

Legislative  
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of Ontario



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Speaker: Honourable Ted Arnott  
Clerk: Todd Decker

Président : L'honorable Ted Arnott  
Greffier : Todd Decker

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 December 2022

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2022

*Report continued from volume A.*  
1700

STRENGTHENING POST-SECONDARY  
INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENTS  
ACT, 2022

LOI DE 2022 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT  
DES ÉTABLISSEMENTS  
POSTSECONDAIRES ET LES ÉTUDIANTS

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

Bill 26, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of post-secondary education / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'éducation postsecondaire.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** It's now time for further debate.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I'm pleased to rise today to participate in third reading debate on Bill 26, the Strengthening Post-secondary Institutions and Students Act. I come from the perspective of a member of the community of London, and London has gone through a lot of heartache on the issue of gender-based violence—like other communities across this province—but specifically related to Hockey Canada. It was in London where the members of Canada's world junior team were accused of assaulting a young woman at the 2018 gala. That initiated a whole series of events, scandals and disgust at Hockey Canada's use of NDAs to cover up the assault that occurred.

Also in London, at Western University, just over a year ago, in September 2021, we heard the disturbing and shocking reports from 30 first-year students during orientation week, who alleged that they had been drugged and sexually assaulted. That certainly put a spotlight on the issue of gender-based violence in post-secondary institutions. But it's not new data; it should not be a surprise to anyone—the vulnerability, the risks that students face on post-secondary campuses around gender-based violence and sexual assault.

I want to share some of the data that we do know, that we have known for a long time.

About 30% of Canadian women 15 years of age or older report having been sexually assaulted at least once since the age of 15, and that's a rate four times greater than that reported by men.

About a third of women in Canada reported last year that they had experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in a public place, which is more than double the rate that was reported by men.

Most troubling, in 2019, almost three quarters—71%—of Canadian post-secondary students said that they had witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behaviours either on- or off-campus or online. The interesting thing about that statistic is that those unwanted sexualized behaviours that were experienced by Canadian post-secondary students involved students—overwhelmingly, students or others from their school.

The experience of sexual violence on campus is one that often involves student-to-student relationships. The bill that we have before us today addresses sexual violence on campus in the context of faculty/staff-student relationships. I don't want, in any way, to minimize the trauma, the distress, the devastation that a victim, a survivor, of sexual violence would face as a result of being assaulted when it's faculty or staff doing the assaulting. However, the government really missed an important opportunity with this bill: to expand the bill to deal with all unwanted sexualized behaviours on campus, to deal with gender-based violence on campus as an issue that involves the entire campus community.

During the deputations that were made during the public hearings on this bill, during the committee process, the government heard widespread urgings from presenters, from student organizations, from gender-based violence experts that the bill should be expanded to include a very strong prevention component. Not only did the government hear that repeatedly from deputants at the committee, but they had in front of them an opportunity to move forward with an effective prevention measure, and that would be to proclaim Consent Awareness Week in Ontario.

My colleague the member for Toronto Centre led the development of a bill—Bill 18, An Act to proclaim Consent Awareness Week—which would officially declare the third week in September in each year as Consent Awareness Week. This would be a proclamation that would be province-wide. The third week in September is very deliberately chosen because that is typically orientation week on Ontario college and university campuses. We know that most sexual assaults on campus take place during the first six to eight weeks of the post-secondary experience, so proclaiming Consent Awareness Week during the third week of September could raise awareness of what consent is, what constitutes consent, what the elements of consent are, and that would help prevent those sexual assaults that are so prevalent on Ontario campuses.

It's regrettable that the government decided to ignore the advice of the deputants who came to the committee, to ignore the advice of the student organizations who were calling for proactive, preventive measures like Consent

Awareness Week, and instead decided to keep this bill very narrowly focused.

One of the other recommendations that was made to the committee that was getting input on this bill was the need to have minimum standards on sexual violence policies. This would be a way to ensure that a student who was attending Western University and a student who was attending Algonquin College in Ottawa—that the contents of the sexual violence policies that were developed by those institutions would have some basic, common standards, some minimum standards that could have been developed under the leadership of the government, that could have been developed by an expert committee on gender-based violence. Unfortunately, that is another issue the government chose not to follow through on.

The other thing that was urged of this government but that the government decided not to move forward with was the need for mandatory training on sexual violence policies and on responding to disclosures of sexual violence and all of the other things that would have been part of the policy.

Again, I want to commend Western University for the leadership that institution showed in the wake of that disclosure from those 30 students in September 2021. The university conducted an extensive internal review. That review completed its work and made a number of action-oriented recommendations that were designed to transform Western's culture and help ensure that no student at that institution faced the prospect of gender-based and sexual violence. Following that internal review, the university hired external reviewers as a cross-check with the internal findings. The external independent review also came forward with 17 very specific recommendations as to next steps for the university. Interestingly, both the internal review and the external review began their list of recommendations—the first recommendation made by both of those review committees was around education and training.

We know that a sexual violence policy that isn't accompanied by a significant investment in training on that policy will be meaningless—it will be the paper it's written on. It won't actually achieve the kind of results that we need to see on post-secondary campuses.

Yesterday, we were in this place, talking about a motion that the government brought forward on training for anybody who is involved in the Family Court system on intimate partner violence. Again, in that motion yesterday, we saw the government stop short of making that training a requirement of people involved in the Family Court system. What we saw with this bill is, not only are they not making it mandatory at institutions; they don't even reference it in the legislation that is before us. That is certainly a missed opportunity.

**1710**

It's something that Western University actually came to the committee that was reviewing this bill and urged the government to move forward with—that requirement for mandatory training and education, because they realize how important that is. They have made the investment in ensuring that every single student at Western University has the training on gender-based and sexual violence.

They have also allocated resources to hire an additional gender-based and sexual violence support case manager and an education coordinator. They have put in place a training program for special constables and other security personnel. They are looking at this very broadly as an all-of-campus problem that requires an all-of-campus solution. That solution has to be proactive, and it has to be designed to prevent incidents of gender-based and sexual violence.

One of the other concerns that was raised with the committee that was reviewing this legislation was around the terminology that is used in the bill. I note that the government has changed the original term, "sexual abuse"—they have changed that to "sexual misconduct." Many of the deputants who came to the committee did urge that the wording be changed, that the terminology "sexual abuse"—they pointed out that this doesn't reflect what's in place on campuses. But they did not recommend "sexual misconduct." Many talked about the fact that their own sexual violence policies use the terms "sexual violence" and "harassment"; they don't use "sexual misconduct." Having consistent terminology is also important. It's similar to the need for minimum standards on the content of the policy. There is a need for consistent terminology to be used across all institutions.

Another amendment that the government could have made and should have made is to ensure that the policy applies not just to students when they are in campus situations, but when they are off-campus working in work-integrated learning opportunities.

This government has talked about its desire to ensure that all students have access to work-integrated learning opportunities, to give them that leg up in the labour market when they graduate, to allow them those hands-on experiences that are going to help in their job search when they finish their program of study.

Certainly, a student who is in a work-integrated learning experience is definitely in a situation where there is a power imbalance. They are a student who is in a learning role, and their supervisor is an employer who has a lot of power over the feedback they're going to get, potentially a grade they're going to receive for that work-integrated learning. That power imbalance is what puts women at risk of sexual violence and harassment. So it would be very important, even if the government only wanted to limit its bill to sexual violence that involves faculty and staff and students—even if that was the limit that the government wanted to place, they could have, at a minimum, extended it to those off-campus work-integrated learning opportunities that are directly connected to the student's post-secondary program of study.

Speaker, the last thing I want to talk about is the restrictions on the use of non-disclosure agreements. I am glad that the government listened to some of the feedback that was provided at the committee around the fact that a survivor has to be able to determine whether a non-disclosure agreement is in their best interest. They should be able to seek independent legal advice and make that decision in an independent way, as to whether they feel that it is in their own best interest to sign a non-disclosure

agreement. That is respecting survivors; that is a survivor-centric approach that has been taken in other jurisdictions that recognized that non-disclosure agreements at certain times may be an option the survivor wants to choose.

The problem with this legislation is that it only deals with non-disclosure agreements that involve faculty and staff and students. It does not deal with non-disclosure agreements that affect university administrators or college administrators and the staff at those institutions. One of the reasons that PEI brought in legislation on non-disclosure agreements was because of some very high-profile cases involving NDAs, but in several of those cases it was actually the staff who were required to sign the NDAs because of complaints around the conduct of the president of the University of PEI. That is not uncommon at universities across the country, actually, where there are staff allegations and staff have been the victims of sexual violence and harassment by a senior administrator and they are forced to sign NDAs. We know from the testimony of women who have experienced sexual violence how it feels to be silenced with an NDA that is imposed on them when they don't have any power to refuse to sign that NDA. So it is unfortunate that the NDA provisions of this bill only apply to students, faculty and staff and don't apply to staff and administration—because that is one of the issues we have seen quite regularly at the post-secondary level.

Of course, it's not just the post-secondary sector that experiences high levels of sexual violence and harassment. It's not just in the post-secondary sector where NDAs are used to silence the voices of victims.

When we had the debate in the previous government, when we had the debate on the government's Working for Workers bill, they introduced a ban on non-competes. At the time, I argued that the government should be banning NDAs, because that would have made a real difference for many women in this province who have been forced to sign non-disclosure agreements after they have been a victim of sexual assault. So I encourage the government to look at that and to expand those provisions to all sectors.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Questions to the member for London West?

**Mr. John Jordan:** I think good legislation has to have a purpose and it has to focus on that purpose, and that bill does just that. The focus is on keeping our students safe in our colleges and universities, specifically addressing faculty and staff sexual misconduct. This government understands the importance of getting legislation right. I was on the committee. We listened to many stakeholders—over 100. Probably the most powerful was the PEARS Project, the Students for Survivors student organization of the University of Toronto, really looking at the non-disclosure agreement and the loopholes that it allowed.

My question is, given the over 100 stakeholders that we had input from on the development of this bill, will the member opposite support and respect those stakeholders?

1720

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I appreciate the question from the member about the consultation that took place on this bill,

and certainly I respect the input that was received from presenters who talked about the fact that there are incidents of faculty and staff sexual violence directed at students. But I also know that there were many, many groups and organizations who talked to the government about the fact that student-on-student sexual violence is actually the real thing that makes students unsafe on post-secondary campuses and the need to include proactive prevention measures as part of this bill. Expanding this bill to include prevention would not have, in any way, undermined the important measures that are included to prevent faculty and staff sexual violence.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next question?

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I listened to the member from London West and I know that she spoke very much in detail about this legislation. One of the things I'm reminded of is the amount of people, especially stakeholders, who include community organizations, advocates, students, people who come forward to give their feedback—I just want to say thank you to all of you out there who work hard, especially in addressing sexual violence, especially in addressing any sort of abuse that students face.

One of the things I think you touched on was the way we should prevent this as well and create awareness, which I think this bill could have done a little bit more and listened to those bits, those feedback and amendments. I would love your feedback on that for this government.

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank my colleague the member for Scarborough Southwest for her question, because there were lots of ideas that were brought to the committee about what the government could do, what this legislation could do to effectively and proactively address the prevalence of sexual violence on campus.

One of the tools that is immediately available to this government, at any point, is to pass Bill 18, the private member's bill that proclaims Consent Awareness Week in Ontario. The student organizations that have been pushing for this have really pointed out that this proclamation of Consent Awareness Week would go a long way to do that kind of education on what is consent, what constitutes consent, to raise awareness of the importance of consensual sexual activity on campus and the vulnerability of students to sexual violence.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

**Mr. Rick Byers:** I thank the member for her comments. As we consider this bill, I think of it as the goal of the bill to make sure that students are no longer silenced. We had a system that allowed perpetrators—the member mentioned non-disclosure agreements—to hide behind them and to continually move around the institution. Silence protects predators. Silence is complicity. This bill prevents perpetrators of sexual misconduct from continuing to work at their or any other institution and stops them from hiding behind NDAs. That's an important element that I certainly support.

I ask the member, does she see that as a positive development here and could she support this legislation?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I do see that as a positive element because I totally agree that NDAs have been used to

silence victims. But unfortunately, in the post-secondary context in many of our workplaces across the province, NDAs are also used to silence any employees in those workplaces. We know that that is what happens in post-secondary institutions when employees have experienced sexual violence at the hands of a supervisor. And it happens in many other contexts. So this is a small piece—prohibiting NDAs, with exceptions, when it involves faculty, staff and students—but it should be much broader. It should apply to all members of the university and post-secondary community, and it should apply to all workplaces in Ontario.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next question.

**Ms. Bhutla Karpoche:** Before I ask my question, I also want to say a big thank you to everybody who participated in the committee hearings. I'd like to particularly thank the young people, the students, who are doing important work on the ground to combat sexual assault and gender-based violence.

The stakeholders who presented before the committee made several recommendations in terms of how this legislation can be strengthened. The NDP put forward their recommendations as amendments, which were voted down by the government.

Could you please share with this House what some of the amendments were that we put forward that the government voted down?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park for that question.

I do want to emphasize that the amendments the NDP put forward were not amendments that we just dreamed up and brought to the committee. These were amendments that were based very directly on the testimony that was provided to the committee. I talked about some of those amendments in my remarks: the need to use consistent terminology across the sector; the need to include minimum standards, the basic components of the sexual misconduct policies that post-secondary institutions are expected to develop; the need to ensure mandatory training on those policies; the need to include proactive prevention measures; the need to expand the policies to cover work-integrated learning experience as well. These are some of the amendments that deputants encouraged the government to move forward with and that the NDP brought to the table.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Next question.

