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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 April 2023

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 avril 2023

Report continued from volume A.

1708

HELPING HOMEBUYERS,
PROTECTING TENANTS ACT, 2023
LOI DE 2023
VISANT À AIDER LES ACHETEURS
ET À PROTÉGER LES LOCATAIRES

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

Bill 97, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to housing and development/ Projet de loi 97, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to further debate. I recognize the member for Humber River–Black Creek.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I also want to thank the desk of my colleague from Toronto Centre and their chair as well, because I've got papers sprawled all over the place here.

It's always an honour to get up and rise and speak on behalf of the residents of Humber River–Black Creek. Before I get into a little bit about the bill, I'm going to give you a little bit of a table of contents of what I'm going to speak about, if I can reach it all in 20 minutes.

It will be a little bit about the bill. It will be a little bit about home protections that I still don't believe have happened under this government. It's a little bit about condo reform that I still think needs to happen, because again, this all has to do with housing.

Before I get into that, I do want to address something that I've been hearing. I think politically, there are strategies and there's rhetoric. This is something I want to say, and I'm—this is not about scolding, because there's a point to where I'm going with this. But I've been hearing this morning and the last two question periods, there's a statement that gets made. It's about how many votes the official opposition lost in the last election. That was something that I've heard in the last two question periods. Maybe we'll hear it tomorrow and maybe Thursday. Maybe it's a strategy they'll keep repeating.

But I want to say something about that. I want to remind the government of a simple fact: We just came through an unprecedented crisis that affected all of Ontario. There were four years of the government's reign. Every single one of us lost votes. All parties lost votes. After four years of Conservative government, almost 415,000 votes—

Ms. Donna Skelly: We gained seats.

1710

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Again, this is not about scolding or shaming you. I'm just saying, keep this in mind: 415,000 people fewer people voted Conservative in this election than the last, and, in fact, this government won. They won a majority, because we have a first-past-the-post system. We had 18% of all people who had the ability to cast a ballot who voted for this government.

I'm not saying this to shame you. What I'm saying is simply this: When majority governments get up in this electoral system to claim that they have a mandate, that "we gained seats"—

Interjection.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I'm hearing my friend across remind me of this, as if I haven't noticed that they've gained seats. They gained seats, but every single person—all of us—lost votes. After four years of the Conservative government, this government presided over the lowest per capita turnout in the history of this province.

I say this simply for this purpose: When any of us, regardless of who's in government, speaks about a mandate, to me, a true mandate, a mandate that allows us to puff our chest out like that, would be over 50% of every voter casting a vote. That would mean that the majority of people said, "We want this." That simply says to me that there have got to be strings on that. There has got to be a parachute to some of this.

Why do I mention this? I am concerned, regardless of who it is, about the power of special interests in influencing government. I look at a lot of the policies that are coming around housing, that are happening under this government, and I ask myself when I review it how much of the influence—because there are many people who weigh in when it comes to policy, especially around development. But I think that developers play a large role in terms of how this goes out. If I had to hazard a guess, let's just say that—

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): I apologize to the member. I have to interrupt. It's not about what you're saying.

Pursuant to standing order 50(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. The debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader directs the debate to continue.

I'll recognize the Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: Please continue.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Thank you very much.

We'll now continue the debate, and I'll go back to the member for Humber River–Black Creek to continue the debate.

Mr. Tom Rakocvic: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the government for allowing me to continue.

This is not about scolding. This is not about an insult, okay? What I'm saying is simply this: When we meet with stakeholders, when we get advice from stakeholders, they are going to generally argue what benefits them most, right? That's just how it works. So if you bring in a new housing strategy and you talk to city planners who are experts in the field, versus the development side of it, you'll probably get a little bit of a different concept.

In my community alone, there's a development where the city of Toronto says what makes sense is under a thousand units, and that does represent a high level of intensification at that particular site, but the developer comes in with over 3,000 units that they're asking for, and the response of this minister—and we hear it every morning when we talk about it—is to basically claim that anyone who disagrees with this housing policy are simply NIMBYs, as if community members who have a position on something, whether we may agree with them or not, are basically to be insulted or derided and simply be ignored.

I think we can all agree that when it comes to development, it's important but it has to be responsible. There are limits in some cases—actually, in most cases; there always have to be limits. I say it simply for this purpose: If the government believes they have a mandate, believe me that some of the things that they're getting advice on may not go too well in three years. I can say that with regard to housing, they're not meeting their own targets.

With regard to this legislation that's before us, I have come from a tenant background. I lived the first 30-odd years of my life as a rental tenant in Toronto, and was lucky and privileged to be able to buy a home, when I couldn't buy a home right now in Toronto based on the way prices are going. But I'm privileged to be able to have a home and to be raising my family there.

There are provisions in this bill that I believe would be helpful to tenants. Do they go far enough? Maybe not, but I have heard about the requests of tenants wanting to be able to install air conditioning units in their homes. I know that this addresses that. I think that's positive.

Renovictions: Within my community—and I represent a community that has many, many rental tenants who live in there—we are seeing renovictions. The landlord comes in and they basically say, "I'm going to come in and I'm going to make some repairs to the unit." In some cases, there are buildings in my community where the units are perfectly livable, but they're coming in and they're modernizing it, making it more open concept, all of that stuff, moving tenants out on this basis and then turning around and doubling the rents.

So what's happening is already in Toronto the average cost of rent is over \$2,000. This government wants to take credit for the fact that there are new rental housing starts, but it's a bit of a double-edged sword because these prospective landlords and these developers are basically

building units because they're able to charge an arm and a leg for them.

All of these issues that we're faced with are nuanced. There's a lot of complexity when it comes to it, and I don't think it's just easy for governments to simply say—and it's interesting, I guess all governments will do this: Anything positive that's happening while they happen to be in power, whether it's from them or not, is to take credit for it, but if it's something that they're not happy about, well, it's to blame someone else. I find it interesting that after five years of this government, they tend to continue to foot a lot of blame on the Liberals that were before them when they've been here for five years.

Other tenant protections: I know that there were questions being asked of the government side—"Well, we're doubling fines." It says it right here: Offences for an individual landlord is going from \$50,000 to \$100,000, but in the case of corporations, it's \$250,000 to \$500,000. You can double the fines. You could make the fines \$10 million if you wanted—\$100 million, \$1 billion even—but at the end of the day, if there's no enforcement, is it truly a disincentive for bad behaviour? If a landlord, or if anyone for any matter, is doing something that's untoward, you can make the punishment as prohibitive as possible, but if there's no fear that the punishment is actually going to come, how much of a deterrent is it?

