may or may not get to see a doctor. Hopefully you do, but how long has it taken? That is certainly regulatory overburden and punishment.

Let's talk a little bit about WSIB and red tape, and the very unfortunate priorities that we have seen in this government. The member from Nipissing has bragged many, many times in this House about having returned \$2.1 billion—so-called surplus—to business owners at the expense of people with workplace injuries who have not received the support that they need to be receiving. We know that the turndown rate for WSIB for people with workplace injuries is unbelievable; it's in the 80% range. So people are not able to get the support that they need, and yet this government is bragging about taking away resources that are set aside that were always intended to be there for workers, to keep workers—injured workers—from becoming a burden on society in general and a burden on their families, but that is exactly what this government has done and continues to do with their cavalier attitude towards people with disabilities and workers with injuries. To me, it's criminal.

I see in those cases a messing around with so-called red tape that benefits some people and that actually causes very serious harm for other people—and people, again, who don't have the resources to fight back. Not surprising, then, that those are the ones who get beat up on.

1710

I want to look next at—actually, let's look at the colleges for a little bit. I'm coming to something else, but this business of taking the word "private" out of private, for-profit colleges—we know that people overseas, international students, have been ripped off in the thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars, Frankly, the fees that they're being charged are unconscionable in the first place, but the fact that they are trying to get information—we know that there are unethical recruiters overseas actually trying to draw in more and more international students. It's like we're trying to make up for our deficits by putting the weight on international students who come here, who wind up having to pay \$50,000 for a year of school or for two years of year of school. To me, it's like

an enormous head tax. It's not about education; it's not about welcoming people to the country; it's about soaking them for as much money as you can get.

And, frankly, taking the word "private" out increases the vulnerability of those students and their families who are trying to figure out, if they're going to send their son or daughter to overseas to study, how do they know, how do they figure out which schools are legitimate, which schools are going to give them a degree that they can actually use, which schools are going to go bankrupt when it's convenient for the schools and leave the students with nothing. So, to me, the fact that that is in this bill makes me suspicious of the rest of the bill because, frankly, there's no rationale for doing it except for disguising the nature of those schools to people who won't have the means to figure out the difference.

Now, we've had a lot of talk about reducing red tape also in relation to Bill 71, the Building More Mines Act. That's not discussed in here, but again, we see this practice of reducing red tape in some places to the benefit of some people but to the disadvantage of others. So I want to read a little bit—I received a couple of days ago a press release from the Matawa Chiefs Council. Matawa represents nine First Nations; some of them are in my riding, some of them are farther north.

"Matawa traditional territories and homelands: As the Matawa member First Nations have taken time to review and consider the impacts of Ontario's Bill 71, Building More Mines Act introduced in Queen's Park on March 2, 2023 by mines minister, the Honourable George Pirie, Matawa Chiefs Council issued a formal response to the Standing Committee on the Interior in advance of standing committee hearings which will be held this week in Timmins ... and Sudbury"—so we know people are there right now, and by the way, Matawa is very unhappy that there were no hearings held in Thunder Bay. I wonder why? Because it would be the easiest place for the communities of Matawa to come. They write:

"(1) Matawa member First Nations were informed"—informed—"of amendments—not consulted.

"(2) 'Recovery' permits are potentially avoiding the duty to consult and accommodate, avoiding historic grievances and new revenue interests in closed mines now being reassessed and returned to production"—so they're very worried about that.

"(3) Potential 'fox guarding the henhouse' scenario developing across Ontario as mines will be self-monitoring or privatized on mine closure plans. Mine closure plans are required in order for mines to open, and chart the course of responsibility for the mine when a mine is closed"—missing from Bill 71.

"(4) The proposed Ontario Mining Act amendments proposed by Bill 71 impact northern First Nations including communities located in the remote Far North. The standing committee on this issue are holding hearings only in Timmins and Sudbury.

"(5) The cumulative impact of speeding up the mining cycle in Ontario—to the benefit of industry and investors—will place the burden onto First Nations councils,

administrations and finances. The province of Ontario must be held accountable for this exploitive and aggressive approach contrary to the principles of reconciliation and the spirit and intent of treaty.”

So here we have an example, again, of a reduction of red tape that, first of all, flies in the face of what the government keeps telling us about all of these negotiations that are supposedly taking place when, in fact, I've been told directly by all these chiefs, in addition to others, that there has been no consultation—perhaps with two communities but not with the vast majority.

So, again, I'm very, very concerned that some kinds of red tape are a priority for this government, but the rules and regulations that are there to protect the environment; to protect communities from having tailings ponds burst, for example; to protect communities, frankly, from the devastation of their environments—those regulations are being slipped away, and then companies are not necessarily being required to put the money up front so that remediation can take place. We know how often it's happened that industry has left—there's a common practice to declare bankruptcy, get out, leave the mess behind. Certainly, First Nations communities are very, very concerned about that.

I have spoken before about a positive example, which took place with Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation, also known as Pic River. In that case, very careful negotiations took place. Rules have been put there so that that environment will be protected, so that traditional economies can take place and so that the people know that their watershed will be protected. And the money has been there; the money has been put up front. They have an agreement that they feel good about. But if we look at Bill 71, we actually see exactly the opposite: Those protections are being removed, and then the people who live in those communities not only are not being consulted, they're going to be left holding the bag. They certainly have a great deal of worry.

Again, I will reiterate what concerns me and what has concerned me since I've come to government is a very selective kind of priorities and the notion that if everything is good for business, then everything else is going to fall in line for people, but that's not the case. Sometimes, that might work well, but without regulations, without those checks and balances, people wind up being vulnerable.

As I said earlier, the fact that is, the government is willing to leave 800 regulations on the books to control the lives of people on ODSP and, I must say, at the same time not observe the responsibility to actually comply with the AODA and make sure that those things are taking place. Then I see a government that has its favourites and its favourite people, and the new private health care businesses that will be reaping a bonanza in profits, just like those that reaped a bonanza in profits after long-term care was privatized. But I don't see the work being done to protect the people of this province who have to work for a living. That means, because they don't have proper WSIB support—and they don't, and it doesn't matter how many times people on the other side say, “WSIB is great; it's

there.” Sit down with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers and find out how many people have been abandoned by WSIB.

Ms. Sandy Shaw: They're living in poverty.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: They are living in poverty. Some of those people wind up being homeless. These are people who worked full-time, experienced a workplace injury and then were left with nothing. Years after years after years of appeals, maybe after 10 years something comes through, and then at the same time the government chooses to shortchange them on their cost-of-living allowance. So there's a lot of meanness that happens to people who don't have the ability to fight back. The lack of support for legal aid is just one of those many, many factors.

So, yes, there are some things in the bill to support, but boy, would I like to see this government actually work on behalf of all the people of this province.

1720

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I do encourage the member from Thunder Bay–Superior North to carefully read all aspects of this bill. It's not a short bill. There's a lot to it, many schedules to it. But speaking of helping people, helping families, making sure that supports are in place, our government is focused on making life easier for families so that they can make ends meet, get ahead and prosper. A key part of that is making sure that parents meet their child support obligations through the Family Responsibility Office, ratifying the Hague Convention. That would be an important step forward.