**Mr. Andrew Dowie:** I want to thank the member for London West for her speech—as well as all the other speeches as part of this debate. I've learned a tremendous amount, as a member. It's a world away from my day-to-day—and just to understand the depth of the problem, and the solutions that are being proposed have been quite, quite well.

I understand that at the committee level, some revisions were accepted and others not. To the member from London West: Are you in agreement that some of the government's amendments to Bill 26 made in the committee will provide greater protection for students?

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** As I indicated, I think that the changes that were made to the section on the non-disclosure agreements to allow exceptions, to empower survivors to make an informed decision as to whether they want to sign a non-disclosure agreement—that was a positive change that was made to the bill. But the changes that were made to the terminology, in fact, go contrary to what was recommended to the committee.

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

Ms. Dunlop has moved third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of post-secondary education.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

*Third reading agreed to.*

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Point of order: the member for Barrie–Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you, Speaker. I think if you seek it, you may find that we have unanimous consent to see the clock at 6.

1730

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The member for Barrie–Innisfil is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 6. Agreed? Agreed.

It is 6 o'clock. I can see it.

Orders of the day.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

### PROTECTING AGRICULTURAL LAND ACT, 2022

### LOI DE 2022 SUR LA PROTECTION DES TERRES AGRICOLES

Mr. Vanthof moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Planning Act to protect agricultural land / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire afin de protéger les terres agricoles.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Pursuant to standing order 100, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Speaker, it's always an honour to speak in the Legislature. This is the only place on the planet where you can just decide to move the clock and it moves. Some people would question what we're actually doing here.

Bill 27 is very simple. When a piece of agricultural land—when an application is made to have it rezoned to be anything other than agriculture, under this bill, the proponent would have to do an agricultural impact assessment to show that there is a better use for that land than growing food, fuel or fibre. That's the basics of the bill.



Why this bill is so important is, Ontario is losing 319.6 acres per day of agricultural land, per day—land that will never produce food again. That is up from 175 acres a day in 2016. So it's going up very quickly. We are losing land at a much quicker rate.

We actually had this proposal in our campaign platform last election. This is not a new idea, but it has gained much more significance in the last few weeks because the 320 acres a day that we're losing now doesn't seem to be enough for the government. There have been—and I'm not going to go into detail on it—proposals to pave over much more agricultural land, particularly in the greenbelt.

Why it's so important that this be enshrined in legislation is because the greenbelt debate shows that simply having political promises doesn't protect land. Because the Premier did promise—and originally, he said he was going to open up the greenbelt, then he promised never to open it up. And now, obviously, there is legislation to open it up, to pave over agricultural land.

We need a way to protect agricultural land for the future. I have talked to the minister about this several times, and in question period as well—on protecting land.

We all know that productivity per acre is going up substantially. I give farmers credit—I'm a farmer by trade, and it's incredible what we can do on an acre of land. We are one of seven areas in the world that actually has the capacity to feed more people, but that doesn't mean that we should just waste the land that we do have. We are one of the few areas in the world where there's more land going to be available. In parts of Ontario where I live, there is capacity to create more land. But just because there's the capacity to create more doesn't mean you waste the best land that you have. Because of where we are situated, nestled in the Great Lakes, we have, in Ontario, some of the best land in the world.

The process, as I explained, is pretty simple. You apply to rezone land, and it needs to pass the test: Is there something better to do than grow food—and there are examples where it might be. If you have a chunk of agricultural land and you're totally surrounded by development, if you're an island of agriculture, it might no longer be feasible to produce food there. In our area, we are starting to grow a lot more vegetables. If you are proposing to build a vegetable storage unit in the middle of an agricultural area on agricultural land, do you know what? That might make sense. That's why the assessment needs to be flexible and subjective to what you're actually doing with the land. But if you're planning on taking the best land in Ontario and building a subdivision on it, that's another story.

One thing I'd like to counter the government on is that we need to pave over more and more land. There are 88,000 acres in Ontario right now ready for development, already zoned for development. And some of that may be agricultural land, but it's already zoned for development. So it's not that there isn't enough land, that we need to pave over more.

Land is a precious resource; it has always been and always will be. If it was just the opposition trying to give the government grief, I could see it—"The guy's just blowing smoke." But we're not the only ones who are

saying this. Farmers across Ontario are concerned about the loss of land. They've written a letter to the Premier—all three general farm organizations.

The biggest general farm organization has also written a letter supporting Bill 27, the Protecting Agricultural Land Act. I would like to read a couple of paragraphs from it:

"OFA"—the Ontario Federation of Agriculture—"supports Bill 27, Protecting Agricultural Land Act, 2022 as drafted. This bill requires that any potential rezoning of agricultural land be subject to an agricultural impact assessment. We believe that provincially, the protection of Ontario's prime agricultural areas for their long-term agricultural use must be a key objective, and Bill 27 has the potential to contribute to this.

"An agricultural impact assessment (AIA) is a critical tool that is used to evaluate the potential impacts of non-agricultural development on agricultural operations and the agricultural system, and recommends ways to avoid or, if avoidance is not possible, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts.

"AIAs have been a long-standing OFA ask of government. They first were mentioned during the Co-ordinated 4-Plan Review, which then vice-president Keith Currie, was a part of. It was seen as a way to strategically consider where development should go, and OFA continues to see AIAs as a tool for long-term land use planning."

So farmers are saying it.

Actually, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing was directing municipalities to look at agricultural impact assessments around 2016 and before, up to about 2020. And then, somehow, things quieted down on the AIA front. At that time, they were mostly used if there were other uses encroaching on agriculture and to see how that could be mitigated, but they were in use.

At estimates, in the Standing Committee of the Interior, on November 15, 2022, I asked the Minister of Agriculture what her view was of agricultural impact assessments. I'm going to read directly from Hansard:

Myself: "Currently, is an agricultural impact assessment required on the agricultural land or on adjacent properties for other uses?"

Minister Thompson: "Well, the fact of the matter is: During this consultation period—we need to be careful we're not talking hypothetically here"—although they had been used—"but the realization is, we're in a consultation period and we need to be making sure that everyone has their voice heard, but the fact can't be denied that we have a housing crisis on our hands, and, with that, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing"—and then I cut her off.

I said, "I don't think we're arguing about that. I'm asking a simple question. The agricultural impact assessment was in the briefing book, so the simple question is: Is it currently suggested for agricultural land, or for land adjacent to agricultural land? What does the current agricultural impact assessment cover?"

"It's a draft document, so we're still just working on it, and so its applicability"—that's a big word for me—"at this time—I think you're making more of it than—the fact of the matter is, it's just a draft."

It's a draft that was being used by municipalities—and I can pull the documents up. So it's not that the government has never heard of agricultural impact assessments either. They're actually looking at them. I think they're looking at them a bit less seriously right now, because all they want to talk about is housing.

As I've previously stated, there are 88,000 acres right now zoned for development in this province.

1740

I think we should, and I think the government should, speed the process up a little bit and start looking at how to protect the land that we have. We need to protect the land we have.

Our agricultural impact assessment—is that the be-all and end-all? Will it solve all the problems that we're facing? No. But if used correctly, it will be a means test—what should the land be used for?

We all know, deep down, that at some point food production and who can produce the food is going to be extremely important in the world. It's extremely important now. Look at the prices of food in the store now. We are so fortunate that we have not only the capacity, but we have the systems; we have the supply chains. Can we make them better? Absolutely. Do I support what the government is doing, making them better? I do. But you can't build a house when you're taking away the blocks of the foundation, and the foundation of most of agriculture and the foundation of the future of supplying food to Ontarians and to the rest of the world is the soil—and it's the amount of soil.

I'm a farmer by trade. One of the greatest feelings that farmers ever feel is that day in the spring when you pick up that chunk of soil and you crumble it in your hands, and you know that it's ready to seed. It wasn't ready yesterday, it wasn't ready four hours ago, but now it's ready. That point is the closest that a farmer gets to God. We know how important it is to protect that soil.

You can have all the technology you want, you can have everything, but if you don't have the soil, at the end of the day we are all going to fail. So if an agricultural impact assessment helps at all, we need to look at it.

Pass this bill for second reading, bring it to committee, and let's save Ontario's soil.

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

**Mr. Kevin Holland:** I am pleased to rise today to speak on the government's behalf and join in the House's consideration of the member opposite's proposed Bill 27. Before I get into the details of this legislation, let me put it into proper context.

Today in Ontario, we face a serious, acute and worsening housing supply crisis. A number of experts, from the Smart Prosperity Institute to our government's own housing task force, have concluded that Ontario is currently short about half a million homes, and that we'll require an additional million homes by 2031 if we are to meet demand. With the federal government's recent announcement that it will raise annual immigration targets to half a million people, we will likely see even greater demand. We want to welcome these newcomers to Ontario, and we want to make sure that Ontarians already living in the province

are able to find a home they can afford. But to do so, sustained action from the provincial government is required.

That's why our government vowed to get 1.5 million homes built in Ontario over the next 10 years, to erase the existing supply gap and to keep up with projected demand. I am proud to say that our government has done precisely that.

Earlier this week, the Legislature passed our third bill to implement our housing supply action plan, and it is even now considering our proposed Better Municipal Governance Act.

Since 2019, we have released three housing supply action plans: More Homes, More Choice; More Homes for Everyone; and More Homes Built Faster. These plans are working. Last year, Ontario saw around 100,000 housing starts, and even despite serious economic headwinds, we are expecting to see nearly 100,000 this year as well.

But we also know that we cannot let up on the pace of action, because even 100,000 starts a year leaves us well short of our goal of 1.5 million homes over the next 10 years. That is why we continue to look at ways to simplify the building process by reducing fees and costs and cutting red tape. And that brings me directly to the proposed legislation in front of us today.

Unfortunately, our government's efforts to get more homes built faster have been met with resistance by the party opposite at every turn. Not once have they voted in favour of our plans to make it easier for Ontarians to find an attainable home. And with today's proposed legislation, they are working directly against that goal. Instead of cutting red tape, they are proposing to add even more, by adding yet another step to the complex process of getting new homes built and making sure land is used in a manner that best suits the need of Ontarians.

My colleagues at the Ministry of Red Tape Reduction recently released their latest package of measures aimed at cutting red tape in Ontario.

Unfortunately, this proposed legislation from the opposition may as well be named the red tape addition act. If passed, it would create yet another hoop for municipalities in the province to jump through, forcing additional regulation and requirements on the process of rezoning land, and creating more bureaucracy and delay.

Speaker, let me be clear: As the member for a riding with a substantial rural and agricultural component, and as the former mayor of a rural community, I share the member opposite's desire to preserve Ontario's agricultural lands.

Just a few months ago, I was joined by my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs and my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in North Grenville to mark the occasion of the International Plowing Match. It was a good opportunity to reaffirm our government's commitment to protecting agriculture and defending the interests of farmers in Ontario, and it was a good example of how our government is working together to preserve farmland and build new homes—because we know we can do both, and we know we need to do so in a manner that makes sense and which doesn't add unnecessary bureaucracy to an already complex process.

In fact, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs just recently announced our government's new Grow Ontario Strategy. This is designed to secure food chains; support farmers, food processors and agri-businesses; and attract a strong labour force so we can continue to be competitive in a global market—and it hardly needs to be said that part of what we need in order to attract that workforce is an adequate supply of attainable housing.

I would be remiss if I did not address one other aspect of this bill; namely, its focus on the use of minister's zoning orders and the new Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator. These are important tools in the provincial tool belt and continue to be used in a manner that responds to municipal requests and to support government priorities and which help cut through red tape to facilitate the new housing and infrastructure Ontarians are counting on.

What's our record? Well, it's a record we can be proud of. Using MZO's, we have accelerated the construction of more than 4,260 long-term-care beds, 650 supportive housing units, and 113,400 additional housing units. They have also helped create over 152,000 new jobs. And when used on non-provincially owned lands, MZO's have generally been made at the request of municipal councils.

I know my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has expressed his intent that in the future, the new Community Infrastructure and Housing Accelerator tool will be a key method of supporting municipal council requests to advance local priorities. But we know both CIHAs and MZO's are important tools for building the infrastructure Ontarians need. And we cannot impose new restrictions that would stop our government from using these tools in a manner that responds to local needs and at the request of municipal governments.

1750

Let me conclude by reaffirming our government's support for farmers and agricultural workers and the close bond that I know many members on these benches have with farmers in their communities. We will continue to stand up for Ontario agriculture and for common-sense efforts that preserve farmland for future generations. But we will also continue to stand up for effective, efficient and responsive government, which means that we cannot support efforts that would add even more red tape to government and more cost and bureaucratic hurdles to the process of getting homes built.

Ontario is in a housing supply crisis, and our government was re-elected by Ontarians earlier this year because we promised to tackle the housing supply crisis. I am proud of the steps we have taken so far, with credible, evidence-based policies that would spur the construction of homes of all types, with a particular focus on affordable, non-profit and inclusionary zoning units, as well as purpose-built rentals. We are doing this because we know how important it is to restore the dream of home ownership for a generation of Ontarians who are giving up on that dream. We are doing it for our young people hoping to start a family in a community of their choosing; for newcomers looking to settle down and put down roots in their new home; and for seniors hoping to downsize while

remaining close to friends and loved ones. Indeed, we are doing it for all Ontarians—rural, urban and suburban; north, south, east and west.

We will continue to work with our partners at all levels of government—including the federal government, municipalities, and here at Queen's Park—to ensure that more homes are built faster and the farmers and agricultural workers our province depends on are properly housed and supported.

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

**Ms. Peggy Sattler:** I am proud to rise today to support the private member's bill brought forward by the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Protecting Agricultural Land Act.