Now, there are other elements of the bill with regard to development policy changes. I know that when I used to work in the city of Toronto for a councillor, there's always the incentive—and this has been happening for the longest of time—for developers to come in and to want to buy up employment lands and then intensify and put residential housing on it. That can always be a very complicated one here, because at the end of the day, people need to live somewhere, but they also need to work somewhere. I think the easiest return for a developer is to come in, intensify, put in units and then walk away, regardless of what the property was that they built up. So I see that there are some provisions to protect, as it says, manufacturing, warehousing, but there are exclusions in other cases, and that's concerning.

I know that there is some concurrent legislation that's happening, and I do want to mention it here because I may or may not have a chance to speak to it. But I know that there is a provision in another piece of legislation that's happening right now which has to do with the sale of school properties. If this government knows that they are planning—that Toronto and the GTA is planning to intensify and intensify and intensify, and we hear more people are coming and they've got to live somewhere, if we take school properties and convert those properties to high-intensity rental, you're bringing more families and children in but you're taking away schools. So at some point, what are you going to do, expropriate land from others and turn it into a school? I mean, there has to be some foresight around some of the decisions that are being made, and I hope that that's going to happen.

I have a couple of articles that if I have time—I'll get to them last. I'll talk about them when I get to them.

There are two other things that I want to talk to about housing. One of the points is about home warranty reform. I was very privileged and honoured to be a part of—there was an undertaking by this government in the last session of Parliament to revisit and to modify the system of home warranty in Ontario. We had heard from Justice Cunningham in the past; the Auditor General levelled a very scathing report. And I can say one thing: I'd say probably the best thing about being a legislator is committee, because I know that when we sit here in Legislature, especially during question period, it can get really heated, things go back and forth. But you would hope for the most part in committee that you begin to see a bit of a different side.

I have to say that during the discussions on home warranty reform—I mention this because this is very important, because if this government wants to deliver on the millions of homes that they promised to build, if these homes are not in good shape and if they are not properly warranted and these homeowners are not protected, then you're going to be dealing with a problem with a lot of people, and they're going to be very furious. We heard that as we travelled the bill.

Some of the hardest questions—when the brass from Tarion, the home warranty provider, came here before committee—came from the government side; they did. Some of the hardest questions to one of this government's own delegated authorities came from the government side. They were hard questions.

1720

I remember the way in which we received the report of the Auditor General around how hard it was in some cases to actually level a complaint against a developer, how Tarion would appear to be fighting people who were trying to get, basically, their warranty respected and then, in the end, when Tarion is paying out, something like 75%—and I'm just going off the top of my head—of fines, of the money that Tarion was paying out because of issues with a developer, were still uncollected. The list went on and on and on.

So it was interesting because—and again, I want to commend the government because, at the time, the minister did provide access when I wanted briefings, etc. and other things. But I saw—it seemed, from the beginning of the process to the end of the process, the vision of this government and where they wanted to go change, and I have to say that when this bill went finally—when we heard it in its final form and when we heard in committee, virtually everybody who had any issue with home warranties had something negative to say with the direction in which they were going.

The only group, the only individual who spoke on behalf of the changes to home warranties in Ontario—does anyone want to guess? Okay, let's make it fair—someone who wasn't in committee. Well, it was the Ontario Home Builders' Association. They were the only ones that actually said, "Yes, this is a step in the right direction," and virtually everybody that was wrestling with Tarion or having issues with home warranties said, "We don't believe this goes far enough in protecting us." They were

the only ones that actually said, "No, this is where I think you need to land."

I can tell you right now, in truth, they did; they separated the home warranty provider and the regulator. That was one of the requests of Justice Cunningham, but here's what's happening. And I encourage each and every one of you here to look into it. Does the home regulator that regulates these developers have all the information? It's interesting, because Tarion had all the information to make these judgments. They said, "Well, maybe you need to separate this." But now, the home regulator provider doesn't seem to have all of the information that's necessary.

Let's say that you buy a new home and you're having a problem with it, you end up going to Tarion and you're not getting your way with the developer, and they basically solve your problem as a consumer gesture. Does the regulator, the person who regulates these developers, these homebuilders, now have the full knowledge to be able to preside over whether licences need to be issued or re-issued? I would argue, at this present time, they don't, and we're still seeing problems.

While the government is not meeting its targets of building new homes in the way they had hoped—well, I can tell you this: As you still build them out, we are going to continue to see problems, and that's of concern. It is something that I think each and every member should really be concerned about.

They talk about the family living in the basement, wanting to get that new home, but if that home turns out not to be a dream but a nightmare—and that's something that anyone who was on the committee saw—that is something we really need to address, that as these homes get built, they're built properly and the protections are there that are deserved.

Condominium oversight: The last time there were changes to the Condominium Act in 2015, there were a number of recommendations that were meant to be made. The Auditor General reported on it and basically said the following, that though this was enacted there are still elements of this that are still not enacted, and I have a list of them:

- giving condo corporations 90 days, as opposed to 30 days, to make a claim against the developer;

- making the developer responsible for the amount of first-year contributions to the reserve fund, to be determined according to regulations, if the developer's budget statement does not include an amount for the reserve fund that met the requirements of the regulation;

- regulations to require standardized condo declarations to make them easier for purchasers to understand;

- the developer to disclose whether expenses will increase in the first year after registration of the condo, by how much and why, as well as any expenses that the developer knows about, or should know about, that will arise after the first year—anyway, the list goes on and on.

I know that the members of this government, if they look into it—and I know the ministry knows that this has yet to be enacted. But these are protections. So, literally, as we're speaking, and if you walk out of this majestic

building, you look and you see cranes, and Toronto, for years even before this government, has been leading North America in cranes. New condos are being built, and these prospective families that the government wants to tout as who they're protecting are getting the keys, and they're being undersold. They're being told this is what it's going to cost, this is what your maintenance fees, all of these things are going to cost, and they're getting those keys and the prices are coming up.

Many of them were having to count pennies—we don't have pennies anymore, but if they could, they would be counting them—and making complex calculations based on their income, in and out, on whether they could purchase this new home. I can tell you that in the cases where there are problems with these homes, it is absolutely devastating. Again, there are members right now here that presided over the changes that were suggested, and we're still facing those problems.

In the last few minutes I have, I want to mention two things that are of major concern, I think. This one is from CBC. It says in this headline, "Investors Now Make Up More Than 25% of Ontario Homebuyers, Pushing Prices Higher, Experts Warn." This government believes that the high cost is simply a supply issue. The developers, even if they're meeting their targets, are going to continue to pressure—and I don't think it's the individual members, because I get it: In the government, there are very few decision-makers, and most of the government members have to pull rank and then be responsible for those decisions. They're going to continue to tell you, "Do more, do more, do more. It's not enough." It's just like what the auto insurers told the Liberal government: "We'll bring the rates down if you cut accident benefits, if you do this, if you do that," and they still continued to climb. They are going to tell the decision-makers within this government what needs to be done, and it may or may not be the reality. But what it will do is make their business far more profitable.