So I hope that the member opposite agrees with us in our expectation that everyone should meet their court-ordered obligations for child and spousal support. My question is simple: Will they?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I don't have a problem supporting that aspect of the bill, assuming that it does what it says it's going to do. With all of the things, of course, it requires some study and checking with stakeholders to make sure that each of these elements does what it's intended to do. Of course, it is problematic that it's another omnibus bill, which means that it's all or nothing. Hopefully, it will be open for committee and it's possible to make amendments.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I wanted to thank the member for her very thoughtful and thorough comments that reflect the needs of her community. This is a significant bill that was dropped on the table this morning at 9 a.m. So the fact that your comments reflected the spirit of your community in the face of this bill—this is a bill about red tape. What you laid out so clearly was—I won't call it red tape, because that's the government's term, thinking about economics. But you laid out the barriers that are faced by real people in your community and arguably across communities in the whole province.

What are some of the barrier-fighting differences that this government could make for people in your community in Thunder Bay that again were missed opportunities in this but would be easy enough for the government to add?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: I guess removing many of the regulations that confine and restrain the lives of people who are on ODSP, removing the constraints that are crushing the lives of people who are injured workers, but also making sure that funding is actually coming into our communities so that people aren't having to travel 600 or more kilometres to get dialysis, for example. So I think that it is a question of priorities. I see that—no, I'll leave it at that.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: I appreciate the commentary from the member opposite on this very important bill. By eliminating red tape, we're reducing delays and paving the way for faster access to high-speed Internet for homes and businesses. Madam Speaker, this is the basic infrastructure that every Ontarian deserves. Imagine: We live in the 21st century, and people still don't have a high-speed Internet connection. We have seen this during the global pandemic, the importance of high-speed Internet, because our families were relying on high-speed Internet, our businesses, our health care system, our education system were relying on the high-speed Internet. Does the member agree that it is important to cut red tape that slows down development and delays broadband expansion?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Absolutely, we need broadband expansion. It's unfortunate that the government spent such a small proportion of its budget—

Interjection: Two per cent

MPP Lise Vaugeois: —two per cent of its budget to actually get broadband in place.

I'd also like to refer to the member from Spadina–Fort York, who was a member of the committee, who talked about the importance of making sure that the right quality of broadband is brought to remote areas, including northwestern Ontario.

Interjection: They won't be getting it.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: It's not likely that we'll be getting it. No, we are not going to be getting the higher quality that is actually needed in the north.

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

Mrs. Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens: Good afternoon. Through you, Speaker, to my colleague from Thunder Bay–Superior North, I've not seen many bills that touch more legislation but do so little to tackle real issues that people are facing in the province of Ontario; I could say, rising costs of fuel, rising costs of housing, health care. As you said in your speaking notes, I can't believe that people from the north have to come to the south for autopsies. What is really missing in this legislation to make a meaningful difference right now for the regular families that are in Thunder Bay as well as in all of Ontario?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Well, they could start by rent controls and undoing the removal of that, which has caused so much harm to so many people. People are being renocted out of their places or the rents are being arbitrarily raised well beyond what they can afford. Of course, they can't afford groceries in our region.

Yes, if people had sufficient money—it's an interesting thing about ODSP, because some people think of it as, "Oh, that's money that's thrown away, that's given away," but every penny of that money comes back into the community: to pay for housing, to pay for food, to pay for services. So, in fact, the government continues to shoot itself in the foot by denying people enough money to live on. I would love to see that in this bill.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Of course this bill, in every aspect of it, in every schedule associated with it, is about cutting red tape. Now, I listen carefully to what I hear from government members and opposition members, and the House leader for His Majesty's loyal opposition stated today in the context of his one-hour speech or address to this House that, of course, he and his party don't like red tape either. So are we finally getting to the point where even the NDP accepts the fact that red tape is a significant barrier to our economic competitiveness and growth, and that for the first time in our province's history we have a government committed to eliminating it, a ministry completed dedicated to it, and that's because when we have prosperity and growth by cutting red tape, as we have, by \$900 million, then we can fund the core services of health care, education and social services? Does the NDP finally get it, given what their House leader said?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Well, if the government were actually funding education properly or not privatizing and giving away our hospitals that people have contributed to for years and years, if you were actually helping people to survive—it's what you call it. You want red tape for you. I think it's important that certain regulations need to be there. We need quality of life, and red tape is this thing you like to talk about, but it actually does nothing for improving the quality of life of people on the ground.

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

Ms. Jennifer K. French: In the discussion, there has been some talk about broadband, the historic government announcement for investment, but they've only spent about 2%. They are not coming forward with that money and rolling it out.

My colleague from Nickel Belt and yourself are looking through a lens of getting broadband to rural and northern and remote communities. This government laughed at my colleague from Nickel Belt when she talked about the province having responsibility to deliver it when companies who can't make money will not deliver it. So, what are your community members going to do when companies can't afford to deliver Internet and the government leaves them high and dry?

MPP Lise Vaugeois: They won't have Internet. That's the problem.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: But they promised it.

MPP Lise Vaugeois: Well, they did promise it, but if private companies aren't—if it's not profitable, then they're not going to get it. So we do need the government

to be stepping up and making sure, frankly, that the subsidies are available to make sure that every person in the province of Ontario has access to the high-speed level of—

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

1730

Hon. Doug Downey: I am pleased to stand in the House today to discuss legislation that would, if passed, pave the way for better services, cut red tape for businesses and save Ontarians time when they're accessing the justice system. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague and parliamentary assistant, Brian Saunderson.

I'd like to take a moment to thank my colleague, the Minister of Red Tape Reduction, as well as his assistant, the member from Niagara West, for all the great work they've done today along with their respective teams and ministry staff. They've introduced legislation that reflects and responds to concerns that affect all sorts of people all across the province, in a variety of sectors.

I'm honoured to join you today to speak about the changes affecting the justice system in this bill, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act. Here in our ministry, PA Saunderson and myself proposed a number of sensible legislative improvements that build on the government's successful track record of reducing red tape and supporting people and businesses. These improvements reflect our government's determination to work with justice partners to save time while making the justice system more accessible and easier to use. If passed, the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act would continue our work of simplifying operations in the justice sector and saving people time and needless paperwork.

Madam Speaker, we've spent a lot of time thinking about smart solutions to improve the way we do our work in the justice sector. That's why we're proposing changes to the Courts of Justice Act that would remove the requirement of the Auditor General to audit the Office of the Children's Lawyer.

The Children's Lawyer operates as a program area of the Ministry of the Attorney General. That means that each year, its financial position is reported in the public accounts. Having the children's lawyer report to the auditor means that its finances are being scrutinized twice. In our opinion, that makes no sense.

There's no other set of books maintained by the Children's Lawyer to report on its finances. The additional requirement to report takes up valuable funds and resources, not just for the Office of the Children's Lawyer but also for the Auditor General. These audits are time-consuming, as anybody who has been through an audit would know.

I should point out that in addition to having just one set of books, the Children's Lawyer has funds only within the Consolidated Revenue Fund. There are no funds residing in banks or trust accounts outside of the general government bank account.

Madam Speaker, if passed, these changes will help streamline processes while ensuring that the Children's Lawyer continues to publicly share its financial reports.