I have to say, Speaker, that the form emails my office is receiving to protect the greenbelt are more than I have ever seen on any other issue. They are just pouring into my office because this issue matters to London. It matters to London that Ontario is losing 319 acres of farmland a day. That is a rate that is almost double what we had seen five years ago. We in London have an agri-food sector that is a key part of our local economy. We have more than 7,000 people employed across more than 90 companies. They rely on the rich farmland that is surrounding our city.

London has actually had more success than some other municipalities in the province with our urban growth boundary. We have seen our agricultural land increase by more than 23% in the last decade, but we just look down the road at Hamilton and we see what the government did with Hamilton when they ordered that city to expand its urban growth boundary after council had specifically voted not to expand the boundary.

The loss of farmland is something that would affect our local economy. It would affect those local agri-food businesses that rely on those agricultural producers outside of our city. But it also matters to people who care about the environment and climate change. The loss of farmland, the loss of wetlands is putting all of us at risk. And we have seen a government that says one thing behind closed doors, when they promised donors that they would open up the greenbelt, and then they say another thing in public, that they're not going to open up the greenbelt—but then they open up the greenbelt anyway. There are a lot of questions about who is benefiting by their opening up the greenbelt, Speaker.

The bill that is before us today would put some limits on the government's ability to rezone agricultural land and convert it to non-agricultural uses. It's a tool, an agricultural impact assessment, that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture has been advocating for, for many years. That's why they support the private member's bill that is before us in its entirety. It will do something to address the rapid loss of farmland that we are seeing across the province.

It's interesting that just as the province announces its—I can't even remember what it's called—Home Grown campaign or Grow Ontario campaign to support farmland, just as they were announcing that, the Ontario Federation

of Labour was reporting on its campaign to protect farmland, which now has over 51,000 signatures. So protecting farmland is an issue of great importance to people in London, to people across the province.

This bill would help ensure that decisions about farmland, decisions about the farmland outside London's urban growth boundary, would take into consideration the needs of our province to produce the food that our growing population requires and to ensure food security, the sustainability of our food systems, as well as protect us from the devastation of climate change.

As my colleague has said many times, once you pave over farmland, it is gone forever. That's why decisions about rezoning farmland have to have some criteria around how those decisions are made. Agricultural impact assessments would help ensure that the criteria are taking into account the best interests of the people of this province.

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

**Ms. Stephanie Bowman:** I rise today in support of Bill 27, Protecting Agricultural Land Act, and I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for putting forward a bill that aims to protect the agricultural land we have left. I'm delighted to hear that the Ontario Federation of Agriculture supports this bill.

Against the wishes of thousands of Ontarians—signing petitions and writing emails—this government passed Bill 23, which will see development on protected lands and class A farmland. We know Ontario is losing over 300 acres of farmland a day, as has been mentioned, and these losses will become worse without the effects of a bill like this. "Once farmland is lost to development, it is gone forever," the Ontario Federation of Agriculture says.

This government clearly has a real hunger for farmland, but we need to take measures to protect the farmland we have. And this isn't just coming from city dwellers like me. As we said, the OFA has made an open letter to the Premier, stating that, "The loss of thousands of acres of agricultural land has the potential to jeopardize our domestic supply chain and local food production. The impact will be felt on consumers today and for future generations."

Development on our protected land reduces local food production and raises the cost of food, making it harder for us to put food on the table. Land in the greenbelt not only provides our food, but also clean drinking water and clean air. Therefore, it's crucial that we have limits, that we have rules in place that require assessments like this to be made before any zoning order or zoning bylaws are made by the minister or a local municipality.

I'm disappointed to hear the member opposite liken this to red tape. Red tape and rules are there for reasons, and they are to protect and make sure we have guardrails around the things that we value and want to keep safe. I'm disappointed to hear that that member doesn't think that farmland is one of those things.

Maintaining Ontario's strong and sustainable supply of food production is vital, and requiring an impact assessment simply helps us evaluate the potential impacts of non-agricultural development on those lands, on the farm

operations and the surrounding area. These kinds of assessments would offer recommendations, based on their expertise, on ways to avoid or minimize serious harmful impacts.

After recent discussions with OMAFRA, I learned that the ministry has a role in helping the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to make sure that the minister understands well the implications of paving over farmland. Has any impact assessment been done to determine the impact of Bill 23 on our agricultural lands? Accommodating future growth and protecting the land is an ongoing battle in which we must find a balance. Because protecting our farmlands and our food supply should be a top priority and not just seen as a rule which we must throw away.

**1800**

I wanted to believe the Premier when he said that he wouldn't open up the greenbelt. But if we don't evaluate every acre of farmland that could be lost, what mechanism do we have as a province to determine when the paving should end?

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

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I rise to speak in support, and I'm proud to speak on behalf of the good people of Scarborough Southwest to support Bill 27, my colleague and friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane's bill to amend the Planning Act and require an agricultural impact assessment prior to the rezoning of existing agricultural land for non-agricultural uses. Speaker, I wanted to speak specifically to this bill for a few reasons, but one specific one is growing up as a young girl and seeing my grandfather really instill the value of what it means to love the earth and respect the soil, how much we rely on food production and the capacity to produce food locally and what it means for our communities.

According to the 2021 census, it's heartbreaking to see that Ontario is losing more than 319 acres—in comparison, that's about 58 city blocks' worth—of farmland a day. That is devastating.

On top of that, when we talk about—I hear the government members talk about it; they talk about environmental protection and the capacity of food production as red tape. It is just so disappointing when we have a government also using the need for housing and the need to develop housing as an excuse to pave over farmland, when we have over 88,000 acres of farmland currently approved for development.

So, Speaker, it's a very simple thing: What does the government have against doing a real assessment to make sure that we have the proper capacity for food security? Right now, especially after what we faced during COVID, we need to make sure that we protect our communities and we protect our green spaces and we protect our farmland.

I just have one final point, which is really looking at the ecosystem as well. What happens when we see things like Bill 23 pass? We have seen so many organizations, including the OFA, come forward and ask this government. The OFA have spoken in support of this bill. So I ask the government members to vote together. Think about the green spaces, think about our community, and vote for Bill 27.

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

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I'm proud to take my seat on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin and support the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane in his bill, the Protecting Agricultural Land Act. I think it's important that we restate what this bill actually does. Bill 27 amends the Planning Act to require an agricultural impact assessment prior to the rezoning of existing agricultural land for non-agricultural uses. The amendment would mandate an agricultural impact assessment before any changes to current municipal bylaws as well as municipal zoning orders levied by the province on affected properties.

We have been talking about several bills throughout the last couple weeks that are going to be impacting farmland across this province. We have a Minister of Agriculture that is denying that—not even using the word “farmland” when our critic for agriculture is putting questions to her of the importance and the impact that it's going to have not only on our economy, but on lives across this province. It is going to contribute to the security of our food production—to the security of just producing food in this province.

Here's one of the kickers—and I always bring a northern lens to the debate: The government is looking at allocating offsetting policies to address concerns about loss of farmland and natural heritage areas to other areas, by generating and creating farmlands in other areas. Well, once we lose the prime land that we have in southern Ontario, where the environment and the soils are some of the richest in this world—we have this basin that we should be protecting. Once it's gone, it's gone forever.

I want to go to what the Auditor General brought in her statement. She said that the Ford government ignored its own experts on prioritizing Highway 413. There are multiple ways that this government is attacking farmland; highway building is one of them. Here's the kicker for northern Ontarians: This government is going against their own experts to building these highways in southern Ontario. And what the Auditor General said is that the Minister of Transportation had overruled the priority list provided by the minister's technical experts to push certain highway projects forward.

They're pushing those forward to the tune of spending billions of dollars in southern Ontario. What's happening to northern Ontario—it was a question I was going to put to this government—is, the Auditor General revealed that the deferral of construction of highways that are desperately needed in northern Ontario—they're being denied. To the tune of \$158 million that was intended for road development in northern Ontario is now being reallocated to building roads in southern Ontario.

We are making very poor decisions that are going to have drastic impacts on the food security of this province. As the member talked about earlier, there is nothing more enriching for a farmer than to go into the middle of their field and know what they have done, what they have created, know that they're not only looking at sustaining their own livelihood, but that they're sustaining the livelihoods of so many across this province. What the member of Timiskaming–Cochrane is asking is: Let's take a step back. Let's put a few processes in place to make sure

that we're making the right decisions. Before we raise those red flags, let's give ourselves the opportunity to assess the impacts of our decisions that we're going to be making. Because if we don't do that, we are going to be making some very difficult decisions, putting ourselves in very difficult positions when it comes to our food production and the food security that we know we're going to need, not only here in Ontario but across Canada and across the globe. We see what is happening all over the place with climate change, and we need to take the steps today to make sure that those processes are in place to protect our farmland.

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

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane has two minutes to reply.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you to all the members who spoke, but I'm going to specifically reply to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. Protecting farmland isn't red tape. Protecting farmland is protecting our children's future. You need shelter, you need food—the basic necessities of life.

This bill isn't calling for an agricultural assessment on land that's already zoned. There are 88,000 acres that are zoned right now—you can start building right now. I don't hear anyone on the other side talking about, “Well, how do we speed things up on those 88,000 acres?” I hear a lot of, “Well, we need the greenbelt,” or “We don't want to create red tape.” But I think we could all agree, let's use the land—we need more housing in Ontario. We need affordable housing; we need all levels of housing. You have 88,000 acres that are already approved.

Actually, the greenbelt legislation, that you have to build within a certain time: What you're actually doing is you're taking resources away from those 88,000 acres, you're taking contractors away from those 88,000 acres and you're putting them into the greenbelt. You're actually slowing development down in land that's already approved in favour of land that you promised not to touch. That tells a story.

Some day in this Legislature, if this Legislature still exists—hopefully it does—people are going to be saying:

“Wait a second, why did they pave over all that land?”

“Well, there was a housing crisis, don't you know?”

“But now we can't eat.”

There is a housing crisis. There are the tools to fix it. There is the land to build on. Why aren't you doing it? Pass this bill. Save our land.

**1810**

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

Mr. Vanthof has moved second reading of Bill 27, An Act to amend the Planning Act to protect agricultural land. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 2022

#### LOI DE 2022 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr. Harris, on behalf of Mr. Calandra, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

**The Speaker (Hon. Ted Arnott):** Would the member care to lead off the debate?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before we begin, I want to give a special shout-out to my wife, who I believe just tuned in on our Parlance app. So thank you very much to the assembly for having such a diverse range of ways for people to tune in and see what's happening in the Ontario Legislature.

Again, before I begin—I know the member from Algoma–Manitoulin was very interested to talk a little bit about some of the soccer matches that were on today. It's a little disappointing; we did see Canada, unfortunately, lose. And the team that shall not be named, apparently—Germany—unfortunately was unable to make it through. They did win today, against Costa Rica, but they were not able to squeak through into the round of 16. But I am going to continue proudly wearing my shirt today, and thank you all for allowing me to do that this morning; it means a lot, more than you know.

I will also let the House know that I will be sharing my time with our lovely deputy House leader, the member for Barrie–Innisfil. I'm going to try to use up as much time as I can for her, and that's why we've got a little bit longer of a preamble here.

We are here tonight. It is Thursday night. I know we all want to try to get home to our families, so I will get into the meat and potatoes of it, if you will.

I know that the member from Barrie–Innisfil is going to elaborate on some of the points, obviously, that I'm going to bring up here, as well. I want to thank her—and I want to thank all of the people, really, who make this place go around here.

I especially want to thank the Minister of Legislative Affairs—I'm his parliamentary assistant—for his work on compiling this bill and bringing it forward for discussion here in the House this evening.

This may come as a shock to some here in the House, but as most of you already know, I am the son of a former Premier. Each day, I see his portrait on the wall down the hall. It's a great honour, I will say.

Bill 51, if passed, will hopefully provide members with ample opportunity to see more of themselves and their input here at Queen's Park—perhaps not through a family portrait or a familiar portrait, but they should feel a connection to this place above and beyond having their names carved into the stone of the hallways here in this building.

Speaker, you and I both know, as do members of this House, but for those who are watching the debate—hi, Kim and the kids at home—whether you're watching here, whether you're scrolling through Hansard in the future, the motto of this Legislature is carved into the very pillars of the chamber itself. It translates from Latin to “hear the other side.” An interesting fact is that the assembly's motto is actually inscribed on one of the diamonds of the mace that we see on the table before us here today. In that spirit, this legislation proposes to give all members of this House more say.

To be clear, these reforms are not Progressive Conservative ideas or a Ford government idea. Many of these proposed reforms within this bill have been in place in jurisdictions across the country and throughout the Westminster system. Many of these proposed reforms found within this bill have also been called for by members across the aisle here in Ontario over the years.

I'm going to go back a little ways into the depths of history. I'd love to share a couple of poignant quotes from two different days of debate on the concurrence of supply—and this is going to get a little dry here, so I do apologize—from 1983. This is how long we've been debating changes in the House and how long things have been talked about. There are always little small bits that get tinkered with here and there. But this goes back to 1983. Speaker, can you believe it? That was two years before I was born—my gosh. It's just kind of kicking in here, right now.

I'm going to talk a little bit about an NDP member, Jack Stokes. Actually, if you get an opportunity, he has a very interesting portrait that's down where they have the portraits of all the Speakers, on the first floor.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Yes. Thank you, Speaker.

His stands out a little bit more than some of the others. So if you haven't seen it, go down and have a look.

He was a member from Thunder Bay. He was questioning why legislators should be responsible for approving budgets for offices without having any say on who actually holds those offices. It also touched upon the importance of empowering opposition members to have more say in how they do their jobs each day and the support they receive to do so, which, obviously, is very important to consider.

I'm going to read a little bit of an excerpt from Hansard. These are direct quotes, so don't hold me responsible for any, we'll just say, grammatical errors. I quote MPP Stokes—he's talking about budgets and the people that these monies were being allocated to: “We have to confirm them. We have to pass the moneys that are necessary to pay them and for the carrying out of their responsibilities, but we never have anything to say about them”—and I think that's a really important part of this.