Will it help people? Well, as we see the financialization of the home market happen—and it's happening in the States. I won't have time to read these, but I recommend to all of you to start looking up what happens in other places, in other jurisdictions. Sometimes they become a warning for us. As billionaire corporations, multi-billion-dollar corporations consolidate and begin to buy up single-family homes, that family that lives in a basement right now—could be your kids or grandkids or not; could be anybody—are having to compete with multi-billion-dollar investors. That represents a portion of the supply.

If you're not aware of that and you're not looking at this—and I ask this government to look deeply into this, because I know that to some degree, the soul of the Progressive Conservatives is part of that dream, and part of that dream is financial wealth. We don't want to make any restrictions that could allow someone to become fabulously rich, but once someone gets to a point, once these corporations get to a point where they have billions of dollars—there's an article I have here that there's a company that's looking to purchase 4,000 single-family homes

for that purpose in three provinces, including ours. This is coming, and they will be competing.

As you continue to add more and more supply, as you say you will—and you're still not meeting your targets—those same investors, whether they are Canadian companies, American companies or anywhere else, are eyeing single-family homes and condominium units. If you think it's a supply issue, believe me, that family that you tout and that you say you will stop at nothing to protect so that they can realize their dream of home ownership, well, they are going to have to compete. They're already competing with those big businesses and companies, and they're going to continue to have to do that.

If you're going to build a home for them, do it right. Make sure it's protected. You have a majority government, as I said from the top. You have the power to make things happen, so really protect these new home purchasers and protect tenants.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We'll now move to question and answers.

Mr. Billy Pang: Thank you to the member opposite for his remarks. Once upon a time, years ago, I was a tenant. I can still remember the first night I arrived in Canada. I rented a room in a basement. I was from a city with serious light pollution; therefore I'd never heard of a thing called a night light. So at night, I turned off my light: "Oh, I cannot see my fingers." I felt like I was being buried alive. Now, years after, I'm here with the government.

This government has brought in measures to strengthen protections for tenants.

1730

So my question to the member is, will you join us in supporting these enhanced protections for tenants?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Thank you for sharing your experience as a tenant. Actually, you kind of reminded me of that time where there was that major power outage that happened in the GTA. I've never seen so many stars in Toronto.

And I know what you're talking about, because I have one of those lights through the window of my home right now. It's pedestrian lighting. I save on energy bills, because I'm getting my home lit from that light.

I know you're sitting on the edge of your seats whether or not we're going to pass this bill, right? It's going to pass anyways, I would presume, if I was a betting person. But I'm simply going to say this: There are improvements for tenants, but the question that I ask you—and if you do talk to tenant groups and if you listen to them, there is a lot more that needs to be done to truly protect tenants and to allow for affordable rents in this city and across this entire province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the member for his debate on this bill. He talked about protections with respect to Tarion that don't go far enough. You also talked about condo protections as well. And then you also talked about corporations coming in and buying up homes—speculation.

Can you talk a little bit about some of the ways we can prevent that speculation, if the government is willing to pass legislation, again, to protect the stock that they are claiming they're going to build so that life is more affordable for people in the province of Ontario?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: There are a lot of different ways in which I think the financialization could be addressed. I won't get into all of them. I know that they exist because it's about—for instance, the federal government has been introducing some restrictions around who can buy homes, you know, from other places.

I'm not going to tell you it's easy, and some of the solutions are very complicated. But I raise this simply because I think the government, if they want to fully understand supply, they need to understand that it's not just about buying homes, even the homes that already exist. It is whom these young families—you know, working families who are trying to buy, maybe, their first home or whatnot—are having to compete against. There's a lot that needs to be done in this area, and I hope that they really, really consider this, because I think this is absolutely huge. It's going to be an increasing issue when it comes to the future of homes in this province.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Laura Smith: I'm listening to all these wonderful stories about coming to Canada, and I'm reminded of my dad, who in the mid-1950s actually arrived at Union Station, got out and saw a man smoking a cigar on the sidewalk. This was in the mid-1950s, and he thought, "If a street cleaner who's working on the streets can hold a cigar, then Ontario is the place for me. I'm going to live here." So an immigrant came here and decided to set up shop. He rented a place. My mother and my grandmother were the landlords, so he was able to get a place to live.

Ontario has an obligation to newcomers, because this is just continuing on a consistent basis. We've seen things grow steadily from 39% to 49% in 2021, so we have a responsibility. Does the opposition not agree that we have an obligation, and an imperative moral obligation, to act and ensure that we are properly planning for this growth?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Currently, as we see it in this government's own housing plan, they're not meeting the targets they want. And so, what I tried to do, at least in discussing the financialization—we don't really discuss that here.

And so, I get it. You want to add supply; you want to add supply. You want to basically tear up regulations that protect farmland and environmentally protected land, and basically saying it's all being done on behalf of giving that young family the chance at a home. But at the same time, you're not protecting new homebuyers when they're experiencing problems in those homes. You're not even enacting simple laws that have come out of legislation that's years-old to protect new and prospective condominium buyers. And you are not—or at least it appears, because we don't know what's happening behind the closed doors, sometimes, of the ministry—looking at what

is going on with the future of homes in this province when it comes to the financialization of those homes.

So if you have a moral imperative, I think you have a moral imperative as a government to look at every single one of these, and more.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Ms. Sarah Jama: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Humber River–Black Creek for his contribution to this debate. I hear him when he says that we need to bring back real rent control and protect tenants from rent gouging and displacement, instead of weakening rental replacement bylaws. We do need to strengthen them.

So my question is, what amendments do you think this government should make immediately to Bill 97?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I want to thank the member, and it's my first time in Hansard to be able to congratulate her. I'm so happy she's part of our team.

There has to be some level of rent control that we have to see here, because the way it has simply been is to allow and to incent developers—to allow them to charge rent in whatever amount they want. And considering that we're in the midst of an affordability crisis, to know that rents in the city of Toronto are at \$2,000—and they're extremely high absolutely everywhere. If you are just thinking that supply flooding the market of rental homes is going to bring those prices down in a quick way, in some way, shape or form—we are not seeing that happen right now. We just continue to see rents continue to go up and go up and go up, even with the new rental housing starts. There has to be some serious action around bringing down rents to an affordable level so that people can afford them.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Next question?

Mr. Will Bouma: I always love engaging with my friend from Humber River–Black Creek—and he is my friend. He's one of my best friends in this place. He can get a little preachy sometimes in his speeches, but he means well, but hey, so do I. I'm a very religious person, so I think there's a part of me that responds really well to that.

What I've heard from the opposition this afternoon is that they have no problems with this bill. They think everything that we're doing is a move in the right direction, but across the board, it isn't going far enough. Let's leave that aside.

This is a good bill. You're fully supportive of everything that we're doing in this bill. I would like to ask the member, will you be voting in favour?

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: Well, I appreciate the kind words, and I acknowledge and reciprocate the friendship that he feels towards me.