Another area is our proposed changes focusing on not just improving processes for programs and agencies, but also for Ontarians as individuals themselves, as they navigate important decisions for themselves and their loved ones. That's why we're also putting forth common-sense amendments that would allow substitute decision-makers to spend less time on paperwork and more time helping people in their care.

Our proposed changes to the Substitute Decisions Act, if passed, would clarify that under a power of attorney an attorney has the power to access personal information about an incapable person. That's how you would expect a power of attorney to work, but there are barriers, so we're fixing that. This is, of course, assuming the incapable person would be entitled to the information in the first place. If passed, these amendments would provide clarity to what can be a very challenging process in a very challenging time. It would make it easier for substitute decision-makers to do their job with certainty.

I'm so thrilled that with each red tape bill we get a chance to put in a whole variety of ways to cut red tape. Madam Speaker, our goal with many of these changes is making processes clearer and easier to understand. We're also streamlining systems to make our services more convenient.

Before I begin with the proposed changes to the Creditors' Relief Act, I must note that our current system of sending enforcement documents is not as up to date as it could be. That's why we are proposing to pave the way to include an option for the sheriff's office to send some enforcement documents by email. This would enhance communications between sheriffs' offices and stakeholders and would modernize and transform the delivery of court services. I'll remind you, Madam Speaker, that we had to get rid of telegrams in place of email in the Rules of Civil Procedure.

Most people today can complete a variety of simple tasks online or through an app on a mobile device, whether it's transferring money from their bank account or buying movie tickets for the show that evening or, quite frankly, signing documents to buy or sell a home. People expect the same level of convenience when they interact with our legal system, and this is an excellent example of where we can modernize and transform an out-of-date process while making communications quicker and easier, and it aligns with our government's vision of moving justice forward.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to say that our efforts to save people money and time also apply to small business owners in the retail cannabis sector. Currently, retailers who want to sell their business or change the legal structure are simply not allowed to transfer their licences or authorizations, and they can't transfer their inventory. This means that the current process to sell their business or change their business structure takes up an extraordinary amount of time and can be very costly.

There is good reason for the restriction. When cannabis was first legalized, there was a concern, without the benefit of experience, that, for example, cannabis from stores that were closing could fall into the hands of illegal

markets. Since then, we've seen that there are easier ways to do this without unfairly burdening those closing businesses, yet still protecting the public, our communities and young people. To that end, we're proposing changes to reduce costs and red tape for cannabis retailers by enabling the transfer of licences and inventory to another cannabis retail authorization holder in circumstances that would be set out in regulation. If passed, these amendments would establish regulation-making authority to make changes that would support businesses and could reduce potential financial losses. I should note that these legislative changes will only come into effect once a proper and fulsome framework for licensed inventory transfers is established in regulation by the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario.

Now, we recognize there are many opportunities to transform the way we do things in our legal system, and I'd like to mention a couple of other practical steps we're taking to improve some administrative services and clarify others. This includes fixing legislation under the Execution Act for the collection of judgment awards, including the seizure of property. The proposed amendment here, if passed, would clarify when the principal residence exemption in forced sales can apply. This is a practical change that clears up a piece of legislation and aligns with the federal law on the same topic.

Also, in the trustee space, we're proposing changes to the Trustee Act to support cost-effective investment of trust property. If passed, these changes would make it clear that investment managers of trust property may invest in mutual, pooled or segregated funds on behalf of a trustee. It's really modernizing to the modern ways of investing money—and they're not even that modern, Madam Speaker. This amendment would make the law easier to understand and remove any doubt concerning a routine practice.

Finally, we have clarified functions in the law society's adjudicative tribunal. We've made changes to a regulation under the Law Society Act that will help the Law Society Tribunal function more effectively by recognizing the expertise of the chair. Just to clarify, that tribunal is a disciplinary tribunal. By doing so, we're giving the chair the authority to assign a one- or three-member panel in certain motions where regulation currently states there must be a three-member panel. These amendments will allow the tribunal to hear and schedule motions more efficiently.

With all the changes I've outlined, we're clarifying and enhancing processes. Some of these changes may seem small, but they're all essential in helping our justice system run as efficiently as possible for everyone in the province. We're enhancing processes to remove redundancy and save resources for the children's lawyer and the Auditor General of Ontario. We're simplifying processes to make life easier for Ontarians, including making it more

convenient for substitute decision-makers to do their jobs in very tough times. We're modernizing and improving the way the justice system communicates with stakeholders. And we're also supporting independent and small businesses in Ontario by reducing costs, risks and red tape for cannabis retailers.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to talk about this very important piece of legislation led by my friend and colleague the Minister of Red Tape Reduction. My colleagues will have more to say on these and some other proposed changes in the Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act.

I'd like to now turn it over to parliamentary assistant Brian Saunderson.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): The member from Simcoe–Grey.

I'll just remind members to refer to each other by your location or title.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: It's a pleasure to follow the Attorney General. I know his riding is a long one: Barrie–Springwater–Oro-Medonte. I think he has very ably touched on the seven major changes that are in this Bill 91 that will impact the administration of justice in our province. I don't need to re-cover the same territory, but I would like to say, as a former practising litigator, that the changes will be well received by the bar association, particularly the changes to the Execution Act, which will help to facilitate the execution and enforcement of judgments. I know, as a former litigator, that that is always a key concern for a plaintiff—knowing that they will have the ability to enforce any judgment that they get. So clarification of such things as the principal residence exemption will be well received by the bar.

1740

In addition, the changes to the Creditors' Relief Act will also be well received, as they help to set out the avenues for service of documents and to update that and to bring it into the 21st century.

These are all important aspects and changes that are being brought forward in Bill 91, so I want to congratulate the minister of red tape for this initiative, which is the 10th piece of red tape legislation that this government has brought forward in the last five years. It has been observed on both sides of the floor today, during the debates, that this is one of our government's top priorities since 2018. And we continue to work with businesses, non-profit organizations, individuals and the broader public sector to remove unnecessary, redundant and outdated regulations that are holding Ontarians back.

Having sat through the debate this afternoon, it is clear from the comments on both sides that we can agree that red tape does need to be addressed, does need to be reduced, and I think the discussions that I've heard are really around what constitutes red tape that is good versus unnecessary red tape.

It's clear from this side of the House that under this Premier, Ontario businesses, not-for-profits and the broader public sector have saved nearly \$700 million each year in compliance costs due to our government's aggressive red tape reduction efforts since 2018.

The Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act is our government's plan to continue increasing the competitiveness, access to services and access across the province to simultaneously save time and money for the people of Ontario.

This piece of legislation focuses on three key themes: paving the way for better services, helping Ontario businesses grow, and saving Ontarians time. As I indicated, there are 42 new initiatives that will boost the efficiency across various areas of government and multiple sectors in our economy, and seven of those apply to the Ministry of the Attorney General, to which the Attorney General has spoken.

I would like to focus my comments in the remaining time on some of the changes that will positively affect the constituents in my riding of Simcoe–Grey. First and foremost among them, we know that connectivity and access to high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury but a necessary access for all Ontarians, no matter where they live. This government has committed to making sure that all Ontarians have access to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. This bill is proposing to help thousands of constituents living in my riding to have access to high-speed Internet by the end of 2025. We're doing this by speeding up the process to collect utility infrastructure data, to improve routing for projects, to plan networks and prevent delays in the permitting process between municipalities and the Internet service provider.