He went on to say, “One wonders how many members think about that. Is it any way to run a show or any way to run a store?” This is where things get a little bit interesting. “I think we have that responsibility and we should insist

on exercising it. Most members who have a heavy workload will be aware we need additional staff to carry out our responsibilities. It is not an immediate problem for members of the executive council. If we, collectively as an Office of the Assembly, do not provide them with the resources, both financial and human, to carry out what we see as their responsibilities, an accommodation can be made within the ministry.” He’s talking about how we have ministry staff who do fantastic work to help the wheels of government move. “Invariably, that is done, but that is not the case with regard to members of this House”—and he’s talking about MPPs, parliamentary assistants, for example—“who are not members of cabinet and the executive council.”

He went on to say, “Every year we go through this exercise of justifying the moneys required for the Office of the Assembly. This includes indemnities to members of the House, support staff, research facilities, the library and the administrative offices of the Office of the Assembly. Yet we have never felt it important enough to devise a mechanism whereby we could have a free exchange as to the kind of environment and the kind of facilities we should have to equip ourselves in the carrying out of our responsibilities to the population for Ontario.”

He then went on to add, “I think that collectively”—again, talking about all of the people in the Legislature, the MPPs, the people who make up this chamber—“we are competent to make those decisions.”

I know this is going to come as a shock to most of the people in the House here, especially the folks who are sitting across the way, but I actually agree with a member of the New Democratic Party. So mark this day in your calendars, everybody—December 1, 2022—that the kinder, gentler Mike Harris actually agrees with a member of the New Democratic Party. But, I will say this was from 1983, so it was a little while ago.

Of course, we are competent enough, collectively, to make those types of decisions. I think it’s really important that we must not lack the will to improve the functions of this Legislature, and that’s what MPP Stokes was touching on. So we need to look beyond the status quo to empower members, now and into the future, to have more say in the day-to-day operation of this, which is our House.

That is what Bill 51 is all about. The proposed legislation is just another crucial step forward in our government’s efforts to strengthen Ontario’s highest democratic institution—efforts which began, Mr. Speaker, as you’ll remember, in the last Parliament.

Another important element of this bill worth mentioning is the transfer of authority for the legislative precinct, including the allocation of office space, which we’re going to get into a little bit more. I know that there are many members here—I see a lot of heads nodding on the other side—who are very interested to hear what this bill is going to do in that regard. So just going back, talking about the legislative precinct and moving the allocation of office space over to the Board of Internal Economy—I may reference that as the BOIE; it’s a little bit easier—while

leaving security, of course, with the Speaker. This proposal puts the all-party, consensus-based Board of Internal Economy in control of the legislative precinct, which is the case with the House of Commons in Ottawa and many other Canadian provincial assemblies. By taking this step, all our elected members gain the direct ability to prioritize the use of space in the building in a way that allows all members to best serve their constituents. At the end of the day, that’s why we’re all here. I’ll come back to this topic in a moment. As I said, it is of the utmost importance to many members here in this House.

**1820**

Until 2018, the entirety of the Queen’s Park precinct, except the legislative chamber, was under the control of the sitting government. It was then that our government made changes to transfer control to the Speaker. We are now going one step further and giving authority directly to the members of all parties and independent members, as is the standard in other Parliaments.

At the same time, Bill 51 proposes leaving security authority with the Speaker, as we understand that this is a practical consideration and should and will continue. The Speaker and all Speakers do an incredible job liaising with our fantastic security staff. I think we should give them a quick round of applause. A few of them are here in the House right now.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** They do amazing work here and really keep us all feeling safe and secure.

Speaker, I know we could probably talk for the next 49 minutes here about some of the amazing staff we have here at the assembly, everybody who helps keep the lights on here and the debate moving, of course—our Clerks, our good friends in the interpreter booth, and the folks who run the sound and video cueing here. It’s great to see them doing such a fantastic job.

As I mentioned, one of the key ways that this bill would empower members is through the added input on the use of space here in the Legislature. I’m going to spend a little bit of time talking about this, because I think it’s very important.

If passed, the bill will establish a duty of the BOIE to provide reasonable legislative space for all MPPs except for cabinet ministers—of course, with a few conditions put in there. As we know, MPPs from all parties need legislative office space to effectively do their jobs. Whether it’s a quiet place for staff to work or a place to welcome guests from your riding and beyond, all members need adequate space to perform their roles as representatives of the public.

Speaker, imagine if you will: Out of 124 elected members of the esteemed Legislature here in Ontario, over 40 of them hold the title of parliamentary assistant to a ministry. For those who may be watching online or here and aren’t familiar, the PA role entails—speaking very generally, of course; it’s quite broad—assisting the minister of those respective ministries with an aspect of a file or their greater ministerial portfolio.

Parliamentary assistants—and I want to be very clear on this because, I’ll be quite honest, Speaker, this drives

me up the wall—do not have office space in the main legislative building here at Queen’s Park, yet they are still expected to fully execute their roles as both parliamentary assistants and members of provincial Parliament. As is so often the case with governments, they sometimes get a little bit bogged down in technicalities.

Let me paint a picture here for you, Mr. Speaker: In addition to being the member of provincial Parliament for the great riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, I am also the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Legislative Affairs. My parliamentary assistant office is at 777 Bay Street, which is roughly a 10-minute walk from this chamber. However, I cannot undertake any business relating to my MPP role at that location, leaving my staff to scramble for sessional space here at Queen’s Park. That sessional space is temporary and very often not available, and it is, of course, dispensed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Not only that, but just try booking a meeting room with over 40 parliamentary assistants competing for the same space. I know that, for many of you here, we’ve all run into this problem over—well, for me, the last four and a half years; for many of you, just recently, but you’re getting a taste of what it’s like already. That’s why I think it’s so important that we need to make these very necessary changes.

Speaker, I want to make it clear: I’m not complaining; I’m explaining.

Members may have noted the swarm of staff that are always hovering outside the chamber doors, laptops in hand, or strewn about the Legislature, looking for a comfortable space to finish some work, hoping their laptop batteries hold out just long enough. Because guess what, Mr. Speaker? Try to find a power outlet in this place. I can tell you that having our staff in a consistent mode of hovering and running around from one building to another is not a productive use of time.

Members need offices and staff need offices as well to assist those members. The proposed legislation, if passed, will allow unused office space in the building to be assigned to MPPs who do not currently have an office within Queen’s Park. Prioritizing the use of space in the Legislature for legislators just makes sense; Speaker, dare I say, it may even make common sense.

I know this will disappoint some of my colleagues, but even with this change, there will not be enough space for permanent offices for every MPP that needs one. That said, this is definitely a giant step in the right direction.

This provision also includes protections to ensure that opposition MPPs are assigned space in the legislative precinct before most other government MPPs. Obviously, we have some provisions that are made for some of our House staff, the whips etc.

Once again, this bill is about empowering members on all sides of the House, instead of consolidating power into the hands of the government of the day.

For years, the Liberal government made efforts to essentially short-hand the opposition, but we will not follow the example set by the former government. We will continue our work from the previous Parliament to put a

greater say on the business that takes place here back into members’ hands.

To put our record into proper context, I’d like to compare our track record of empowering members of this Legislature to the former Liberal government’s. In 2008, the McGuinty Liberals decided they should stuff private members’ business into the last hours of a Thursday afternoon. This move was, in our opinion, a clear attempt to limit the work that private members’ business offers, often moving forward incredibly important ideas, by giving them a couple of hours at the end of every week to debate their private members’ bill and motions instead of spacing them throughout the week. We were happy to change the standing orders to give more time in this House for private members’ business instead of offering them the scraps of the legislative schedule to conduct their business.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Good move for democracy.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Absolutely—a great move for democracy.

Like I said, we made the members of this House a priority in the last Parliament and we will continue to make them a priority in this Parliament.

Bill 51 also seeks to make some changes to the processes around the appointment and the removal or suspension for cause of the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Speaker. Members here at the Legislature know about the role, but newer members or people who may be watching at home may find some of this information from the Legislative Assembly website interesting, so I’m just going to read a couple of excerpts here:

“The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for security in the House and the legislative precinct and for property management. The Sergeant-at-Arms is also the guardian of the mace”—of course, which sits here on the table—“the ceremonial staff used in Parliament to symbolize the authority of the Speaker in the House. The Sergeant-at-Arms also provides ceremonial services on behalf of the Legislative Assembly.

“At the start of each day’s meeting of the Legislature,” they lead “the Speaker’s procession into the chamber, carrying the mace over the shoulder. The official uniform consists of a sword that is worn on the left side of the body, a bicorn hat”—which I love, Mr. Speaker, when you wear your hat, but you don’t seem to wear it that much anymore; we’ve got to work on that—and, of course, the very beautiful, I think, black swallowtail jacket, which I find very nice.

“It is believed the position of Sergeant-at-Arms in Parliament dates from the 14th century in England when they were appointed by the king to provide”—are you ready for it?—“protection to the Speaker in the House” from their own members.

The House was quite a bit more rowdy in those days. We do have our days in here where the heat gets dialled up a little bit, but I will say that it is good that we haven’t had to break up any fist fights in the Ontario Legislature for quite some time.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Not recently.



**Mr. Mike Harris:** Not recently. The member from Sarnia–Lambton, though—I will say sometimes I think he wishes maybe there was, every now and then, to keep things a little spicy.

1830

Mr. Speaker, the bill also touches upon the appointment of a temporary Sergeant-at-Arms, as well. I'm going to discuss this component first, and then we'll move back into speaking about the Sergeant-at-Arms more as a whole. I'd like to read directly from the bill.

This is section 77.8(1): “If the Sergeant-at-Arms is unable to fulfill the duties of his or her office or the office becomes vacant, the assembly may, by order, appoint a temporary Sergeant-at-Arms.”

I'm just going to continue here:

“(2) Unless decided otherwise by unanimous consent of the assembly, an order shall be made under subsection (1) only if the person to be appointed has been selected by unanimous agreement of a panel composed of one member of the assembly from each recognized party, chaired by the Speaker who is a non-voting member....

“(3) If, while the Assembly is not in session, the Sergeant-at-Arms is unable to fulfill the duties of his or her office or the office becomes vacant, the Board of Internal Economy”—again, the BOIE—“may appoint a temporary Sergeant-at-Arms.”

Speaker, this would avoid a slightly awkward situation regarding a temporary Sergeant-at-Arms that came up back in the 1990s. At the time, New Democratic Party MPP Richard Johnston, of the former riding of Scarborough West, made the following inquiry during a point of order, and this is during a time when there was a change-over of the Sergeant-at-Arms:

“I was wondering if the Speaker, on that part, might tell us just who it was who was appointed in the time that the Sergeant at Arms had to be away for important personal reasons last night. Who was appointed during that period to maintain the order in the House at that time? The House was not apprised of the fact that any decision had been made.”

It was very interesting that the members of the Legislature had no idea that there was a new Sergeant-at-Arms who had been appointed, and quite frankly, that no one knew it had even taken place.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Oh—Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Hello.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Hello. How are you? I'll make sure that I don't call you “Mr. Speaker”; don't worry.

In this case, the member who raised the point of order was satisfied with the response that the Acting Speaker gave and accepted that appropriate procedures were followed in that temporary appointment, but the Acting Speaker apologized to the House for failing to inform them that this process had even taken place.

Under this proposed legislation, such situations would no longer occur, and I think that's important. We need to know who is here protecting us. We need to know who is in charge. If there were an emergency or something did

happen, we need to know that the right people are in place to do that job.

Under this proposed legislation, like I said, such situations would not occur, as members from each recognized party would have a say and be given notice regarding the temporary Sergeant-at-Arms. Situations like these, while rare, are why it's important to provide details about the process ahead of time, so members are not left wondering what's going on here in the House. If passed, the bill would lead to the creation of an all-party, consensus-based appointment system, Madam Speaker, and I think that's very important.

Just going on a little bit more to talk about the Sergeant-at-Arms procedures here, I want to talk a little bit about the appointment, suspension and removal process that is going to be put in place, should this bill pass, in regard to the Sergeant-at-Arms. This would require an all-party panel to unanimously recommend a candidate to the position, followed by the adoption of a motion confirming that appointment by the House. A person can also be appointed by unanimous consent of the House. Removal or suspension is possible by a two-thirds vote of the assembly—of course, for cause. The same standard already exists for the Clerk of the Legislature, so we would just be aligning it with the Clerk.

We should note that the same sort of rules apply also for the Auditor General, which I think you might find interesting, Madam Speaker. By a two-thirds vote, for cause, the assembly would be able to replace the Clerk or the Auditor General, which obviously is already in place; we're just aligning the Sergeant-at-Arms with that.

Suspension is possible when the assembly is not in session by unanimous agreement of, again, the BOIE, and these processes are modelled on those which already exist, as I said, for the position of the Clerk of the Assembly.

As I previously had mentioned, these proposals are not PC proposals. I'm not sure where questions-and-comments is going to go here; I'm not sure what we're going to hear for debate from the opposition. But I have a feeling that they're going to maybe accuse—

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Attack you?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** No, they would never attack me. No, no one from the opposition would do that. They wouldn't do that. They're too nice. But I have a feeling that we may hear some remarks about, maybe, the government House leader. I do want to say that these are not government House leader proposals either—unless, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, he's a time traveller and can go back and already change these things in other jurisdictions. We already see these things happening all across all Westminster Parliaments.

I want to say that the Sergeant-at-Arms is also a government or assembly appointment in numerous other Westminster jurisdictions, and I think that's really important when we put this into context. These rules and regulations that we're proposing to change already exist in Ottawa. They already exist in many other Parliaments here in Canada, and not just here in Canada but, quite frankly, across the world—obviously mostly in the UK, where we

see our Westminster standards come from. It's important to point that out because I don't want people to get the wrong idea.