I'm going to do him a favour. I don't know if he's a subscriber to Netflix or any of these things, but they usually just dump all the episodes at once and you know what happens by the end; there are not a lot of cliffhangers left. I'm going to leave him with a cliffhanger, and I'm going

to have to make him wait to see what we're going to do. Okay?

So I'm giving you that excitement.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We have time for another quick question.

Ms. Natalie Pierre: We're all familiar with the term "renoviction"—and so, currently, the wording in the Residential Tenancies Act around what is considered to be a reasonable period of time for a landlord to move into a unit following a landlord's-own-use eviction is very vague. That's why in this bill we're looking to set specific deadlines in order to increase transparency and protections for tenants. So I'm just wondering if you can support that aspect of this bill.

Mr. Tom Rakocevic: I appreciate that the government is acknowledging renovictions. It is something that is affecting members of my own community. I'd use that as an example, where they're not even necessary improvements to a unit that are coming—just simply turning it into an open concept and using that as a pretense to throw a tenant out and then rent that unit for double the cost. So I do appreciate that the government is looking at the area of renovictions. Perhaps there might be more that we could do, and I will be very happy to discuss this further. But I do appreciate that the government is finally acknowledging and taking some steps towards this issue that's affecting tenants, not just in Toronto, but everywhere.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): We're going to move to further debate. Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm guessing that the government is done speaking to this bill, but I'm happy that that gives me the opportunity, because I would have run out of time and not had the ability to speak today. So I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 97, Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act. We've heard a lot of debate, particularly from this side of the House, of how this bill doesn't go far enough, and we've heard a lot of stories from people who are tenants and who have felt the wrath, may I say, of a system that is certainly not set up to be able to help the people of Ontario, and it's quite frankly gotten worse over the years.

1740

This is, I believe, the third housing bill that the government has brought forward in a very short time—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's number 4; the minister corrects me.

But that goes to my point that we are actually getting further and further behind when it comes to the protection of our constituents in the housing situation. We know that many young people will never have the opportunity to buy a home with the housing market the way it is, and there's nothing in this Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act to help young people start that life for themselves, to be able to get into the housing market.

Those are the kinds of measures I know my constituents would like to see. They would like to see that first-homebuyers or that pay-as-you-go type of program that I know Hamilton used to run to help homebuyers get into

the housing market when they weren't able to previously. Once again, we see the government leaving those same young homebuyers, those first-time opportunities out of another bill. I know the minister looks sad that that's happening, but he could have made a difference if he would have spoken up for his constituents, who I'm sure are looking for those same opportunities.

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: I did.

Miss Monique Taylor: He says he did, but it's not reflected here in this legislation today.

Other things that I know are in the bill and that I know many people will be happy to see with the change of climate change—there is a change to air conditioners being allowed in units. Hopefully, the tenant who will have that air conditioner will be able to afford the increase they will have to endure to be able to have that air conditioning in their home. The government has said that they can have air, but they have to be able to afford to have that cooling system within their unit, regardless of their income.

We know there are many people who are disabled in this province who need to have that cooling system to be able to stay healthy. We know the effects that heat can have on a healthy body, so add that to someone who is already not well. And if you are disabled in this province, we know that you are living far below the poverty line and you certainly don't have extra money to be able to afford a cooling system in your unit. Once again, the government has put the onus on our most vulnerable people to be able to afford the rent increase to cover the cost of electricity for a cooling unit to be added to their apartment.

We've also seen—I believe it happened in Hamilton; I believe it's here in one of my ACORN members from Hamilton's testimonials. They were able to have air conditioners, and then the landlord did some renovations and changed the windows so that they couldn't fit an air conditioning unit anymore, ensured that the windows were too small to be able to put in that air conditioning unit, and has left those folks without the ability to even add to their unit an air conditioning unit, an air cooling unit to their unit, because the landlord just didn't want them to.

When we see things like that happen, what is the recourse for these people? What are they supposed to do? How are they supposed to fight back? The only system is the landlord and tenant tribunal, which we know is wait-listed quite far behind and puts the onus back on the tenant to access that tribunal system to fight back against a landlord that, first of all, doesn't want to give them an air conditioning unit or does renovations and prohibits them from putting an air conditioning system in because the windows are too small, or just a landlord that has renovicted some of their tenants so that they have the ability to boost the rent.

We heard quite the story earlier today from the member from London–Fanshawe of her constituents, the couple living in a hotel room for a year when the landlord had told them four to five months for renovations and they would be able to move back in. I believe the renovations have not even started a year later, and those same tenants are paying the bills and the utilities in that house and trying to not

have to pay for reconnection fees. But that landlord has found a way through it and is just not going to do anything, by the looks of it, and so those poor tenants will be left to take to the landlord tribunal. If they are able to be successful in their fight after quite some time of waiting, it will then be upon them to have to be able to collect that money. So now what? They're into Small Claims Court to be able to recoup the money lost.

This is not helpful when we have a housing crisis and when we know that we have a homelessness crisis. The city of Hamilton has just recently called a crisis in Hamilton and asked the government to step in—I just want to see if I can find the actual wording. Here it is: Hamilton declares a state of emergency for homelessness, mental health and opioid addictions. This just happened in my community, and the article here says:

“On Wednesday, he spoke of overflowing shelters in the city that regularly turn individuals and families away, and of staff burnout at some of those facilities, where employees are leaving the work because they are unable to help everyone who needs it.

“They didn't fail, the province failed them,” said Clark”—Brad Clark is a former MPP for the Conservatives from Hamilton who is now part of city council and has very clearly said that it's the province who is failing the people—“who first proposed the motion and has emerged as a strong voice on council for people experiencing homelessness and drug users. ‘All of the agencies that are supposed to help [are saying], ‘We're sorry, there's no room.’””

That's because, in Hamilton, we have 500 shelter beds, but we have 1,500 on the wait-list for those beds. So we have an extreme crisis of folks who are not able to access beds.

This article further goes on to say:

“The motion states Hamilton has invested millions of ‘unsustainable’ local property tax dollars into programs and services, but the ‘exceptionally complex’ challenges continue to have ‘a significantly detrimental impact’ on communities.

“According to city data, as of February, there were nearly 1,500 people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton.

“To help address that, and other crises, the motion calls for the Ontario government to”—here's what this says to the Ontario government; hopefully they're listening:

“—Allow for more than 21 consumption and treatment service sites in the province (its current funding cap).

“—Expand access to medications that prevent opioid withdrawal and reduce use such as methadone and buprenorphine.

“—Provide long-term funding for affordable and supportive housing.

“Hamilton's emergency declaration is based on the one Niagara region council passed in March. Other Ontario cities have also declared similar emergencies. Ottawa was the first in Canada to declare a homelessness and housing emergency, in February 2020.”

This is from the CBC, on April 13. It's very clear that municipalities across our province are calling it a crisis,

asking the government to please step up and help. Yet we see the fourth housing bill in front of us that does nothing to address these serious issues. We have people who are dying on the streets on a regular basis.