Recently, I had the great pleasure of attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony in New Lowell to announce the access-to-broadband infrastructure for 430 families, farms and businesses in the New Lowell area, with reliable, high-speed Internet. As we've heard during the debates, and as I can say from my interaction with the farming community as a lawyer, access to effective Internet is extremely important for our original entrepreneurs in our province, the farmers, as well as local businesses so that they can ensure—and we saw, during the pandemic, the necessity of broadening markets for our retail sector to have access to customers online and not just in person.

I recognize there is still more work to do, but I am proud of the work that this government has done and continues to do to ensure that underserved and unserved communities across the province have access to reliable, high-speed Internet.

Madam Speaker, this bill will also help to reduce the frustrations for over 8,500 families in Ontario's support order system by implementing the Hague Convention of 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance. Having practised family law for many years, I can tell you of the intense frustrations of parties to a family law process who, at the end of the day, cannot collect on their support orders, whether it be for child or spousal support.

We've heard from speakers previously who have spoken about the mechanics of the convention, which was

adopted at the federal level in 2018 but requires each of the provinces to opt in to that. Through this legislation we will be doing exactly that. Then we will be notifying the federal government so that we can make sure that those enforcement avenues are opened up so that we can enforce spousal support and child support orders of family law courts in Ontario and internationally to those that have signed on with the Hague Convention.

Simcoe–Grey is home to some of the best dairy farmers in Ontario: farmers like the Sheldon Creek Dairy in Loretto or Miller's Dairy in Creemore, who, like many others, play a key role in our communities. That is why this bill is important, because it will modernize the regulations under the Milk Act to reduce the costs and burdens for dairy processors.

Over decades, many of the practices, technologies and products have not kept pace with the regulations as the Ontario milk industry changes with time. By amending the Milk Act we are modernizing specific regulatory requirements while at the same time continuing to preserve the highest food safety and quality requirements in three specific areas, namely:

- the frequency of cleaning and sanitation in a dairy plant;
- milk grader certification for on-farm processors; and
- the administrative burden related to expiration of milk grader certificates.

This is an area that I know the dairy farmers in my riding will be extremely pleased to see.

The next aspect of this bill I'd like to speak to is something I think that is very important to the residents of Simcoe–Grey, and that's the environment and securing good-paying green jobs locally. This bill will be proposing amendments to the Oil, Gas and Salt Resources Act to accommodate innovation and new technologies and to regulate carbon storage in Ontario.

Our government is working hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while evolving our energy system, creating good local jobs and attracting investments through Ontario's low-carbon hydrogen strategy. We heard earlier from our Minister of Energy about the great steps we are taking in the energy sector to make sure that our 90% emissions-free grid is enhanced to provide the energy we need as we continue to electrify and make Ontario one of the top producers of EVs and EV batteries in the world.

The proposed amendments would give our province the ability to create protective checks and balances for testing and demonstrating projects on private land, including carbon storage, which has the potential to store 30 years' worth of carbon emissions.

We've heard reference today to the importance of small businesses in our communities. My riding of Simcoe–Grey, in fact, has an incredible small business and entrepreneurial background. In fact, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has ranked Collingwood consistently over the last seven years as being one of the top five municipalities of any size across Canada for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial spirit. We have over 3,500 local businesses in Collingwood—which is just one-seventh of my riding—that are generated by entrepreneurs. They

generate the jobs for the majority of our residents and they are the backbone of our local economy.

To make sure that we support those businesses and those entrepreneurs as they make sure that they can continue their businesses and come out of the pandemic, we are working hard to do that. Just last year, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimated that red tape costs small businesses in Canada roughly \$11 billion each year—\$11 billion that can go into the economy, it can help to employ people, it can provide safe, stable, green jobs in our economy. That is too much. It's no surprise why our government continues to make this a priority to eliminate red tape across all sectors, including supporting our local small businesses.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of this piece of legislation, this 10th act of reducing red tape in Ontario. I know that it will stand our business, not-for-profit and other sectors of our economy in good stead as we move forward to continue to make Ontario a thriving, striving economy. Thank you.

1750

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Point of order: In my years here, it has been a convention that members refer to each other by their position or their riding name. It has occurred several times today that members on the government side have referred to each other by their given names, and I would request that you consider—perhaps another day—whether that convention is going to be upheld or not because, otherwise, everyone will start doing that, and I don't want to go there. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you for bringing that forward. I did address it with the House—a reminder for members to do that.

Further questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: In his opening comments, the Attorney General referenced one of the changes in Bill 91 where they're repealing the Courts of Justice Act, which requires the Auditor General to examine and report on the accounts and financial transactions of the Children's Lawyer.

My question to the Attorney General: Given that the auditor did a value-for-money audit of the Office of the Children's Lawyer, which uses panel agents, as the minister knows—this is a quote from the value-for-money audit: "The office had not adequately analyzed why ... payments to panel agents had increased by" almost "60%." Does the Attorney General have any concerns about removing this oversight, these checks and balances, and perhaps making the finances of the Office of the Children's Lawyer less transparent?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Response, the Attorney General.

Hon. Doug Downey: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I did hear your suggestion that we use members' ridings. So I did hear that, and I will abide by that, Madam Speaker.

I have no concerns at all about the fulsome review that happens within government. All of the Office of the Children's Lawyer's finances are held in the Consolidated Revenue Fund. They are reported through estimates which, as the member opposite will know, is something that is reviewed by all parties, by all members through a committee structure.

So I have no concern at all that the transparency will be significant and will continue. We're not taking anything away from that. We're simply getting rid of duplication. I look forward to the next question.

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

M^{me} Dawn Gallagher Murphy: My question is to the Attorney General. Thank you for your presentation. You made note of trust properties and ensuring we have modern ways of investing. So regarding the updating of the Trustee Act to facilitate investment of trust assets, could the Attorney General please tell us what the changes are that are being made and why?

Hon. Doug Downey: I thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for the question. The changes for the Trustee Act are for people who are acting as trustees. They, of course, are managing monies, managing funds for other individuals. It's not entirely clear—there's some discussion around what kinds of investment vehicles can be used. So we want to take away any ambiguity about that and make it clear that they can use modern investment tools, like mutual funds, like pooled funds, the kinds of things you would do in your own personal life. We don't think there should be a barrier for the trustee simply because they're acting as a trustee when those very common tools are available.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to say that I found the answer from the Attorney General to be insufficient and did not bring any sort of trust back to this place.

I will point out that the Office of the Children's Lawyer intervenes for children in the province of Ontario, sometimes with estate law, sometimes in issues of custody, sometimes in issues of abuse. When the Auditor General did her evaluation of the Children's Lawyer, she found that of the 450 private lawyers and of the 245 clinical investigators, there were great inconsistencies in those payments. At the end of the day, if you put the child at the centre of this conversation, what is best for that child is to have a level of assurance and oversight and accountability for the Office of the Children's Lawyer. And those value-for-money audits should inform best practices. We should course-correct when the Auditor General finds that there are insufficiencies.

Back to the Attorney General: You can't just say to the people of this province, "Just trust us," because very few people do.