I'm just going to talk a little bit about some of the other jurisdictions that do this. Maybe I'll skip over the nuts and bolts, but I'll just say, this is already done in—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** The member from Brampton North wants me to go into detail—more detail?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Yes.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Oh, I don't know—this is already done in Alberta and New Brunswick, for example. I'll just say, in fact, the Sergeant-at-Arms even in Ontario was a government appointment until 2018, when that power was transferred to the Speaker.

What we intend to do through this bill, should it pass, is to further democratize that process, Madam Speaker. We could have decided that the government party alone should make such decisions, but given the critical, impartial work done by the Sergeant-at-Arms, I was pleased to see that we are taking an approach to empower all members of this House to have a say in who is appointed to that position.

That covers the selection of the Sergeant-at-Arms, but the bill also covers potential suspensions or removals of the Sergeant-at-Arms as well. Again, I'll just kind of breeze through this. I see that we're about halfway through now and I do want to make sure I give the deputy House leader an opportunity to get a few words in as well.

I will just say—an interesting tidbit here. I know this is a little dry, but this is an interesting tidbit. It may come as a surprise to most, but we here, since Confederation in 1867, have actually only had 10 Sergeants-at-Arms in this Legislature

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** Only 10?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Only 10, which I thought was an interesting fact, actually.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** The last guy was here 18 years.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Get ready, because I'm going to tell you a little bit about the guy who was here for 57 years, in fact—57 years. The longest-serving Sergeant-at-Arms that we've had in the province was our first-ever Sergeant-at-Arms; his name was Frederick Glackmeyer, and he served in that role for 57 years. That's a long time, Madam Speaker. To put that into a different perspective, Mr. Glackmeyer served through 16 different Legislatures, nine different Premiers and 16 different Speakers.

Thankfully, to my knowledge, we have never had any issues with any of them requiring a suspension or dismissal, but that said, we need to ensure that systems are in place to allow transparent and accountable processes should these things occur.

From the explanatory note of the bill—I'm sure you've all read this; I'm sure you're riveted to get your hands on it.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** If you haven't seen it yet, the member from Brampton North, I bet there's a copy on the table that is waiting for you to come down.

Look at that, he has one in his hands already. He's a studious member. He has probably read the whole thing, and he can probably quote word for word what I'm about to say.

From the explanatory note of the bill: "Those sections are similar to sections 77 to 77.3 of the Act which deal with the appointment and removal of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly." So again, we're aligning things very similarly to what is done with the Clerk already. "The new sections provide for the assembly to appoint the Sergeant-at-Arms and to have the power to remove the Sergeant-at-Arms"—again, of course, and this is very important—"for cause." As I mentioned, the removal or suspension of the Sergeant-at-Arms can only occur by order passed by a vote of at least two thirds of the members of the assembly, or, if the assembly is not in session, with unanimous consent of the Board of Internal Economy. These provisions will put more power back into the hands of members across all political stripes instead of leaving such powers in the hands of the government itself or a single, although impartial, typically government-member Speaker.

**1840**

I've spent the last few minutes speaking about process regarding the Sergeant-at-Arms, but I'd like to shift gears a little bit and discuss another critical role here at the Legislative Assembly, and that is, of course, the Clerk of the Assembly. I think this is a really nice nod. I don't know if a lot of you understand how the titles—I know the government House leader, having spent some time in Ottawa, will be familiar with the way that "Honourable" titles are conferred. Things differ quite a bit around here. Of course, if you're a cabinet minister, you are conferred the title of being an "Honourable" member. But once you leave this place, that title doesn't go with you. So this is a nice little nod, I think, to our Clerks and the folks who work very hard here.

If passed, Bill 51 would establish statutory authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to grant former Clerks of the Assembly the right to use the term "Honourable" before their name, which I think is really great. We believe this is a very appropriate way to recognize those few people who have dedicated their lives to serving our highest democratic institutions in the most trusted non-partisan role. Clerks are in many ways—quite frankly, in all ways—the backbones of this Legislature. They help us get through the day-to-day operations of this place. They provide sage advice to you, Madam Speaker, and to all the members here in this House. They make sure everything is in order while we table bills or motions. This is one way we can collectively say thank you for all the hard work that they've done over many years here in this place. While many items of Bill 51 are common practice in other jurisdictions, it appears this would be the first place that would actually do that for the Clerks of the Legislature. While this would not be common practice, we think it's appropriate for Ontario to lead the way and grant former Clerks permanent recognition for the great work that they do.

*Applause.*

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Absolutely.

Speaker, as I wrap up my remarks today, and I'm passing—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** No.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** You want more?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** More.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Oh, my gosh.

I will pass things over here, very shortly, to our deputy House leader. But I would like to thank the Minister of Legislative Affairs for all the hard work that he and his team have put into this bill. I think these are great things that all members can really get behind. I know the office space issue is one that I certainly can get behind.

With that, I will pass it over to the member from Barrie—Innisfil.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** I recognize the deputy House leader, the member from Barrie—Innisfil.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I rise very much in support of Bill 51, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act. I want to sum up, as my colleague was saying, the need for this piece of legislation.

Again, we're often evolving as parliamentarians. This building itself is evolving, which is really speaking to the progress—from simple things like bricks and mortar, whether it's allowing having WiFi in this building, to having electricity etc. It wasn't always the case. The foundation of what we stand on today—many of us will say the foundation was built from democracy. But the historical fact, really, is that the foundation was built in 1886. It's old, but it's historic and very important.

With time, we've had to modify the bricks and mortar of this place, but as important as that is, it's the procedures that make up the elements of what we do today that we need to modify to keep up with the times, as well.

My colleague was talking about the lovely people who make up this House—not only those who are elected, but those who help us with the day-to-day. I'm speaking into a microphone right now, and I'm being recorded by Hansard; that takes people. That's incredible. So thank you to those individuals who serve us every day and don't often get thanked and are really the unsung heroes who keep this place functioning—and, of course, our table with the Clerks and everyone who does their jobs.

*Applause.*

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Speaker, we weren't always in this space. In fact, the Ontario Legislature has an interesting history of moving around Ontario. I want to get to the root cause of why it was moving around.

The first one of the buildings we had for the Ontario Legislature wasn't in Toronto, but it was in what was known at the time as Upper Canada. Unfortunately, at the time, the Americans were trying to invade Canada. We remember who won that war, and here we are sovereign Canadians—the War of 1812. That same historic War of 1812 where Canada reaffirmed its sovereignty as a country also led to the burning down of the Ontario Legislature, a very unfortunate incident. It was burned down by American troops because of the War of 1812, so we had to rebuild.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** We got them back. We burned down the White House.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Yes, we did, but I won't get into that part of the history.

So we had to come up with another building. Yet, despite having defeated the Americans, and the fact that they did burn down our building—unfortunately, fire became the biggest nemesis of the building. Despite not being invaded, there were subsequent fires which caused, unfortunately, the rebuilding of this building. Unfortunately, at one point we lost our gorgeous mace, which resulted in modification of how the mace itself is developed and the materials that go into it.

My colleague talked about the materials that go into the mace. It's a very important symbol in this Legislature. That brings me to what it also stands for, and our Sergeant-at-Arms who protects us. Yes, we had the threat of the Americans, we had the threat of fire—which we can even see when we go to the marble side of the building; the reason it's marble is because that side of the building burned down. But the threats have changed. We can laugh about how we defeated the Americans in 1812. We can laugh about how we literally had members going in a huge circle to stop the fire from coming in and burning down the building; we literally had parliamentarians who were trying to defend the building themselves, which is incredible—that they had such honour and respect for the building. Unfortunately, with geopolitics being the way it is, there are heightened threats. Part of this bill is to have a say, as democratically elected MPPs—we all represent thousands of people in our ridings—in that process. It's not a disrespect to the position, and of course we're very lucky, all of us who got to serve this session—we got to see the first female Sergeant-at-Arms, Jackie Gordon, who has served us for the last six or seven years.

*Applause.*

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you to Jackie Gordon, who has carried the weight of that mace, which, as my colleague was saying, is very decorative right now—but that was a very powerful tool. At one point, it was used as a weapon.

It wasn't just the mace that was used as a weapon. The Sergeant-at-Arms used to be decorated in armour, and I can't even imagine what the armour would look like, but it was, as you were saying, to protect the king—and then it was a position that was again modified to protect the Speaker, which was then modified to protect all of us. And here we are again, modifying our procedures to go a little step further to democratize this Legislature, to democratize the process and go back to that protection.

That brings me again to our great Sergeant-at-Arms, who served us really well in this Legislature—not only being the first female, but she has really modified the place. We're really lucky we have the current visitors' centre that we have downstairs. It wasn't like that before—I remember, even before I was elected, that it was a very narrow way to come in. It didn't really feel secure. We had a small metal detector. I'm thankful for our security who worked in that type of environment, but I can't even

imagine how they felt—because they're the ones on the front lines, really; the first ones everyone has to see before they see the rest of us. That project that she did—I'm very, very grateful for all her work. I know previous parliamentarians had a lot of meetings and had a role to play in that. So bringing things and modernizing it and the great work that all of us—all of us have a role to play in this Legislature—and just the importance of that particular role, not only on modernizing this Legislature, but also keeping us safe.

**1850**

That brings me to, unfortunately, that I've had experience with—I know some others in this Legislature have had the experience of feeling unsafe in the workplace. That's a feeling nobody wants. As much as we might be staff in this building or we might be elected in this building, all of us have husbands or wives or people who care about us—our parents—and they want to know that we're safe. But there comes a day when they turn on the news and, all of a sudden, they hear that there is a shooting—that happened to me when I was working in Ottawa. Unfortunately, someone did come to the Ottawa memorial that is supposed to represent the people who fought for our democracy—the reason we can be elected, the reason we can have a civil debate about disagreements without having to pick up a weapon and take it out on parliamentarians. Unfortunately, this particular individual chose to do that instead of voicing their concerns, whatever they may have been. He went to the memorial and ended up shooting someone who served in the Canadian military and was very, very young. Then he proceeded to storm the Ottawa Parliament and was running in and was obviously proceeding to—at the time, there was a caucus meeting for the government taking place. I happened to be in a building across the street; it was a new finance building. Seeing this all unfold, we ran to the corner of that particular building—we could literally see the memorial, and we could see the car of that particular shooter, and we saw it all unfold, and we saw him run. It was very scary. My heart dropped, because in a different scenario, if I wasn't working in that building and I was working in my previous role, I would have been in that room with the elected officials. There was a particular presentation I was supposed to give at the time, but I moved roles, and someone had to give that presentation for me. I thought of that particular girl who was in that room, of similar age, and the circumstances coming before us. The other thing is that you know the people who are in that building, and suddenly your mind drops—“Are they safe? Are they okay?” Everyone is used to their phones—and there's total chaos. So, in that moment, you need the optimum organization; your trust is in the individuals who are trained.

I'm grateful for the security we have in this Legislature, the training, the vigour that has to go into place—because those things can unfold in a second's notice. Frankly, I wouldn't really fully know what to do, but I would take my direction from those who do, and I trust that they have the training to know what to do. But, in that moment, you wouldn't know—and all of us are looking at our phones

for information, which is probably the worst place, because all kinds of miscommunication could happen as a result. It tells you the vigour that you need.

We can't treat the circumstances of what we do as parliamentarians lightly. We go to work feeling quite safe, but we've seen other Legislatures—most recently in the United Kingdom, unfortunately, when the parliamentarians there were targeted. For them, it wasn't just a scrape or anything; it resulted in death, which is grave and unfortunate. And we recently saw it in the US, despite it being a different composition as our Parliament—we saw that with Speaker Nancy Pelosi and her husband. So it's not something to take lightly—and I think part of this bill is that say that us, as parliamentarians, want in terms of that person who is chosen.

We're very lucky to have Jackie Gordon—and all the work that she has done over the last few years to keep us safe.

I'm really grateful that when I was in Ottawa, we had Kevin Vickers—my gosh, that man, I tell you. He is now the recipient of the Queen's Jubilee—but he also was a recipient of the Canada 125th medal, and he also received the RCMP Long Service Medal. It was no wonder he was in the position he was in, when he took the actions he did by drawing his weapon and shooting down that particular shooter who stormed Parliament Hill—because of his years of service in the RCMP. He also had, of course, experience protecting the Queen and Prince Andrew at the time.

We see the ceremonial role. We all laugh about the mace, and it's interesting how that role has changed—but the reality is, at a time like that, when someone comes in and danger presents itself, it's no longer a ceremonial role; it's really a role to protect us and our workplace and those who are around us, whether it's the pages, or anyone, really. You're really thankful to that person for taking up that role. It's a big sacrifice. You're putting your life on the line—and everyone's security that does that every day. We come to work, we're in a great place, and we have a lot of peaceful protests, but what we've seen sometimes is that peaceful protests can go awry in other places. So I'm very, very grateful for those individuals who choose that call of duty that is service. All of us pick the call of duty for service, but it's a little bit different; we don't put a bulletproof vest on in the morning—and that comes with its heavy burden, where you have to walk around with it every day, if you're security here at this Legislature. I just think we're so fortunate that at every door we go to, at every door we open before we come in here, we have that added layer of protection.

In this bill, we are, of course, strengthening that level of protection. We're modernizing it.

We talked about the history, going back to the role of something like the Sergeant-at-Arms going back to the 14th and 15th century, which took on a little bit of a different role in terms of being the bodyguard. Of course, that has evolved. For those of you who are very interested in history and seeing things evolve, let's turn to a bit of a lighter note. The Ontario Legislature has a podcast, and

the podcast is called ON Parliament Podcast, and if you listen to episode 11—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Thank you. Some people across the way are very riveted by this conversation. Thank you, colleagues.