1750

This article is March 17, 2023: “Toronto Saw More than Three Homeless Deaths per Week on Average in 2022”—three per week. That's a lot of deaths for people who are homeless and who are left struggling on the streets with no support. And with homelessness, a lot of times, comes drug addiction, because people are trying to numb out the issues that they're facing as they're on the streets. I've heard from people who say that people take fentanyl when they want to sleep and avoid having to deal with any of the circumstances of being homeless, like the fear that comes with that. And then other people take crystal meth so that they can stay awake and people don't have the opportunity to steal their stuff. This is what's happening on our streets to people who are left out by this government's proposals and homelessness initiatives.

This is a quote from the same article: “Toronto saw an average of more than three deaths per week among people experiencing homelessness last year, totalling 187 deaths in 2022 according to” Toronto “city data.”

In Hamilton, our total deaths for the year were quite high also. In Hamilton—it has it broken up in sections—22 people died between June and November 2022 of being on the streets unhoused. I know the numbers were quite high. I had it somewhere in my notes here. But anyways, there were over a hundred deaths in Hamilton in 2022 also. Regardless, one on the street, one person who is dying because they're homeless, is one too many, and that is absolutely not acceptable—and obviously not a concern of this government, which is the point of why I'm bringing this information up, because we have a major crisis happening in all of our communities.

Some members are shaking their heads, saying, “No, not in mine.” Well, I'm glad that they live in a fairy tale. They must live in the best community ever, because every community across this province has a housing issue where rent is too high.

In Hamilton, a simple, probably not so great, one-bedroom unit is over \$1,800; a two-bedroom unit is over \$2,200. And let's remind the members opposite that people on ODSP, so disabled people in our province who are not able to work, make \$1,237 a month—\$1,237 a month. And if they have to get into a unit, they're lucky if they can get it for \$1,800. Those numbers don't work. The numbers don't work for so many people in this province—and then to have to pay a utility bill.

Gas bills have gone through the roof. We've had seniors calling my office, telling me they're wearing coats and blankets to go to bed because they can't afford the gas bills any longer. To be able to drive your car—I mean, look at the price of gas; it's completely gone up. And I know the members want to say that it's the carbon tax, the carbon tax, but they seem to forget that there was a plan in place, which may not have been perfect, that the Liberals had in place—it was the cap-and-trade. It was far from perfect,

but at least that money came back into our communities and it wasn't as high as what this government has forced us to do.

They cancelled the cap-and-trade. They tried to strong-arm Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals, thinking that they were going to get a better deal, and we ended up with a worse deal, and now they want to blame everybody else when it's their fault.

There was an Ontario plan. The federal government said, "If you don't have a plan, you're going to have to take this one," and that plan was not good. We should have kept the not-so-good made-in-Ontario plan that the Liberals had put forward beforehand. At least that was not driving people out of this province the way they had—

Hon. Michael Parsa: There you go again, supporting the Liberals.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's not about me supporting the Liberals, because there are things that this—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: No. It's not about me supporting the Liberals. It's about saying that what the Conservatives have done has actually made it worse—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Order, please.

Miss Monique Taylor: I seem to be getting under their skin, Speaker, which I seem to have a tendency to do, and that's because I tell truth. I tell the truth. There's power in the truth in this House and in this province, and they don't like it. I get it. They have to do as they're told and they have to follow their messaging and do whatever their powers that be tell them to do, and they're probably not all comfortable with that. So they have to be able to find blame and lay it somewhere and so they choose to blame us. But we all know the truth: The cap-and-trade did not cost the people of Ontario the same amount that the carbon tax is costing the people of Ontario currently.

What that's doing to the cost of living—once again, we have people who cannot afford the rent, they can't afford to pay the bills, they probably can't afford to drive a car—they couldn't afford the insurance—and then everything else. The cost of food continues to rise, and that is strictly because of this government's forcefulness of taking on the federal carbon tax program here in the province of Ontario, which we shouldn't have had to do.

The minute that the Conservatives came into power, they cancelled a lot of things. They cancelled a lot of things just because the Liberals had done it. They cancelled the autism program that had just begun. They fired the child advocate—the child advocate, they fired. They didn't even tell him before they cancelled his office; he found out while he was on an airplane. They cancelled the environment commissioner. Who else did they cancel when they came into power? They slashed and burned their way right through to take out any accountability, any measures that could have the ability to stand up to them.

Today we heard several times, and we've been hearing, about the state of our children in this province. How many kids are in Hamilton in McMaster waiting for surgeries that are behind? Do they have a problem with children? Is

that why they cancelled the child advocate? The program of autism services: Over 60,000 kids on wait-lists who continue to wait and wait and wait in this province—nothing from this government. Kids in children's aid societies being left, not being able to get into proper homes. Again, it's a funding issue with this government. Any child-funded program in this province is going down the tubes and our poor kids are paying the price for this over and over and over again.

I don't know how many times I will have to stand here and tell them what they're doing and they refuse to listen. They should go home; they should listen to families in their communities, hear what struggles families are facing. They can't afford the rent. This bill is not going to help them. This bill is not going to help young homebuyers buy a home and it's certainly not going to do anything for the betterment of the people of this province. It's another bill wasted, another opportunity missed.

I'm sure they'll have lots of comments and questions for me, and I appreciate the opportunity to be able to talk today.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Unfortunately, we don't really have time to move to question and answers; it's really time to move to private members' public business.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

1800

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CROATIAN HERITAGE DAY ACT, 2023

LOI DE 2023 SUR LE JOUR DU PATRIMOINE CROATE

Ms. Skelly moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 81, An Act to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day /
Projet de loi 81, Loi proclamant le Jour du patrimoine croate.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Donna Skelly: I'm proud to rise this evening to present Bill 81, the Croatian Heritage Day Act, an act to proclaim May 30 Croatian Heritage Day here in Ontario.

For more than a century, Canadians of Croatian descent have made extraordinary contributions to Ontario in business, politics, medicine, science, education, culture and sport. Many Croatian immigrants escaping communist oppression in the 1920s arrived here in Ontario in their search for freedom and economic opportunity. According to the 2021 census, there are at least 80,000 Croatians living here in Ontario, although the actual number is estimated to be very much higher.

Ontario has the largest population of Croatians in Canada. There are vibrant Croatian communities throughout the province, in Toronto, Mississauga, Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor, northern Ontario and, of course, in my

hometown of Hamilton. Croatian immigrants worked in the steel mills in Hamilton and in Sault Ste. Marie, and the shipyards in Port Credit and underground in the nickel, copper and gold mines of northern Ontario. They toiled tirelessly to build a better life here. Croatian immigrants worked on construction sites across Ontario. They helped build this province into the economic powerhouse that it is today. Croatians have embraced Ontario and all that it has to offer.