Hon. Doug Downey: This really highlights the approach of our government versus what would be the NDP government, given the opportunity. When we're talking about the interests of the child and people who are in a

very vulnerable situation, the answer of the NDP is, “Let’s grow the bureaucracy and create duplication that somehow helps the end-user, because we feel good about that happening,” as opposed to making sure that the Office of the Children’s Lawyer maximizes its resources for the benefit of the children that are at stake.

So I make no apologies for making the system more efficient, for focusing on the children and making sure that they are getting served properly.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: My question is for the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of the Attorney General. In reviewing one of the schedules to Bill 91, it appears a specific proposed amendment is to repeal subsection 89(a) to the Courts of Justice Act. Can the parliamentary assistant advise in detail what changes are being made and why?

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you to the member for his question.

If approved, the changes would repeal subsection 89(a) of the Courts of Justice Act to remove the requirement that the Auditor General approve the accounts and financial statements of the Office of the Children’s Lawyer.

I think those questions have been addressed by the AG directly, about trying to remove the duplication. The Office of the Children’s Lawyer does not have any funds in the bank or trust accounts outside the Consolidated Revenue Fund and operates a program in an area of the Ministry of the Attorney General that means that its financial position is reported in public accounts, and there’s no other set of books to be maintained. So by doing this, it makes a direct link to the public accounts and removes the duplication for, in fact, accounts that don’t exist.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Again, this is what the Attorney General doesn’t seem to understand, that it is people in the office who are doing the work to protect children. Those people depend on being hired. There have to be rules and regulations in what the turnover is in these cases. In effect, this is the office that ensures that children are protected throughout that legal process. We all know that this is very challenging for children and for their families during this process.

When the Auditor General found out that this office was not meeting its targets, was not hiring people and that prices of the panel agents, the lawyers, were increasing for no good reason, that’s called poor value for money. The reason that the Auditor General called into question some of these practices is that they weren’t serving the people of this province. So for the Attorney General to say, “No, don’t worry about it; it’s going to be fine,” is not sufficient.

Hon. Doug Downey: People being hired is the focus, apparently, for the NDP. The people are depending on being hired. Well, we could bloat the bureaucracy and feel good about ourselves for hiring a lot of people, but government doesn’t always create wealth, and government doesn’t always do front-line services. So more people in offices taking away from people in front-line services makes absolutely no sense to me, Madam Speaker. Why

would you have two separate oversight functions when you don’t even have separate bank accounts? So I don’t think we’re going to agree on this, because I don’t think hiring more people to do two things—it doesn’t make any sense. Madam Speaker, I don’t know; we just have a different opinion.

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

Mr. Amarjot Sandhu: My question is to my seatmate, the wonderful member from Simcoe–Grey. Through this important bill, we are eliminating red tape that will pave the way for faster access to high-speed Internet. I know the members opposite were heckling before. We’re making one of the largest investments in broadband by any province in the history of Canada. As a matter of fact, last month in Thunder Bay we announced \$59 million that will bring access to 16,000 homes and businesses in northern Ontario.

1800

Before that, Madam Speaker, I was in Newmarket–Aurora with my friend the Newmarket–Aurora MPP. We made an investment of \$45 million that will bring access to thousands of homes and businesses in that region. So my question to the member is, how will these changes help speed up the delivery of Internet infrastructure projects?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Member from Simcoe–Grey, quick response.

Mr. Brian Saunderson: Thank you very much to my seatmate for his question. I can tell this House, Madam Speaker, that serving on the Simcoe county council for eight years, we were working with Swift. We had made an investment of approximately \$5 million over that eight years to get broadband in place, and it was moving at a glacial pace.

What we’re seeing with this government is we’re actually getting connections and fibre optics in the ground. The intent of the revisions under Bill 91 is to ensure that any Internet service providers that are having challenges effectively leveraging—the requirements in the area are aimed at making broadband deployment faster, because there is inconsistency—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Thank you to the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): It is now time for private member’s public business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

GROUP OF SEVEN DAY ACT, 2023 LOI DE 2023 SUR LE JOUR DU GROUPE DES SEPT

Mr. McCarthy moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day /
Projet de loi 78, Loi proclamant le Jour du Groupe des
Sept.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: It is with tremendous pride that I speak this evening on Bill 78, Group of Seven Day Act, 2023. The members of the Group of Seven, originally the Algonquin School, are internationally recognized artists from the early part of the 20th century. Their works have captured the magnificent landscapes of Ontario. Originally consisting of Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Frank Johnston, Arthur Lismer, Frederick Varley and J.E.H. MacDonald, this group of seven distinguished Canadians initiated the first major Canadian national art movement through their inspired paintings capturing our beautiful and unique landscapes. I might add that my colleague the Attorney General has named one of his children Lawren after Lawren Harris, one of the members of the original Group of Seven.

Two artists commonly associated with the group are Tom Thomson and Emily Carr. Although Thomson died before the group's official formation, Thomson had a significant influence on the group. In an essay entitled *The Story of the Group of Seven*, written by fellow artist Lawren Harris, Thomson was described as "a part of the movement before we pinned a label on it." Indeed, two of Thomson's paintings, *The West Wind* and *The Jack Pine*, are two of the group's most iconic pieces.

The works of the Group of Seven now proudly inspire a new generation of Ontario and Canadian artists, as many galleries and schools prominently feature and study the works of these artists and the impacts that they have had on the Ontario and Canadian art community, also while inspiring other young artists internationally.

Speaker, Bill 78 proposes to proclaim that a Group of Seven Day be declared on the seventh day of July in each year, commencing in 2023. It logically would follow that Group of Seven week would be the calendar week within which July 7 falls.

Now, a day to recognize and commemorate the works of these Canadian icons is long overdue, and so I wish to speak about the main considerations that should, and hopefully will, motivate all members of this House to support this bill. The first consideration is simply to celebrate. This bill welcomes a celebration of Ontario's unique landscapes and, indeed, Canada's unique landscapes.

The next consideration is tourism. Ontario is home to many galleries that feature the works of the Group of Seven. Predominant among them is the McMichael gallery in Kleinburg, where many of the Group of Seven artists are buried and remembered. Other venues featuring the works of the Group of Seven include the National Gallery in Ottawa; the Art Gallery of Algoma; the Art Gallery of Sudbury; the Varley Gallery of Markham; the Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brantford-Brant; and the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery in Huntsville. In addition, there is the Tom Thomson gallery in Owen Sound.

Proclaiming July 7 as Group of Seven Day will allow these galleries and the municipalities in which they are located to have greater opportunity to grow and foster

increased tourism through marketing, advertising and the organization of festivals and events celebrating these artists on July 7 and the week surrounding it.

This annual occasion could be promoted provincially by the McMichael gallery and Destination Ontario, both being agencies of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Municipalities with art galleries or that are otherwise depicted in Group of Seven paintings would also benefit from support with respect to this initiative.

The third consideration is arts and culture in Ontario. It is noteworthy, Speaker, that the National Gallery, under the directorship of Eric Brown, was an early institutional supporter of artists associated with the Group of Seven, purchasing art from some of their early exhibitions before the artists identified themselves officially as the Group of Seven.

The Art Gallery of Ontario, in its early incarnation as the Art Gallery of Toronto, was the site of the first exhibition of the Group of Seven over 100 years ago, in 1920.