Speaker, if you tune into episode 11, hosted by Erin—Erin is one of the information education officers, and of course the ON Parliament Podcast is produced by Parliamentary Protocol and Public Relations for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. If you were to tune in to episode 11, you would get to hear all about the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms. Erin goes into the history, which my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga was talking about, and how that role has evolved, and of course, you will get to know about the history of the mace.

We talk a lot about mining critical minerals in our government, just to take a bit of a side note, but the first diamond to be mined in Ontario is actually in the mace, which is exciting. I know my colleague was saying that the second diamond is actually engraved with the motto “Audi alteram partem,” or “Hear the other side.” A lot of Latin phrases—I’m always grateful that I sit underneath the one that says, “Docendo discimus,” which means, “By teaching, we learn.” I’m always learning a lot in this Legislature.

If you tune into episode 11, to digress a little bit, you will hear, again, all about the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms and the evolution of that role and the mace. I just wanted to read a few excerpts from the podcast, for those who might not be able to tune in quickly—because we have a lot of events in our riding. They were saying in the podcast that “the Sergeant-at-Arms that we recognize today wasn’t established until somewhere between the 12th and 14th centuries in Europe.... Back then, the Sergeant-at-Arms was actually the King’s bodyguard,” which we talked about. “In this role as bodyguard, they were responsible for—surprise, surprise—protecting the King at all costs.” They did this “by carrying some pretty impressive weapons and wearing some very fancy armour. There is even some documented evidence that has them carrying decorated battle-maces as both a weapon and as a badge of their particular station.”

That’s really getting into the long history there. But I did touch upon the history of the mace and now what we see it as today and, of course, how the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms has evolved. Just to give you some perspective, I know my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga talked about Mr. Glackmeyer—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** A great colleague.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** —a great man, who has served longest, a whopping 57 years, as the Sergeant-at-Arms.

It’s interesting. We talk about the evolution and modifying roles to meet the times and the needs of the day. But the responsibilities of the Sergeant-at-Arms “remained pretty much the same until the 1970s,” and then it was in the 1970s that the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms “was overhauled a little bit. While they were still responsible for guarding the mace and ensuring the furniture and fittings

are seen to properly, since 1976, the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms”—they added a few extra special duties. “First and foremost, their role is to ensure that the MPPs can operate in a safe and secure environment.” That didn’t happen until 1976. So here we are, in 2022, where I would say that role—as we’ve seen, as I mentioned, what happened in Ottawa—to help us operate in a safe and secure environment has become even more important.

As that role has evolved, “Basically, their first job is safety and security in the building and in particular, the chamber,” and now everything that’s happening around the precinct. Again, that’s recently, in the 1970s, that that has evolved.

That’s why we are here today: to debate Bill 51, to continue modernizing our democracy, to strengthen our democracy, and, again, give us the level of protection that many of us want to know we have the added benefit of, so that when we go home and talk to our spouses or we talk to our kids or our parents, they know that we feel safe and we have that added comfort. Again, I’m really grateful for everyone that makes up this Legislature and does that role.

The other change that we have in this particular modification to strengthen our democratic institutions, to make sure we’re strengthening them at the highest level, is authorities to do things by consensus, and I think that’s really important. A lot of people back home may not know the Board of Internal Economy, but if they’re not aware, you have a member of the opposition, you have a member of the government and you have the Speaker, and I think it’s good to have all representation. This is something that happens in many other jurisdictions as well where you have, again, the Board of Internal Economy helping out with some of these decisions that need to be made, whether it is things like hiring senior members of the Legislature, be it the Sergeant-at-Arms, or simple things like—coming up, as my colleague was elaborating on—office space.

**1900**

And so I think it’s important that we—

*Interjections.*

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** And a lot of colleagues are very excited about that.

Again, we’ve seen other legislatures that have already approved this. Frankly, Ontario sometimes has to get with the times. So part of this bill is getting with the times, Speaker, and just doing some of that housekeeping—housekeeping rules—trying to get all of us in line with some other legislatures across this province, but also to set a high standard. It’s up to us, and as Ontario we set a leading standard for many things we do in policy. It should be no different with how we operate our Ontario Legislature and make sure we operate at the highest level of democracy and have that respect and really ensure that we have responsible government.

All of us are probably students of some level of either philosophy or political science or finance, but responsibility’s important. When we talk about responsible government, and all of the things that we’re trying to do to build on the previous things we’ve done to strengthen this Legislature and strengthen parliamentary democracy, it

really comes down to responsible government. And responsible government, Speaker, don't forget—and we've quoted a lot of Latin today, which is great: *Audi alteram partem*. "Hear the other side." Responsible government means all of us. Whether you're in opposition or you're an independent or you're a very large majority government, it is still responsible government. Responsible government means you have the confidence of the entire Legislature. By strengthening what we have here, we're showing we have the confidence of the entire Legislature, not only of the governing party of the day. We have the buy-in from the opposition, or we have our independents or other members of the Legislature—again, doubling down on the importance of responsible government, again strengthening that foundation of democracy and things that make up why many of us ran, to uphold that institution.

But in addition to upholding that institution and, again, doubling down on strengthening the framework of responsible government, one of the other changes we have in here is of course the very honorary one we just talked about—about the "honourable" and allowing to give that to our Clerk.

Speaker, every day we get up here and we're introducing bills or—our favourite hour, I know, with a lot of our members is private members' hour. That wouldn't be possible, again, without modernizing this place so we could have private members' hour every day. But we couldn't just stand here without the Speaker or the Clerk or the mace on the table. Yes, we can come in here, we could sit at our desks and do our work, but it's that tradition which you have to uphold, in addition to modernizing democracy.

I think we've seen over the last few years that fine balance of really upholding the importance of the parliamentary tradition, whether it's the chair that you're sitting in, Speaker, which was modelled after the previous legislative building that was constructed prior to this one, or even the little clock or the calendar we have there on the table just behind me at the mace. That was again modelled—it might actually be the original. I'll have to ask the legislative library if that is it; I don't know. That is either modelled or the original calendar.

So you have those traditional things, but then you realize, okay, we're in the 21st century and there are things we need to modernize. But we couldn't do it without—every day we get in here and they say, "Order," and it's because the Speaker comes in and we have the Sergeant-at-Arms and the Clerks come in. They allow us to do our jobs, because everything here is documented. It's either in Hansard or it's time-stamped or there's traditions of procedure in how we maintain it. That democracy of debating every bill and, every step of the way, recognizing people that have a voice here that represent thousands of people in their riding—all of that comes together because of that.

I think when you talk about the respect and honour that Clerks or Speakers have in our Commonwealth institutions, it's also great that we are setting a really high standard as the Ontario Legislature by saying we are bestowing the title of "honourable" to our Clerks, which is a very

special bond that Ontario and Canada have with our Commonwealth counterparts, who have similar legislatures to us that do have a Clerk, that do have a Speaker. So now they can look to legislatures like Ontario setting the bar for allowing for that title of "honourable."

In that respect, in this particular bill, we are leading by example in setting a very high statute, but there are other parts of the bill where we're kind of late to the game. We're not really leading by example. We've got to join folks that have already modernized the way they do things.

One example is for transferring the authority from the legislative precinct, including the allocation of office space, to the Board of Internal Economy. We're just joining our counterparts in Ottawa at the House of Commons in how our federal members of Parliament allocate those spaces. British Columbia has a way that they allocate spaces in their statutes, and Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Again, even though we are setting a bar—the first ones to do one thing—we are often joining provinces on other things.

It's not just that, Speaker; it's also the transfer of authority of employees from the assembly to the Speaker to the Board of Internal Economy. That's something you see in different, various statutes in how the House of Commons runs their procedure, but also in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec and New Brunswick.

Lastly, in terms of another part of this bill, when it comes to establishing an all-party appointment, suspension and removal process for the Sergeant-at-Arms—this is something we already do for the Clerk, so we're just adding that to the Sergeant-at-Arms. It's following that particular procedure. That's something, again, that's done in the House of Commons in Ottawa and it's done in other provinces in different types of statutes, whether it's Alberta, New Brunswick or Nova Scotia. So, it is there.

Speaker, I will wrap up by saying that I do hope we have support for this bill. I think it really builds on the foundations of a real true responsible government. It takes all of us in this Legislature to be part of a responsible government, and I want to thank, of course, the folks that make up this building.

I want to end by really thanking folks like Jackie Gordon for her service, for really improving the work that we do here, for really improving security here. Certainly, they're big shoes to fill.

Definitely more work needs to be done, but I'm excited that I will get to be here as a representative and humbly serve the residents of Barrie—Innisfil for another three years and be able to see the progress of how we make this place function better and work better, but also to make it a safer place so all of us can go home to our spouses, to our kids and to our parents, knowing that we are in a safe workplace.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm pleased to ask a question as the House is debating Bill 51 and talking about making changes to the Legislative Assembly Act. As I'm reading from the explanatory note about the need for office space,

I'm thinking about the tour that I had the opportunity to take today with the committee as we went through the building and poked our nose into all sorts of places and learned about this physical structure.

One of the many things we heard was that there was insufficient office space—excuse me; not insufficient office space, insufficient storage space. We were actually standing in what could be an office but is used for storage. This building doesn't have a lot of nooks and crannies that can be used for office space, so I'm wondering if you could tell me what it would look like, if the opposition members should be looking to move, if we're going to be booted out, and how we're going to find the office space.

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It was great, the committee on procedure and House affairs. I was happy to take a tour of the building today with the member from Oshawa and really see the true state of what this place looks like when you take a peek behind the curtains. I think we've all seen the cables running everywhere. We've seen the intermittent WiFi or Internet signals here and there. Running the heat and air conditioning at the same time does seem a little counterintuitive, if you think about it.

When we look at what's happening with this particular bill, there are spaces in the Legislature, sure, that are used as storage right now. But trying to be able to repurpose whatever areas that we can find—there are some vacant offices that are, quite frankly, just sitting vacant in here. But until this legislation is passed we won't be able to reallocate those back to members of this House, so it's very important that we do move this legislation forward so that we are able to get MPPs back in here, into the building, to be able to do the work that they need to do.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?  
1910

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga for such a fantastic speech. I really value the work that he's done in the last four years in the previous Parliament. I also value the work that he's doing today to stand up for the residents of Waterloo region every single day, day in and day out. I also value the colleague for Barrie–Innisfil for her incredible speech.

I'm wondering—I believe my question is to the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, if he could walk me through a little bit more: The member touched on a bit about our parliamentary tradition, right? It all started with the Magna Carta. How does he feel that we are carrying on the tradition today, and how can we do a better job?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** I actually thought that it started with the subways that ran underneath the Parliament here and whether or not there might be a parking garage that could be built at some point.

But it's great for the member from Brampton North to bring up tradition. I think tradition is very important. It is certainly something that needs to be celebrated here in the Legislature. But there are ways to keep with tradition—and the member from Barrie–Innisfil, I thought, brought this up and spoke about it well. There are ways to keep the tradition, but there are ways that we can modernize the background of those traditions and to be able to put more

power into the members of this Legislature and democratize those processes so that we, as duly elected members here in the provincial Legislature of Ontario, have an opportunity to have more input.

Before we move on, I did want to just quickly mention to the member from Oshawa that, as I said in my remarks, opposition office space would be prioritized and no one is getting booted out.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** My next question is actually—I'm again reading from the explanatory note: "Section 102.1 is amended to modify the definition of 'legislative precinct'. The basement of Whitney Block will no longer be included but entrances to Whitney Block will be."

I'm dying to know what's going to happen in the basement of Whitney Block. It sounds extremely—I haven't spent much time in the basement of Whitney Block. So I would like to know, as we are redefining the basement of Whitney Block, what for? What will be there? It feels very Harry Potter-ish. I'm curious about what's going to happen, and is it something that this House would approve of?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** As it sits right now, the basement and I believe the first three floors of Whitney Block are not allocated space that we can use as offices as members. So what we would be doing is returning that back to, essentially, the members of this House. There is office space in the bottom of Whitney Block and, of course, those first three floors where we as parliamentary assistants or ministry people are not allowed to use that office space. There's quite a bit of it sitting vacant right now, and it would be great to be able to have that space returned, back into the hands of the members of this House so, quite frankly, we can all have a place to work and our staff can have a place to work. That's really all it boils down to.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** I was pleased to hear the words from the kind member from Barrie–Innisfil, and I was particularly interested in her remarks regarding democratization, especially in view of the fact that I know a little bit about her personal history, being smuggled out of Soviet Russia and spirited through communist Cuba, an amazing story that every member of the House should venture to learn. So I want to invite the member from Barrie–Innisfil to explain how the provisions of this particular proposition will further democratize the state of affairs in the Legislature.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** Of course, our system of parliamentary democracy was developed over centuries ago in England, as we know, because we had Magna Carta Day thanks to one of my great mentors, former Lady Julia Munro. As a result of her, we have Magna Carta Day, so I did want to acknowledge that, because we have many folks in the Legislature who served with her who are here today.

We saw how, over time, the Magna Carta was revised. So, here again, we are revising just parliamentary procedure, really, to allow for all members of this Legislature

to be involved in certain processes of hiring. Again, one of the top roles, and we went to the history of it—the folks who really provide our safety and our security, just having a voice and say in that. Of course, the Board of Internal Economy, which is democratic and has members from all sides, will be part of the initial step, but all of us having a say in that as well by a two-thirds vote, I think, is increasing the democratization of the process.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad to continue this conversation. My question had been about why the basement of Whitney Block will no longer be included in the legislative precinct, and the answer was about it being used as office space. If it's being consistent with our offices, which are in the legislative precinct, why would the basement—who needs an office in a basement that would not be part of the legislative precinct? What is going to happen in the basement? Why isn't it included? Also—no, I'll just stick with that one. It's going to be carved out. I want to know why, because my little spidey sense is tingling. I don't trust this. So please reassure me and the people of Ontario about what that basement chunk will be used for.