Some of the most notable contributions made by Croatian immigrants have been in the business sector, including construction, information technology, hospitality, and manufacturing. Robert Herjavec, the celebrity investor on *Dragons' Den* and *Shark Tank*, immigrated to Ontario as a child with his family, who he says were destitute at the time. But with drive and determination and seizing all the economic opportunities Ontario has to offer, he is now extremely successful and living the Canadian dream.

Philanthropist Dario Zulich owns the Sudbury Wolves and Sudbury Five sports teams. Victor Dodig is the president and CEO of the CIBC bank. The Canadian-Croatian Chamber of Commerce, a non-profit network of businesses, professionals and organizations, is the voice of Croatian Canadian business and trade in Canada. The chamber says Canada has one of the largest and most successful Croatian communities outside of Croatia.

Many Croatians have excelled in the fields of science and education. Numerous Ontario university professors are of Croatian heritage. Scientist Asaf Duraković was an expert in nuclear and radiation medicine. Madam Speaker, these names are only a few of the many remarkable examples of Croatians who have made significant contributions to Ontario. Their work and their accomplishments have enriched the business, scientific, cultural, social and sports fields. Their achievements have made a lasting impact on the lives of many and have contributed to the overall success of Ontario.

Now, sport is a very important part of the Croatian identity. Croatian dedication to sport has given Ontario bragging rights to world-class athletes. Boxer George Chuvalo was a five-time Canadian heavyweight champion who is best known for having never been knocked down in his 93-bout professional career. That includes fights against Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier and George Foreman. Sandra Bezic and her brother Val won the Canadian Figure Skating Championships from 1970 to 1974 and competed in the 1972 Winter Olympics.

When they arrived in Ontario, Croatian immigrants embraced the Canadian sport of hockey, and as a result, they produced numerous National Hockey League stars. Of course, Frank Mahovlich, who played in the NHL alongside his brother Peter, was named one of the 100 greatest hockey players and inducted into Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. John Kordic and Matt Pavelich were also big names in the NHL. Oakville's Tony Mandarich played seven seasons in the National Football League.

As many people already know, given their performance at the World Cup, Croatians have a passion for the game of soccer. Ontario has 12 clubs that are members of the Croatian National Soccer Federation of Canada and USA.

It's not surprising that Croatian Ontarians excel in sport and athleticism. Parents encourage their children to be involved in sport at a very young age, and there are various clubs across the province that promote participation in sport and other forms of recreation.

One of these clubs is the Croatian Sports and Community Centre in my hometown of Hamilton. Better known as Hamilton Croatia, the club is celebrating its 65th anniversary this year. Over the years, the sports centre has become a social hub for the Croatian community in Hamilton, offering a wide range of sports and recreational programs to keep people active and connected. The club's president says Croatian members are proud of their heritage, but they also want to share it with all of Ontario.

Soccer is an important part of the fabric of the Croatian community. When immigrants arrived, they quickly established soccer clubs to stay connected and share the love of the game with anyone who wanted to join them.

The Toronto Metros-Croatia team won the North American Soccer League championship in 1976, making them the only Ontario team to do so.

The community maintains its vibrant culture because it has built an extensive social network through festivals, sports and cultural organizations. One of those cultural organizations is the Croatian National Home, again, in Hamilton. It was established in 1928, making it the longest-running Croatian cultural organization in the country. On this Victoria Day weekend, the Croatian National Home will be hosting the 49th annual Canadian Croatian Folklore Festival. It's a huge event bringing people from all over the province. It's a family-friendly cultural festival with the goal of promoting understanding, respect and co-operation among Canadians of diverse backgrounds. Next year, the Canadian Croatian Folklore Federation, which organizes the festival, will be celebrating its 50th jubilee festival.

The various Croatian festivals are a lot more than food, fun, music and dancing. They encourage involvement in charities and fundraisers and instill a sense of civic duty in our young people. There are more than a dozen such festivals in Croatian communities throughout the province.

The Carassauga Festival in Mississauga has been recognized as Canada's largest multicultural festival.

The Canadian Croatian Choral Society preserves and promotes Croatian music and traditions and has also introduced Croatian music to a wider audience.

The Queen Helena Canadian-Croatian Cultural and Charitable Society has been promoting Croatian culture through folk song and dance in Kitchener since 1978.

Numerous volunteer groups, such as Livno 892 and Folklore Ensemble Dubrovnik, raise funds for hospitals, churches and the disadvantaged.

Croatian life often centres around their parishes. Holy Cross parish in Hamilton is the largest Croatian Catholic parish in North America. Parishes throughout Ontario have played a crucial role in promoting and preserving Croatian culture and values. There are more than 13 Croatian parishes across Ontario serving not only as places of worship but also as major anchoring points for Croatian identity and tradition. Croatian parishes continue to

provide a social safety net to the most vulnerable. They have helped newcomers integrate into Canadian society. They have been very active in charitable work and outreach programs. Croatian churches have been a cornerstone of the community in providing spiritual guidance and connection to others.

Croatian parishes, cultural centres and sports organizations have helped to build bridges of friendship and cooperation with other ethnic groups throughout the province. They have helped foster and promote economic cooperation and cultural understanding.

Madam Speaker, I want to take a moment to acknowledge the many visitors from the Croatian community in our gallery who came to Queen's Park this evening to be here for the debate of this bill.

Ante Jović, consul general of the Croatian consulate, has been a staunch supporter of this bill to proclaim May 30 Croatian Heritage Day. In his letter of support, Mr. Jović says a Croatian Heritage Day would be an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the culture, history and contributions made by the Croatian community across

Ontario. In fact, I have received dozens of similar letters of support for proclaiming May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario. Why May 30? On May 30, 1990, the first modern-day multi-party Croatian Parliament convened. Since then, it has been an annual public holiday in Croatia and a national day to celebrate the constitution of the first modern-day multi-party Croatian Parliament.

1810

Canada and Ontario have always had a warm relationship with Croatia. In fact, Canada, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, led our more traditional allies, such as the US and the UK, in extending recognition to the new nation of Croatia. In 1993, Canada and Croatia established full diplomatic relations. Prime Minister Mulroney announced that Canada was receptive to rethinking the limits of national sovereignty in a world where problems respect no boundaries. This was the situation the world faced during the Yugoslav crisis. This rethinking was key to expanding Canada's leadership in recognizing Croatia earlier than many other countries. In fact, under the leadership of Prime Minister Mulroney, Canada was among the first group of nations to recognize an independent Croatia, in joining 12 members of the European Economic Community in doing so.

To reiterate, over the past century, Croatians have made significant contributions to this province's social, cultural, and economic fabric. From small business owners to CEOs of large corporations, top scientists, professional athletes, and the tens of thousands of Croatians who now call Ontario home, Croatians have given back to this province in so many ways. Croatians have shown time and again that they love Ontario, they have embraced Ontario, and throughout, they have been an integral part of Ontario's success story.