The McMichael Canadian Art Collection was founded by Mr. and Mrs. Robert McMichael, who began collecting paintings by the Group of Seven and their contemporaries in 1955.

The Group of Seven included pioneers of the arts in Canada, who first gathered together in 1913 when they were employees of the design firm Grip Ltd. here in Toronto. The group would often meet at the Arts and Letters Club here in Toronto to share opinions about art. The members were temporarily separated from each other during the First World War. At that time, Jackson and Varley became official war artists. Jackson enlisted in June 1915, well over 100 years ago, and Jackson in his service served the Canadian Forces in France.

The group's champions during the early years included Barker Fairley, who, although not technically a member of the Group of Seven, did associate with them. He was a co-founder of *Canadian Forum* magazine and he was a warden of Hart House at the University of Toronto.

In 1966, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario incorporated the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. The Honourable John Robarts was then the Premier of Ontario. The McMichael Canadian Art Collection is an art gallery with an institutional focus on the Group of Seven and on the First Nations of Canada. In addition to housing the collection of works by the Group of Seven, the museum property also contains the burial sites of six members of the group and four of the artists' spouses. The idea to utilize a small segment of the property as a burial ground was first proposed by Jackson in 1968.

From the historical background that I've provided, I submit that one can see the impact that the members of the Group of Seven have had in shaping the history of art and culture in Ontario and across Canada.

The fourth consideration that I'd like members of this House to consider, in terms of what should drive support for this bill, is the very important focus on education and engagement. Galleries and schools have always been places where people can learn more about the Group of Seven and consider pursuing a vocation in the arts.

Proclaiming July 7 as Group of Seven Day would allow schools and museums the opportunity to utilize the entire month of June as a time period to better educate our young people—our students—about the arts and the works of the Group of Seven.

1810

Facilitating school tours to galleries and museums in anticipation of Group of Seven Day to follow on July 7 would allow students the opportunity to see the works first-hand, learn the history directly from curators and take the knowledge they learned in the classroom into the experience they will have in the galleries. Group of Seven Day would provide municipalities the opportunity to partner with their galleries and museums, and contemporary groups from the arts world could showcase the works of aspiring artists and allow the public more opportunity to view the works of these artists.

An example of an artist influenced by the group was the contemporary painter the late Rae Johnson, who just passed away three years ago in 2020. Her contemporary art was in part inspired by the Group of Seven in terms of the themes of her work and her choice of painting scenes among her other works.

Displays of Group of Seven members' paintings in combination with others are a perennial favourite of the Canadian exhibitions, particularly the National Gallery of Canada in our nation's capital, Ottawa.

It is noteworthy that on June 29, 1995, Canada Post issued 10 stamps, each based on a painting of a member of the group. And 25 years later on May 7, 2020, Canada Post honoured the centennial of the group's first exhibition at the Art Gallery of Ontario here in Toronto by issuing seven stamps featuring paintings by each of the original members.

Galleries, artists, stakeholder groups, Canada Post and many other Canadian institutions have paid tribute to the members of the Group of Seven for their contributions to the fabric of Canadian society over 100 years.

With this in mind, I respectfully ask all members of this House to support Bill 78 to officially proclaim July 7 as Group of Seven Day, to officially recognize these great Canadians for the lasting impact they have had, and continue to have, on arts and culture in Ontario, throughout Canada and indeed around the world.

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

MPP Jill Andrew: Today, I'm standing in support of Bill 78, the Group of Seven Day Act that would declare July 7 of each year as Group of Seven Day.

The Group of Seven refers to seven artists: Franklin Carmichael, Lawren Harris, A.Y. Jackson, Franz Johnston, Arthur Lismer, J.E.H. MacDonald and F.H. Varley.

As we heard, these seven men were of the Algonquin School of artists and have come to be internationally recognized for their work. It was a near-century ago, between 1920 and 1933, that this group were active in their work. To this day, they are viewed as masters of their craft—that I would agree with. For this reason, as I said, I can support the act as a celebration of art and visual storytelling.

To expand, though, I do believe the best way to honour these artists and their legacy is not only through a day of significance. I believe it is by creating the social and economic conditions necessary to support the next “group of seven,” so to speak.

Ontario, as it stands right now, is losing artists because they aren't able to afford to stay in the arts. They're having to leave the province because they aren't getting enough provincial support from this government.

As critic of culture and heritage, I hear from struggling artists and cultural workers who are stuck in precarious situations, jobs moving contract to contract, and often carrying more than one job at a time just to scrape by. In no other industry is this seen as normal, but it's brushed off—no pun intended—as the “life of a struggling artist.”

Making art a career, becoming a master at it through lifelong practice, is becoming a pipe dream here in Ontario. Too many are changing careers and we shouldn't be standing for that.

To really honour the Group of Seven, we need to invest in arts so that, as I said, there can be more groups of seven, and that starts with properly funding the Ontario Arts Council and not cutting the \$5 million that has already been cut from it by this government.

To honour the contributions of the Group of Seven would be to invest in BIPOC artists, in artists with disabilities, in francophone artists, in women, in 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and especially Indigenous artists who have made significant contributions to Ontario art and culture, but, frankly, haven't been given the same platform as their white, male counterparts.

Before COVID, the median income of Ontario artists in Canada was \$23,500—far below the median average of Ontario workers of \$43,600. Indigenous, racialized and women artists have lower median incomes than, of course, their non-racialized, non-Indigenous male artist counterparts. The median income of Indigenous artists in Canada is \$16,000, while the median income of non-Indigenous, non-racialized white male artists is \$27,100. Either way, it's not great, and it's a fraction of what we make here in this House.

We've got to ask ourselves: How important is art to Ontario if our artists are struggling, many living below the poverty line?

It is vital to know that Indigenous people and artists were the keepers of the land and the very landscape of which the Group of Seven built their name off of and became famous for. Indigenous artists were landscape artists long before the Group of Seven were coined masters of it, through the 1920s and through their century-long legacy.

There is also an Indigenous Group of Seven, which I only recently learned: Jackson Beardy, Eddy Cobiness, Alex Janvier, Norval Morrisseau, Daphne Odjig, Carl Ray and Joseph Sanchez. These seven artists came together in the 1970s, sharing a love of art and exceptional talent, as well as frustration towards the prejudicial nature of Canada's art establishment which, to this day, remains underpinned by colonial hegemony. It was through the fight and

resistance of these seven against this seemingly unbreakable establishment that Indigenous art is showcased more and more throughout Ontario and Canadian galleries, including the Royal Ontario Museum. I think the Indigenous Group of Seven deserve their flowers, too.

The last century hasn't just ignored Indigenous contributions; it has purposely worked to erase them through a genocide that ripped children away from their families, their communities, their land, their language, their culture to teach them the "white man's way." The impact of these genocidal camps, which are called residential schools—inaccurately I might add—is seen today, continuing to harm Indigenous peoples, communities and children.