**Ms. Andrea Khanjin:** I'll just refer to the legislation. As the member may know, because she was here back in 2018, back in 2018 the bottom of Whitney Block—in fact, all of Whitney Block really—had that same ability. So all we're doing is reverting back to 2018. Nothing special happened in 2018. I just wanted to provide that member with that extra historical front. That was what happened in 2018, and we're just reverting back to 2018.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** No further time for questions, but we do have time for further debate.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** It's always an honour to be able to rise in this House and today on Bill 51, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, put forward by the Honourable Paul Calandra.

I'm going to start out with that I never thought I would be sitting here doing a lead on a bill like this. I think I've told this story once before in the House, but I'm going to tell it again. Talk about how things have improved? When I was elected in 2011, it was the first time I had ever had an office. I sat in my office; it was room 156. We didn't have an office for the first three or four weeks, because it takes a while, so I shared an office with a colleague. But when I got my own office, it was a cool day; the first time in my life I had ever had an office. And what you do in an office is you look around and check things out.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** What did you find?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Oh, Brampton North. He can be a pain sometimes.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Sometimes.

Anyway, what I found on my office desk was something that looked like a garage door opener, but I didn't see a garage door.

**Mr. Robert Bailey:** A TV remote.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** No, I know what a TV remote is, to the member from Lambton. I know what a TV remote is; I'm used to a TV remote.

But this looked like a garage door opener. So I decided I'm going to push the button to look for the garage door. I pushed the button, and nothing happened. I pushed the button three more times. Then things happened.

That was the panic button, and that is the first time that I had to deal with legislative security. They explained to me that that was the panic button.

I noticed just a little while ago that they changed the panic button. The panic button is now under my desk. I don't know if they changed it for everybody, but mine has changed. I've never had to push the panic button since.

I'm just saying how green I was then and how little I knew then. I don't pretend to be a legislative expert; I'm not.

**1920**

I'm incredibly honoured to be standing here, but I've learned a few things over the last few years and I think as I go along you're going to find out that I disagree on many issues with the government House leader. We actually agree on some things. I think we both love this place. We will disagree on other issues. There's one other thing I learned this morning, because I often meet the government House leader in the cafeteria: I learned at noon that we both dislike cilantro. So there are two things—only two so far—that we agree on. I told the government House leader once that perhaps in another life we almost might be friends. But we do share a respect and a love for this place.

The government House leader has had the great opportunity to be in two Houses, and that's pretty cool. But the longer you're here, the more you will respect this place, the more you will realize that little things matter. The weeds matter. In this bill, particularly, the weeds matter, because we're not cheering for soccer here. Although the member from Brampton North is a great cheerer, we're not cheering for a game here. We're making laws here that will impact people for the rest of their lives. I'm not saying changes are bad; I'm not saying that. But we always need to be cognizant and careful of changes.

I remember when I was first here, the first thing that you do—again, for all of you who are just here—is you elect a Speaker. That's the only secret vote in this place, the only one. You have the boxes. There was some controversy about how the Speaker was elected, and I'm not going to talk about that. I will say one thing—and I'm not going to out the member who told me, but we were at an event and he asked me, “Could you travel after that vote?” I'm not going to go any further. He asked me that and I said, “I don't know what you're talking about.”

But just think about that. There's a reason why that vote is secret. There is a reason: because the Speaker has to have the confidence of everyone in this House. It's a partisan game, we all know that, but the Speaker needs to have the confidence of the House that he or she is—and they're all human—as impartial as possible. Under our system, before the changes—if these changes are passed; I'm not going to presume. The way our system was set up,



the impartiality of the Speaker is very important for how the process works.

I don't believe anyone here has tried to get elected, got elected, or didn't get elected, for the wrong reasons. I don't believe that. We all want to make Ontario a better place. But it is a partisan, fractious place, and we need to be sure that the rules of engagement are impartial. That's why this place is two swords' lengths—we don't have swords anymore. The Sergeant-at-Arms has a sword, but we don't. We need to realize that. That's why a lot of power, under our current rules, is in the Speaker's staff, is in the Speaker's purview. And I'm going to come back to that, what the role of the Speaker is.

Another part of this place that's very important—extremely important—but not a lot of people understand is the Board of Internal Economy. I'm not going to talk about what happens at the Board of Internal Economy, because it's a bit like Vegas, right? But it's a place where decisions are made as impartially as possible, and that's a place where a lot of decisions are made that impact all of us.

Before 2012—no, I'm going to back up. In 2012, an important change was made at the Board of Internal Economy, a very important change, and that change actually makes some of the things in Bill 51 plausible. The Board of Internal Economy is the only committee in this Legislature that has equal representation from the government and from the opposition; it's the only one, and it operates by consensus. So right now the two members on the Board of Internal Economy are myself and the government House leader. Each organized party has representation at the Board of Internal Economy. So under the Liberal government, we had two members from the Liberal Party—two MPPs, not members of the party, but two MPPs from the government side—and one from the Conservative side and one from the NDP. That was me, too. And it operated by consensus. So now, if one of us says no, it doesn't happen. And the Speaker doesn't vote, so some of the things where you think that perhaps the Speaker is controlling things—the Speaker doesn't vote at the Board of Internal Economy. It's by consensus.

But it wasn't always like that. That's why the things that were impartial, the things that need to be impartial, were controlled by the Speaker. Because every other committee—and I'm not disparaging the way committees work. All committees, except the Board of Internal Economy, are structured in the same percentage as the election. You control the committees, regardless of who is Chair or Vice-Chair, and I don't have a problem with that. This is a partisan place, and committees are a bit partisan. But the Board of Internal Economy runs by consensus.

What will change these rules considerably is if, in the future, this government or perhaps another one changes the makeup of the Board of Internal Economy to what it was before 2012. Because then, despite the best intentions of everyone—and I'm not trying to criticize anyone's intentions—it has the possibility of becoming partisan, because it won't be by consensus anymore. That's why you need someone impartial like the Speaker, someone who has the confidence of everyone.

That's very crucial—extremely. I can't overemphasize that enough. The Board of Internal Economy is an incredible place, and it's a place that—some days I don't know why I'm sitting there either. But it runs by consensus.

I'm going to be very upfront: I'm not sure I have confidence that that legislative change is not coming in the next bill, that the Board of Internal Economy—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The member from Waterloo—no, no.

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** Kitchener—Conestoga.

**Mr. John Vanthof:**—Kitchener—Conestoga disagrees with me, and I respect that. But there's no guarantee of that. Even if your government doesn't do it, there's no guarantee that another one won't do it. That is the biggest issue with these changes—there are others, and I'm going to talk for a while—because there's no guarantee that that won't change.

**1930**

We all know that in committees that are structured the way the other committees are, the government always gets their way—and that's the result of the election; I've heard that from you all kinds of times: “We have more seats.” I understand. But if you change that the Board of Internal Economy is going to be responsible for hiring and firing, other than the Sergeant-at-Arms, and then someone changes how the Board of Internal Economy is structured, then all of a sudden the people who work in this place could be subject to political pressure. Will they? I can't guarantee that. Won't they? I can't guarantee that, but it will be there. The threat will be there.

That's a problem. That is a big, big problem, because when the Speaker is the final say for the staff—and the Board of Internal Economy, right now, has input. This isn't secret. The Board of Internal Economy approves the budgets of the independent officers, your members' budgets. The Board of Internal Economy has a lot of say, and if someone presents a budget, we have the right to ask questions. I have to say, the government House leader asks tough questions. I do sometimes too. I'm not saying that. But if the structure of that board changes, it makes these rules—the possibility to weaponize these rules is there.

If you know there's a problem or could be a problem—we're in the business of making rules. We're in the business of making sure. One of the things that we all want for this place is that, regardless of who is in power, we want the legislation coming out of this place to be the best legislation possible, but we want to make sure that the staff here—that everyone—does not feel pressured politically in any way.

I'm not sure that with this legislation—not with this legislation alone, but if the next legislation or legislation a year from now changes the structure of the Board of Internal Economy to the structure that the government gets its way regardless of who is in government, the independence of the staff is going to be much different. The one thing that I find incredible about this place—and I never thought that I would ever be in a Legislature—is that we can all go to the Clerks' table and we are sure that it's totally impartial. But if the makeup of the Board of Internal Economy changes, there's no longer that guarantee, and I

think we all have to think about this—how that could impact you, because remember, the sides change, and the rules that you make will also impact you when the sides change, and we don't want that. And to say—

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The Minister of Northern Development just heckled me about an office. The fact that we need legislation—you're being told you need legislation to change the offices? I would discount that. If someone—

*Interruption.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Oh, Bob, are you okay?

*Interjections.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The issue of offices: There are certain things I can't say about the Board of Internal Economy—because that's one of the good things about the Board of Internal Economy. We have never brought the issue of offices up, but if the issue of offices was brought forward to the board, there would be a fulsome discussion.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It's not in the purview of the board, unfortunately.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** The government House leader says that it's not in the purview of the board. Then I stand corrected. Like I said, I'm not perfect. But I am right about the basic premise—that the board is the only one that goes by, if I say no or if the government says no, that's the end. But if it changes, and I'm not saying that it will, and I'm not saying that all the changes that this government has brought forward—and this government has brought a lot forward, and they will argue—and, rightfully, they're going to put their best points forward.

This government has made 10 changes to the act in four years—and the previous government, two in 15 years. Some of them are good. Some of them are really good. The question-and-answer period in the House? Much better. I give credit where credit is due. Before, it was four members' statements—and then the person who made the speech made another member's statement. Now it's much better. The Minister of Northern Development came over and talked to me about it, and I said it—some changes that come from the federal side are good. And there are other changes that are good. Again, I'm not saying that everything the government does on this is wrong. But when you change some things, you have to make sure that you look at what could happen in the future.

To put the hiring and firing of all the staff, other than the Sergeant-at-Arms, in the purview of the Board of Internal Economy—under its current makeup, I'm not sure I'm in favour, but I'm not frightened; but if the makeup changes, that's much different.

1940

I would like to give a shout-out to, and I think I did at the start—the level of professionalism that our legislative staff has is incredible. Something else that I thought was really odd, the first day I walked in, was that everybody knew my name. It really caught me by surprise. People calling me “sir” has never worked for me, but that people knew my name always caught me by surprise—and that security came into my office and very professionally said, “Please, Mr. Vanthof, don't ever touch that button again

unless you have a real problem.” They were all very professional.

Having sat at the Board of Internal Economy for a long time and knowing the way it works, I question whether the members of the Board of Internal Economy have the ability to judge. I'm sure the government House leader will disagree with me, and that's fine. This isn't partisan; it will turn out to be, possibly, partisan. I'm not sure that we have the ability to judge.

I'd like to switch to the Sergeant-at-Arms. I'd like to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms for her service. I was on the board when she was hired. All I can say about the process when she was hired is—they hired a very good Sergeant-at-Arms. I have no complaints. The same process was used again, and the result was not quite what we expected. I'm not sure that we need to change how the Sergeant-at-Arms is hired, but I'm not opposed to the idea of a member from each party—that's how the other independent officers are hired. I've been on a few of those committees. I'm not necessarily opposed, but I question whether those members—one of the things you need to be, as a Sergeant-at-Arms, is a security expert. I listened very intently to the member from Barrie–Innisfil about the history of the Sergeant-at-Arms—I've had two since I've been here. Our threat level has changed considerably as well in those 11 years. I don't think anyone is going to deny that. This Sergeant-at-Arms made many proposals, many changes, and I think sometimes the board didn't go as far as she wanted to. That's just the way it works sometimes. But I'm not sure, looking back, whether the system was broke. The federal system could be much different, and I'm not saying it's better or worse, but I would just like to say that I don't think that the old system was broke, based on who we had for Sergeant-at-Arms. I want to put that on the record.

So change to make things better—okay. Change for the sake of change, or because it's done differently somewhere else—I'm not sure.

I'm going to go through some of the things in the bill. Again, the office space: If it's not under the board's purview, that could be changed. Or if it's under the purview of the Speaker—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, only the act.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Only the act. Okay. Thank you, government House leader.

Again, I'd like to put this: “Section 76 is amended to provide for the Board of Internal Economy, rather than the Speaker, to appoint or dismiss employees of the Office of the Legislative Assembly.” That works until the Board of Internal Economy doesn't go by consensus. If it goes by majority rule—and the majority is always the government, because that's the way an election works—then all of a sudden that is no longer an impartial process.

The government House leader is a much better speaker than I am—

**Mr. Mike Harris:** You're doing a great job.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** For a farmer, I'm not bad.

I want to make that really clear—“is amended to provide for the Board of Internal Economy, rather than the Speaker, to appoint or dismiss employees of the Office of the Legislative Assembly.” Right now, it's consensus—I

don't see anything anywhere in that act that says that it's always going to be consensus. You're assuming that it's going to stay—and I hope it does, and I would be much less worried if I was sure that it was going to.

But it has been our experience—and perhaps, in the opposition, we always find that the government is doing things to hurt us, and the government probably thinks that the opposition is always being a royal pain. When the standing orders were changed to take out reasoned amendments and to speed things up—and there have been other changes to speed things up—I'm not sure that the quality of the legislation coming out has been any better.

We put reasoned amendments forward, yes, to slow things down, to give us a chance to actually look at the legislation.