Our government understands and appreciates the importance of Croatian culture and the community's contributions to this province. Through their determination and dedication to hard work, Croatians have made Ontario a better place to live.

That's why I urge that Bill 81, an act to proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario, be passed.

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

Mr. Jeff Burch: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 81, the Croatian Heritage Day Act. I want to thank my friend from Flamborough–Glanbrook for bringing this forward. And, of course, I welcome all of our guests to the gallery.

My riding of Niagara Centre is home to the Croatian National Home in Welland. I'd like to take a moment to thank their board of directors, president Mary Kay Kalagian, and their members for taking the time to meet with me last week to discuss Bill 81. I'm grateful for the work they do in our community and across the Niagara region. They were thrilled to hear about this bill that would proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day, and they have provided me with some comments that I'll now share with the House.

The first comment is from a 22-year-old member of the Croatian National Home named Nicholas Turkovich. He said, "The Croatian community of Niagara is a large and proud heritage group which has played an important role in the history of the region.

"Croatians hold a very unique and vibrant culture filled with music, dance, food, and language that they take every chance to celebrate and share with others in festivals across the region.

"Through the building of cultural community centres, churches, and banquet halls, Croatian heritage has been able to thrive in Niagara throughout the generations by fostering a sense of belonging.

"Bill 81, the Croatian Heritage Day Act, very graciously recognizes the vibrant community that the Croatian people of Niagara have been able to grow over the last century and beautifully commemorates the contributions that Croatians have made to the Niagara region and beyond.

"We at the Croatian National Home in Welland thank" our MPP "for allowing us to speak through him about our culture and share our heritage's history in Niagara, and we thank the Ontario Legislature" and the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook "for considering the Croatian community with Bill 81."

I want to thank Nicholas for providing those comments.

Also from a member, Cathy Conner, who volunteered some history of the Croatian community in Niagara—she said, "Most of the Croatian population of Welland settled in two main areas of the city," the east south end of the city, in Welland South. "Many of the first settlers worked at Atlas Steel, Union Carbide, Stelco, Page-Hersey and helping in constructing the old Welland Canal which runs through the middle of the city of Welland."

In Niagara there is a canal memorial of folks who worked on the Welland Canal and those who died in the line of work, and there are many Croatian names on that memorial.

They established the Croatian Sons Club of Welland, located on Fifth Street in Welland. In the 1920s to 1960s,

this hall became a major centre for the Croatians to congregate for weddings, dances and celebration picnics, where lambs and pigs on spits were barbecued frequently.

Now we're going to get into some names, so I'm going to apologize if I mispronounce any of the names. I did get schooled by one of my caucus colleagues, so I'm going to do my best. Matt Janjac and George Canjar would be your main cooks, with helpers such as Mr. Yuriaich, Mr. Buban, Mr. Brklacich, and Frank Karl, Joseph Gaspic and Pauk Bourcic would be helping with the cooking. During these feasts, the entire Croatian community would come together, and the women would be busy making their strudels, cabbage rolls and salads to enjoy with the lambs and pigs. They would come from Hamilton, Windsor and Toronto for the festivities. Many would meet their significant others at these functions, keeping their European traditions alive for them and their families.

It was in 1924 that these same 17 members who established the Croatian Sons Club also formed Lodge 617 of the CFU.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, they commissioned Joe Loncaric, a well-known music teacher from Hamilton, to come down every Sunday afternoon to teach their children how to play the traditional tamburas and dance their traditional Croatian dances.

In the early 1960s, Joseph Cunjak, son-in-law to Matt Janjac, married to Lillian, organized the first charter to Croatia, then known as Yugoslavia. Many Croatian families from southern Ontario went back to their native land for vacations to visit their families they had left behind. This was the first of his many charters to Croatia.

As the number of members of the hall became larger, the hall was in need of an expansion. At that time, Mr. Cunjak, being in real estate, felt he had the perfect location and building for the new hall. He brought the idea to George Boc and John Miller, and together they began the process for plans and donations to help fund the new hall. With help from the families of Matt Janjac, Nick Turkovich, Louis Podrebarac, Walter Tezak, Frank Zoretich, Don Warren, Walter Vlastic, Nick Yurcich, George Zdelar and many others, the money was raised, and the Harrison Transport building, located in Welland South, was purchased in 1966. With dedication and hard work, the Croatian National Home of Welland was established to carry on the traditions of their Croatian heritage.

On May 27, 2023, the Croatian National Centre of Niagara will be taking part in the Niagara Folk Arts Festival, celebrating their unique culture and history. I have a long history with that myself, being the former executive director of the Niagara Folk Arts Festival. I had the pleasure of working with both the home in Welland and also the location in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which many of you have probably been to. Beautiful soccer field, bocce court, outdoor barbecue shacks—it's quite the location. Of course, many a good soccer game played on their field.

On their website, they posted:

“Families, individuals, Croatians and non-Croatians—everyone is welcome! The event is free and open to all....

“This is a celebration of Croatian culture with music, food, and entertainment throughout the afternoon and early evening.”

I'm very proud to support this bill, which would proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario. I am grateful to the Welland Croatian National Hall, their board of directors, president Mary Kay Kalagian and members Nicholas Turkovich and Cathy Conner for providing me with these historical insights into the Croatian community in Niagara. I hope you will join me in attending their upcoming events to see their contributions to Niagara and celebrate the incredible culture of the Croatian community.

I am very proud to have a Croatian community in my riding. I look forward to celebrating Croatian Heritage Day in my community this May 30 and many years into the future. There is a tradition in Welland of lighting up the bridge over the Welland Canal for festival events and celebrations. I look forward to seeing the Welland Bridge in white, red and blue on May 30.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for bringing this motion forward.

1820

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

Hon. Kaleed Rasheed: First of all, I would like to welcome everyone here to your House, Queen's Park. It's so good to see everyone.

Speaker, Canada is one of the most flourishing and thriving multicultural societies in the world. As an immigrant myself to this wonderful province, I have been encouraged to preserve my customs, religion, languages and culture. More than 140 different languages are spoken in Toronto alone. When walking down a street in Toronto or in my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, you can find yourself hearing a multitude of languages and catching the wonderful scent of some mouth-watering international cuisines.

The rise in immigration has reflected an increasingly diverse social, cultural and economic scene in Ontario. One visit to Mississauga's Carassauga festival, and you will witness the immense diversity our city has to offer, which holds an annual Croatian pavilion, among many other countries.

While this is a vital part of our Canadian society, it is essential to bring the importance of immigrated Canadians and what they have done to help our country thrive. For example, Canadians of Croatian heritage have made incredible contributions to business, politics, medicine, science, sports and culture in Ontario. Since the early 20th century, they have emigrated from their native countries in search of economic opportunities, refuge and religious freedom. Many arrived and settled in Ontario, growing their families in cities such as Hamilton, Toronto and Mississauga. They have made this province their home and are a valuable piece of our workforce and economy.