It should be mentioned that for one member of the Group of Seven, Lawren Harris, this erasure was actually part of some of his work. I wish to share how, citing the words of Dr. Vaugeois, who members in this House may know better as the member for Thunder Bay–Superior North. In her dissertation titled, "Colonization and the Institutionalization of Hierarchies of the Human through Music Education: Studies in the Education of Feeling," she writes:

"Following Confederation in 1867, there was great interest amongst members of English-speaking arts and letters groups to generate notions of identity that could be considered uniquely Canadian.... Group of Seven artist, Lawren Harris, amongst a number of artists, politicians and intellectuals, was a member of the Canada First movement—a movement, devoted to the 'consolidation of the British Empire as ... an instrument to protect and advance "superior" Anglo-Saxon values and institutions and a vehicle for the definition and assertion of Canadian nationhood.' Harris expresses his notion of a raced and gendered ideal Canadian national as he describes his hopes and ideals as a 'Canadian' artist:

"[I]t is only through the deep and vital experience of its total environment that a people identifies itself with its land and gradually a deep and satisfying awareness develops.

'We were aware that no virile people could remain subservient to, and dependent upon the creations in art of other peoples.... To us there was also the strange brooding sense of another nature fostering a new race and a new age.'

1820

"The defining idea adopted by the Canada First Movement, Group of Seven artists, members of the Arts and Letters Club and other like-minded artists, was the idea of the 'North,' 'as expression and mirror, essence and root of the Canadian character.'"

The dissertation continues by pointing out that through their landscape paintings the Group of Seven portrayed Canada and, namely, northern Ontario as serene, as beautiful, and a place of peace. The landscapes were void of the realities of colonization and its impact on Indigenous peoples. In doing so, the truth was effectively erased, because the truth was that nothing about their settlement was peaceful. The land was not empty but home to its keepers. Canada was and remains a colonial project,

rooted in systemic violence against Indigenous peoples that continues to this day, in unsafe drinking water, in over-policing, in the disregard for the thousand of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, many whose families are still waiting for them to get home safely.

Should art erase these truths in the unmarked graves of stolen children? Should art erase these truths in the graves we found as of recently of Indigenous children? Should art erase these truths in the graves we haven't yet found but we know exist? Art cannot erase these truths.

Speaker, I will support this private member's bill, for it is an important reminder of the power of visual art in history. But I tell you this: Whether it's the Group of Seven or whether it's Picasso, we must ask ourselves, whose history is it telling? Who is being left out? Who is being included? Who has the privilege, which—ironically, when I was in my twenties and a struggling journalist, I wrote for a magazine called *Privilege Magazine*. One of my first stories was on the Group of Seven. I was delighted, because they truly are master artists. I also wrote about a cat that owned a \$4-million necklace in the city of Toronto.

I will support this. I will support the bill because it's a step in the right direction. But as I said, we really should consider who is being supported in the arts and who is not.

I look forward to the day we celebrate art that tells the story behind the Group of Seven, stories we don't often hear, the ones we're afraid to tell or ashamed to tell, stories of truth, ones that allow us to imagine new structures and paradigms and norms, ones that tell an honest history and build ideas for the future.

I urge this government to take action to create the next Group of Seven and the next and the next, each with a new and important story to tell.

I urge the member to use his voice as a member to ask the Premier and his colleagues to not slash the Ontario Arts Council, to not take away those \$5 million of COVID recovery dollars while we're still in COVID and COVID recovery.

Among the many actions this member and the government can take towards truth and reconciliation would be to reinstate the Indigenous Culture Fund, a fund that was cut in 2018, which actually saw Indigenous women lose their job in the arts. That would uplift Indigenous artists and protect what culture is left after centuries of colonial erasure. As we stand here on their stolen land—and I repeat again: on their stolen land—this is the very least we can do.

There are countless groups of seven across Ontario, and I assure this government, if they go into Davenport and talk with the Inuit Art Foundation, they will find many groups of seven there. That organization has been really tightening their belt. But you know, it's hard to pull yourselves up by the bootstrap if you don't have boots, and a lot of artists don't have boots. They don't have the straps, they don't have the strings, the laces, nothing. They're just trying to do the best they can.

And the equity-seeking priority groups supported by the Ontario Arts Council need a leg up as well. Decision-

makers need to make the investments in artists and make it count. I think that would be an amazing way to support, to honour the legacy of art and the very complicated yet celebrated history, the real history, the capital-T truth of the Group of Seven.

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

Ms. Laura Smith: It gives me a great deal of joy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 78, the Group of Seven Day Act, and I thank the member for Durham for bringing it forward. I can think of no better tribute than marking the seventh day of the seventh month as a celebration of the seven trailblazing artists.

Ontario's arts and culture sector contributes to a strong, prosperous economy and creates vibrant communities. Our arts and culture sector pulls in about \$28.5 billion annually and supports as many as 290,000 jobs. Our government knows that a thriving arts sector enriches our lives, attracts investors, supports tourism and culture, and makes our communities attractive places to live, work and visit.

The Group of Seven's depictions of the uniquely beautiful Canadian landscape took the world by storm in the 1930s, and their works still draw great crowds to our museums today. Ontario's museums are key contributors to a strong cultural tourism sector and to the quality of life for all Ontarians. And museums play a crucial role in our communities—they help us grow our economy, preserve our culture and strengthen our pride and our place in Ontario. Ontario museums generate more than \$100 million in revenue and support almost 2,500 jobs.

Fifteen galleries across Ontario showcase the Group of Seven's paintings and keep the group's legacy alive. These include the Art Gallery of Ontario and the McMichael Canadian Art Collection, both of which are right here in the greater Toronto area. One of them is in York region, which isn't too far away from my backyard.

I'm proud to represent a riding that has deep historic connections with this group of brilliant Canadians. Thornhill's historic tourism sector has an entire section dedicated to the remembrance of the Group of Seven, who were also known as the Algonquin group.

James Edward Hervey MacDonald, Arthur Lismer, Frederick Varley, Frank Johnston, and Franklin Carmichael met as employees of a Toronto-based design firm named Grip Ltd. Quickly, they became more than co-workers and discovered their common artistic interests, eventually forming the Group of Seven.

Madam Speaker, I hope you brought your walking shoes, because I want to take you on a walk through the streets of my riding, which served as the home and inspiration for many of this group. Our tour begins on Centre Street, where we find the home of James Edward Hervey MacDonald. MacDonald was the founding member of the Group of Seven. He immigrated to Canada from England in 1887, and in 1913 he purchased his home in Thornhill, and it quickly became a hub for visiting artists as well as the birthplace of many iconic pieces of work.

It was in the backyard of this very house where he painted his most controversial painting, Tangled Garden—and I sat in that garden when my son was just a baby. It's amazing. First exhibited in 1916, the artist was criticized for using such a large canvas for a mundane subject. One critic even compared the painting to "a huge tomato salad." I believe, Madam Speaker, that there is so much beauty in being able to make something as mundane as flowers in his backyard into something breathtaking.

Moving on, we're still walking down the street, onto Yonge, until we hit John, where we arrive at house number 14, which was rented by Frank Johnston in 1920. Although his association with the group was brief, he was known for his strong decorative interpretation of landscapes and his ability to complete work very quickly. In fact, he contributed a staggering 60 works to the Algoma show in 1919 at the Art Gallery of Toronto, more than any other artist.