Croatian Canadians in Ontario make up an essential part of our national character. In fact, Ontario is home to over 100,000 people of Croatian descent, which is the

largest Croatian population in Canada. They make up 1% of all Mississaugans, and our city is also home to the Croatian Consulate General in Canada. Croatian Canadians continue contributing to the culture and social and economic fabric of Mississauga, Toronto, Hamilton and Ontario as a whole. Ontario would not be the same without the contributions of the Croatian community.

Speaker, let's not forget one of my idols, I would say: Robert Herjavec. I have watched his shows. He's a well-known entrepreneur, frequently seen on *Dragons' Den* and *Shark Tank*. He's a very tough guy, tough to negotiate with. Robert and many more individuals of Croatian descent have helped build Ontario and Canada. The contributions of Croatian Ontarians have been incredible and will continue to be.

I want to thank the Deputy Speaker for bringing this bill forward and making it May 30, because it is a day of great significance in Croatia, where it is celebrated as Statehood Day, marking the establishment of the constitution of Croatia and the day the first Croatian Parliament convened in 1990.

I just want to say, I fully support this bill, and I want to thank each and every one of you for coming and being part of this historic event. I want to say thank you again to the Deputy Speaker for bringing this bill forward. Let's make it happen. Congratulations to you, and congratulations to each and every one of you.

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

Mr. Rudy Cuzzetto: I want to welcome all the Croatian community here to Queen's Park, but I want to really thank my friend the member from Flamborough–Glanbrook for her remarks today introducing Bill 81. It's a real honour to speak in support of this bill to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day each year in Ontario, on May 30. This is Croatia's Statehood Day, which celebrates the constitution of the first modern Parliament of the Republic of Croatia in 1990.

In many ways, this bill is overdue, because, as the member said, people of Croatian heritage have made incredible contributions to Ontario and to Canada over the last hundred years.

The first Croatian immigrants arrived here in the 1920s, looking for a better life in Ontario. Others came more recently, as refugees from the war in Bosnia in the 1990s. But they all came with strong values, and they have contributed so much to Ontario and Canada.

Many of the first Croatian immigrants took jobs at the Port Credit brickyard—which then became the Texaco refinery and is now the Brightwater development in Mississauga–Lakeshore—helping to produce over 15,000 bricks every day that were used to build throughout the region, including my original family home just across the street from the brickyard, which is now a heritage property under the Ontario Heritage Act.

Growing up there, I was a fan of great Croatian Canadian athletes, including the Mahovlich brothers in the NHL, who won a total of 10 Stanley Cups with the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Montreal Canadiens, and Canada's greatest heavyweight boxer, George Chuvalo. As the bill

says, he was never knocked down in 93 professional fights—including fighting against the great Muhammad Ali, who said that George Chuvalo was the toughest guy he ever fought. Three years ago, my team and I helped to organize an event honouring him with his son Mitch and the former boxer Spider Jones. It was scheduled for April 30, 2020, but unfortunately, I had to cancel that event due to COVID.

In soccer, the Toronto Metros-Croatia, representing the city of Toronto, won the North American Soccer League championship in 1976 with the help of two Italian rookies, friends of mine: Robert Iarusci and Carmine Marcantonio. The team became the Toronto Blizzard, attracting international players like the legendary Italian forward Roberto Bettega, who is here from Italy this week.

In politics, my friend Lisa Raitt, the former federal Minister of Labour and Minister of Transport, is a proud Croatian Canadian. Her colleague Lynne Yelich, another Croatian Canadian, served as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. And of course, many members of this House know her daughter Ivana, who serves as deputy chief of staff to the Premier.

Speaker, as Bill 81 says, Croatian Canadians have helped to build Ontario into one of the best places in the world to live and raise a family.

Again, in closing, I want to thank the friends who introduced this bill, and I also want to thank the consul general for the Republic of Croatia, in Mississauga, Ante Jović, for his support.

I look forward to celebrating Croatian Heritage Day every year on May 30, together with all members and the thousands of Croatian Canadians in communities across Ontario.

I have the privilege to represent one of the most diverse cities in Ontario, and as other members have said, I hope we're able to recognize every heritage in this House, whether through a month, a week or just a day.

I want to thank everybody for supporting this bill today.

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

Mr. Billy Pang: I'm honoured to speak on Bill 81 today. I'm glad about the bill not only as an advocate of multiculturalism, but also on behalf of the people of Croatian heritage in Markham–Unionville and Ontario.

In our province today, over 100,000 people can trace their roots to Croatia, and they can be found right across Ontario.

Diversity is one of Canada's greatest strengths and core values.

I listened to the Deputy Speaker talk about the immigration and contributions made by Canadians of Croatian heritage to Ontario and Canada, and it is very profound and incredible. From the early days of their immigration to the present day, they have contributed to different fields, from business, politics, medicine, science, sports to culture.

This bill would designate May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day. Doing so would recognize the contributions made by Canadian Croatians in the past, present and future. It

would also give us an opportunity to learn from the culture and heritage of Croatia.

Ontarians are proud of our province's Croatian heritage. I encourage all Ontarians to learn more about it. I believe we can learn much from this valuable heritage.

I look forward to the passage of this bill and to celebrate May 30 as the Croatian Heritage Day. Before I conclude: *Sung to the tune of What a Wonderful World.*

I see trees of green,
Red roses, too.
Croatian heritage for Ontario.
And I think to myself,
What a wonderful world.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

The member has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Donna Skelly: Again, I really do want to personally thank Consul General Ante Jović for advocating for, and working so very, very hard, on this bill.

I appreciate, as does this government, the importance of Croatian culture and the community's contributions to our province. Croatians make Ontario better. You have helped build and shape Ontario into the truly amazing province that it is today. I deeply believe it is important to designate

a day to celebrate and acknowledge the achievements and rich heritage of Croatians right across Ontario.

Madam Speaker, I hope all members will join me today in supporting Bill 81, an act to proclaim May 30 as Croatian Heritage Day in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Ms. Skelly has moved second reading of Bill 81, An Act to proclaim Croatian Heritage Day. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Pursuant to standing order 100(h), the bill is referred to the Committee of the Whole House unless—

Ms. Donna Skelly: Madam Speaker, I would prefer that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Heritage, Infrastructure and Cultural Policy.

The Acting Speaker (M^{me} Lucille Collard): Is the majority in favour of the 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 9 a.m. on Wednesday, April 19, 2023.

The House adjourned at 1832.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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
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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	
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Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
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Cuzzetto, Rudy (PC)	Mississauga—Lakeshore	
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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	

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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	
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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
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Leardi, Anthony (PC)	Essex	
Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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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
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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
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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
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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	
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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
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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	

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Wong-Tam, Kristyn (NDP)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke	
Vacant	Kanata—Carleton	