If we continue to walk along John Street, we arrive at the one-and-a-half-storey frame house where Arthur Lismer lived. Lismer met Johnston and MacDonald while working at a design and engraving firm and eventually moved to Thornhill himself. As we stand in front of 22 John Street, we are standing before the birthplace of Lismer's paintings, My Garden, Thornhill; Afternoon Sunlight, Thornhill Ontario; and John Street, Thornhill. It was this very spot that inspired the creation of these masterpieces. During his time here, Lismer was stirred by his surroundings and felt the urge to capture the beauty of this street, this garden and this town. While he may no longer be with us, his talent allows us to see where we are standing through his eyes. There is still so much to discover on John Street. It's incredible to know that these brilliant minds walked this very path and found so much inspiration here.

1830

Now we're going to stop at a small cottage on the east side of Thornhill Cemetery. In 1915, Franklin Carmichael and his childhood sweetheart, Ada Went, moved to Thornhill and made this cottage their home. Carmichael was the youngest original member of the Group of Seven. However, the art he produced was certainly on par with that of his older friends in terms of his style and approach. Among other members, Carmichael stood out for reviving the neglected art of watercolour paintings to capture Ontario landscapes.

And finally, let us stroll down to our last stop: the Pomona Mills house. Located right by Pomona Mills Park, it was home to Frederick Horsman Varley in 1912, for just a short time. A war artist, he painted scenes of battles and cemeteries that he witnessed in England and France, and he's best known for his illustrations of people.

This brings us to the end of our tour, Madam Speaker. I hope one day you'll have the opportunity to walk this tour in person, led annually by the Thornhill Historical Society.

There were two other members of the Group of Seven that unfortunately did not join their colleagues in Thornhill: Lawren Stewart Harris, who was born in

Brantford, Ontario, and was a key figure and the founding member of the Group of Seven. In 1911, he met MacDonald at the Arts and Letters Club of Toronto, and they became inseparable from that moment on. They went on sketching trips together and visited the exhibition of contemporary Scandinavian art in Buffalo. At this exhibition, they realized they too could create landscape art that was distinctly Canadian and modern. Harris was always exploring different artistic styles. Early on, his works were full of rich and bright colours. Once he discovered Lake Superior, he adopted a more simplified and sombre style.

The Group of Seven began to take shape in 1913, when MacDonald and Harris invited an artist by the name of Alexander Young Jackson to Toronto. Jackson was born in Montreal, Quebec, and, having studied in France, he brought with him a respected talent when he joined the rest of the group in Ontario. Similar to his colleague, Varley, Jackson was also a war artist during the First World War.

Every member of the Group of Seven played a critical role in ensuring the success and long-lasting impacts of the group's work. With the help of each member's distinct strengths, the Group of Seven became responsible for Canada's first internationally recognized art movement. Rather than following other movements, they broke away from European tradition and embarked on a journey to do what had not been done before. These artists saw something in our vast nation that others did not. When they looked upon our wilderness, they did not see only trees and lakes and mountains; they saw beyond the surface and were inspired by the soul of our landscape, which reflected a strength, depth and mysticism.

I am immensely proud that my riding of Thornhill provided both a home and inspiration to these important figures in Canadian history. I hope that the educators in my riding and in Ontario can use the legislation of this day as part of their historic curriculum, taking students down the same journey that we all took today, just before the end of the school year.

Madam Speaker, my father used to say that we cannot move forward without looking behind us. Through difficult times, arts and culture have sustained us, not just physically like food or water, but through the nourishment of our spirit and mind. While the art industry suffered many hardships throughout the last few years, I'm proud to see so many recovered and operating back in full swing in our province. Art challenges us in the way we see the world and, perhaps most importantly, it brings us together.

The Group of Seven's art revealed the beauty of Canada to people who would never step foot inside our country, showing the rest of the world what it means to be Canadian. Not only that, but they also brought Canadians together under a shared appreciation for the land we inhabit. Their works created a Canadian identity that united people across provinces and territories.

Establishing the seventh day of the seventh month of every year as the Group of Seven Day will ensure that their significance to our province is not lost, but rather continues to be remembered and celebrated, and they will uphold that remembrance.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this very important bill, and I look forward to celebrating July 7 as the Group of Seven Day with the rest of the province.

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

Two minutes to the member from Durham.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I thank the member for Toronto—St. Paul's and the member for Thornhill—both of them—for their thoughtful remarks. I look forward to joining the member for Thornhill with my team on that journey through her riding to celebrate, hopefully, the first Group of Seven Day. And I thank the member for Toronto—St. Paul's for her thoughtful support and her thoughtful criticism.

I will say this: When it comes to a democracy, debate, criticism and division are part of the lifeblood of democracy, as it is with art and history, and so this bill, I believe, will help spur on conversations that will move us forward, understanding the history, criticizing some aspects of our history, and moving us forward into the future together, united in support of art and recognizing our history, but attempting in every way to always do better.

And of course, to paraphrase a film made by Mel Brooks, when it comes to art, the inevitable afterbirth is the art critic, so let that live on and let democracy live on.

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

Mr. McCarthy has moved second reading of Bill 78, An Act to proclaim Group of Seven Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries? 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.

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: Speaker, if I may.

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

Mr. Todd J. McCarthy: I respectfully request that, in the alternative, the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Patrice Barnes): Is the majority in favour of this bill being referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy? Agreed. The bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, this House stands adjourned until Thursday, April 6, 2023, at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1838.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Ted Arnott

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffier: Trevor Day

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Valerie Quioc Lim, Wai Lam (William) Wong,

Meghan Stenson, Christopher Tyrell

Temporary Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes par intérim: Mike Civil

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

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

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)	Northumberland—Peterborough South / Northumberland—Peterborough-Sud	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)	Timmins	Minister of Mines / Ministre des Mines
Quinn, Nolan (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	
Rae, Matthew (PC)	Perth—Wellington	
Rakocevic, Tom (NDP)	Humber River—Black Creek	
Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)	Kenora—Rainy River	Minister of Indigenous Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Northern Development / Ministre du Développement du Nord
Riddell, Brian (PC)	Cambridge	
Romano, Ross (PC)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Sabawy, Sheref (PC)	Mississauga—Erin Mills	
Sandhu, Amarjot (PC)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)	Brampton South / Brampton-Sud	President of the Treasury Board / Président du Conseil du Trésor
Sarrazin, Stéphane (PC)	Glengarry—Prescott—Russell	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Saunderson, Brian (PC)	Simcoe—Grey	
Schreiner, Mike (GRN)	Guelph	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock	
Shamji, Adil (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Shaw, Sandy (NDP)	Hamilton West—Ancaster—Dundas / Hamilton-Ouest—Ancaster—Dundas	
Skelly, Donna (PC)	Flamborough—Glanbrook	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-présidente et présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Smith, Dave (PC)	Peterborough—Kawartha	
Smith, David (PC)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)	Bay of Quinte / Baie de Quinte	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Smith, Laura (PC)	Thornhill	
Stevens, Jennifer (Jennie) (NDP)	St. Catharines	
Stiles, Marit (NDP)	Davenport	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	
Tangri, Hon. / L'hon. Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associée du Logement
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)	Vaughan—Woodbridge	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions / Ministre associé délégué au dossier de la Santé mentale et de la Lutte contre les dépendances
Triantafilopoulos, Effie J. (PC)	Oakville North—Burlington / Oakville-Nord—Burlington	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming—Cochrane	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

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