This legislation—and this isn't even partisan. No one on the outside is going to get really excited about this, because it's too far in the weeds. But I didn't get to read this or think about it until yesterday. There's nothing in the standing orders anymore—that I can slow it down, so I actually can get someone who's got more legal expertise than me to look at it for a couple of days. That's what reasoned amendments were for—to slow things down so we could actually have a chance to look at it. You took them out. We can argue whether it takes a week or a week and a half to make a bill—but we're not making sausage.

Based on those experiences from our side, and I'm sure that the government—we'll talk about the bad experiences that they've had with us. But based on those experiences, honestly, I don't have a lot of faith that that change isn't coming down the pike. Because we always live under—in a majority government, the government can always change the rules. The trick to governing responsibly is sometimes not using the hammer all the time, but I'm not sure that this government, honestly, has learned that.

I heard someone who was a mayor for 31 years—and I was in municipal council—argue that under the bill, the strong-mayors, as long as it's a provincial priority, 33% of council is enough. In what world, whether you're in the curling club or the figure skating club or a municipal council or anything else, is 33% enough—regardless of who else's priority it is? If you can't get more than 33% of your group to agree, then perhaps it's not a good idea.

**1950**

If we cannot trust the Legislature of Ontario to hold up the premise that 50% plus one is the way democracy works, then we can't trust—and this government, right now, is putting forward the premise that if it's a government priority, 33% plus the mayor is enough. Do you know what? Down home, that doesn't work.

When the pages are here, if there are nine pages and six want to go one place and three want to go the other place, but the page captain is one of the three, they go where the six want to go; they don't go where the three want to go.

You may disagree; that's what this place is for. But you're asking us to trust that you're not going to change the makeup of the board—

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Let's vote on it.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Again, the member from Brampton North is great at heckling; I commend him for it.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I just want to vote, John.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Do you know what? You will win this vote. This isn't a surprise. These changes will likely come to pass because you have a majority.

I'm just trying to tell you, and trying to put it on the record, that you will also be responsible if things change because you've made these changes. You need to think that through.

You need to think about the Board of Internal Economy and that it runs by consensus. So, if anything, you think, "Oh my, we could have got this if the Speaker would have done this differently"—no, it's the Board of Internal Economy. As a majority government, it will be easy for you to change the Board of Internal Economy to get your way, again.

We all like sports, and we all watch sports.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** How do you know?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Most of us. We trust the rules. But if you know the rules are going to change in the middle of the game, you lose faith in the game.

You have a majority. You get to set the rules. But the game isn't for you to win; the game is for Ontarians to get good legislation. And the way you get good legislation is to ensure that for the people who work in the legislative precinct, at all levels, their impartiality is ensured and they are under no pressure at any time.

That's why the Speaker had the power—because we vote for the Speaker. It's a free and fair vote, but it's going to change with this legislation.

Again, "Section 78 is amended to provide for the Board of Internal Economy, rather than the Speaker, to prescribe duties and functions of employees.

"Section 90 is amended to add powers and duties of the Board of Internal Economy relating to the allocation of office space." The government House leader corrected me on that.

But "Section 102.1 is amended to modify the definition of 'legislative precinct.' The basement of Whitney Block will no longer be included but entrances to Whitney Block will be."

So what's in the basement? We're short of space, and we're taking space out. I'm assuming that the basement of Whitney Block was in the precinct before. I'm not trying to make anything nefarious—again, the government House leader will correct me, and I'm happy with that.

*Interjection.*

**Mr. John Vanthof:** We usually vote against—actually, we have voted for some of your legislation lately. We vote against legislation based on what the poison is compared to what's good. Every legislation has some good and some that we don't agree with—and with every bill, we have to make that decision. But that is a question.

"The new section provides that the Board of Internal Economy, rather than the Speaker, will prepare accessibility plans." I'm not going to dwell on this at all, but the way it works now, very qualified staff advise the Speaker. The board actually approves the budgets for these plans or

doesn't—right now, the board approves, so nothing goes ahead. The proposals are made and the board can say yea or nay. Whether accessibility plans aren't happening now because of the Speaker—I don't want to give that impression at all, because it's the board that does those things. I don't think I'm going to belabour this much anymore.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Thank God.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** People are thanking me.

But please think of me or think of this speech when, at some point, you're going to be told that we have to change the composition of the board because things just aren't getting done. When it doesn't run by consensus anymore and you've made these changes, you might not like what you got; you might not like what you asked for. There are things that I can't say because I'm on the board—and I don't want to say. But it was a huge change—to change the board to consensus. Because of that, these changes aren't that nefarious. But if you change it back—and it's fully within your power to do that—you will be responsible for that.

With that, Speaker, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to speak, and I'd like to thank the people of Timiskaming–Cochrane for actually allowing me to stand here.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** It has certainly been an interesting evening here in the Ontario Legislature. I have, I will say, probably the most important question that is going to be asked here tonight: Does the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane think that cilantro tastes like soap?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** To the member for Kitchener–Conestoga—I remembered your riding. Yes, I'm not a big fan of cilantro. I wasn't expecting that question.

I appreciate your sense of humour. We may disagree on many things, but you come from a long political family as well. I disagreed with many of the things that your father stood for, but I also think that he believed in this place, as you do. So I thank you for the question, and I thank you for the bit of humour.

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**Mr. Mike Harris:** Yes or no?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** When I was a kid, I ate my fair bit of soap. Cilantro is worse. Okay?

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** To the member: Thank you so much for your presentation. I listened very intently. There was a lot in there that I learned.

I'm just curious to know: With respect to the items that you've identified that are areas of concern, especially about having the Speaker's powers probably diminished further and replacing that with the Board of Internal Economy, the concerns of corruption or perhaps—I'm trying to use my words carefully.

*Interjections.*

**MPP Kristyn Wong-Tam:** Please let me just finish. Just please let me finish, if I may.

I know that there are times when we don't want to have undue influence. I'm mindful that we have a public service

that is impartial, that is fair. So if we have that concentration of further authority and it becomes politicized—is the member here concerned that that may happen?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** That's a very tough question. This is a partisan place, and it needs to be. We have elections, we put forward our platforms, and people choose. As a result, that partisanship seeps into this place. It just does, and we need to make sure that it doesn't seep into the people who set the rules and the people who we rely on for advice, the people who keep it safe. We need to make sure.

My concern is that that partisanship, if the makeup of the board is changed, could seep in. That is my concern.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions? I recognize the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

*Interjections.*

**Mr. Rick Byers:** Thank you for that ovation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the member for his remarks on this bill. I guess, as I get more familiar—I'm always learning, as legislation is introduced, and one thing I've learned with the introduction of Bill 51 is the power the Speaker currently has over this assembly and the appointment of many, many employees.

I must confess, with my background in the commercial world, for an organization as large as this to have such fundamental powers rest with one person, I must say I find a little bit—yes, I know that person is voted in by the assembly. But I must say, and I'm curious: I look at the transfer of these powers to the Board of Internal Economy to be a very substantial step forward in the management of the organization. Does the member agree that that change, in fact—is it not a better way to go than what we have with just one person currently?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you for that question. The way it's structured now, at the end, the one person is the person who we vote for; it's not the person alone that makes the decisions. Again, I said in my remarks that the way the board is structured now, I'm not that concerned. I'm concerned—I'm always concerned. But if the board structure changes to a majority rule, regardless of who is in the majority, you have the potential for political seepage.

When we're in question period, I'm sure sometimes we think the Speaker favours us and sometimes you think the Speaker favours you, right? But we believe in his impartiality, and I think he has done a good job. We need to make sure that we know that it's going to continue to be impartial. That means we can't change the structure with these changes.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Ms. Doly Begum:** I want to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his very informative presentation. I also learned a lot. I know that one of the Latin phrases that the member from Barrie–Innisfil was talking about is “By teaching, we learn,” and I feel like we learn and teach in this House a lot. It's such an honour to work alongside colleagues like Timiskaming–Cochrane.

One of the things you talked about is—and you conceded and said the government House leader is correct—section 90 and the need for allocation of office space. We heard from quite a few members about that need. Would you say that it is possible for us to just have section 90 and none of the other things in the bill? Is that a possibility, and what would that look like? It's a very simple—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Back to the member for response.

**Mr. John Vanthof:** I guess anything's possible. But if this bill or these problems had been presented a week ago, two weeks ago, instead of yesterday and starting the debate on Thursday night—we're all tired, right?—it would have maybe been a bit different.

Again, the government has the right to present bills, has the right when they see—we all do, when we identify problems. Believe it or not, in my opinion, we actually do solve problems at the Board of Internal Economy. We don't always agree, but we actually do solve problems.

So I think anything is possible. Any bill could be changed, and that's why we debate bills and amend bills.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** Jeez, everybody. Don't all get up at once. Holy smokes.

I want to talk a little bit about office space as well, and I think it's really important that we recognize that the Legislative Assembly Act precludes ministers and parliamentary assistants from actually having space within the legislative precinct. It's a challenge for a lot of us, and I want to point out that the members of the opposition and independent Liberal members don't have to deal with a lot of these issues because they have office space here, every single one of them.

So I just want to say to the member opposite, what are his thoughts? Does he think that all members of the Legislature should have an office within the precinct? Because I believe we should.

I've had an opportunity to see Parliaments all across Canada and several other Legislatures within North America and throughout the world. I've had the opportunity to travel with my father and see how things work in other jurisdictions, and almost everywhere I've been, MPPs or legislators have an office in their building. We don't have the ability here. Would you support it?

**Mr. John Vanthof:** Thank you for that question. It was a thoughtful question. I think it should be looked at. I'm not opposed. We need to figure out how that's going to work physically. I think that's something we can look at. We need to learn how that's going to work physically.

If you think back, I think one of the reasons that we have, for some things, 30-minute bells is to give you time to get—right? Sometimes you wonder why things like that happen, but that's why that happens. Is it a pain if you're a—I don't know; I've never been a minister or a PA. I can assume it's a pain, and if things can be done to make that happen, I'm not opposed.

But the real issues in this bill aren't about the office space. They are about making sure that this place stays impartial and that we know for sure that it stays—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** That's all the time we have for questions.

Further debate?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise and talk a little bit about this debate tonight. Let me first just start by saying a couple of things that should hopefully give the opposition some comfort with respect to the basement of Whitney Block. As the members opposite will know, the entire government complex has been closed for a decant. That's what we call Macdonald Block, and that also includes many parts of Whitney. The offices are being cleared out of Whitney for renovations, and the government requires space. Before 2018, all of Whitney Block was a government building. The opposition voted against that change in 2018, but now regret having voted against that, so we're going back to 2018.

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With respect to the member for Oshawa, I want to again reiterate to all colleagues that the bill, as put forward here today, contemplates ensuring that the first people who get access to this building are the opposition—absolutely first—because we don't want a situation in the future where a government can decide through the BOIE or something that members should be five miles away from this place. That's why I put it right in the legislation that is presented to the members of this House today. It also guarantees space for the caucus offices. That is what's right in the bill.

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane is right: We get along quite well. I do consider him a friend, and I know, despite his comments, he likes me a lot. We would probably share a beverage together. But the entire premise of his discourse—and I appreciate it—was that there's nothing wrong with what's in here as long as the Board of Internal Economy doesn't change. The reality is, colleagues, that the only way never to change a piece of legislation in this place is to have a dictatorship and say, "No, we're never, ever going to change anything ever again." The member knows that that's absolutely not possible.

What he's saying—the last time the Board of Internal Economy was changed was under a minority government in this place, not through a majority government. The House of Commons, which he referred to, has had an equal BOIE since 2003. So I would suggest that this place can learn from other jurisdictions. I would suggest that this place can learn from New Brunswick, from British Columbia, from Alberta, from Manitoba. I would suggest that that is important.

That's what these changes are to do: They put the authority of this place back into the hands of the people, where it belongs; into the hands of the elected members of Parliament, because we're all sent here on behalf of our community to represent them. No one person in this place, whether they are elected or sitting at that table or in that chair, should ever think that they are more important than this place and the people they represent, Madam Speaker. Let me suggest to you that the moment anybody thinks that

they are more important than the people who sent them here, that's when it's time for them to leave this place.

The member opposite talks about some of the changes that were in here. I know a lot of members have been focusing on the Sergeant-at-Arms. It's a small piece of what's in here. To put it into context, the Sergeant-at-Arms is the head police official in this place, responsible for a large police force, responsible not only for our safety and security, but the safety and security of the people who come into this place, but also responsible for ensuring that the people who want to visit this place have access to the place, to ensure that we don't go too far in keeping people out.

Every other officer of this Parliament is selected by a committee of members of Parliament. In fact, the last officer of Parliament—not the last, but the last two officers of Parliament. The Poet Laureate was selected by a panel of this Parliament made up not only of the government and the opposition but also the independents. Before that, the Information and Privacy Commissioner—the government had the right to suggest it would only be government and official opposition, but we didn't do that. We also invited a member of the independents to come on, thereby putting the government in a minority position not once but twice, because we trusted the process.

Now, the member opposite says, “Well, they could change the composition of the Board of Internal Economy.” If I wanted to do that, I'd just simply change the composition of the Board of Internal Economy. I wouldn't need any of this, Madam Speaker. It would be a heck of a lot easier for me to present a two-line bill changing the Board of Internal Economy to government-majority rule. But no, that's not what this bill contemplates; it contemplates putting powers back into the hands of the members, and it is something that we started in the last Parliament.

Again, we created a committee in this place called the procedure and House affairs committee. The whole point of that committee, the entire point of that committee, was to ensure that the members of this place were represented through the procedure and House affairs committee. Now, when we made those changes, I could have put any one of the Conservative members as the Chair of that committee, but we didn't. We put right in the standing orders that it had to be an opposition Chair. Why? Because we needed to ensure that there was a counterweight, that there was accountability. And that is why the Chair of that committee is the member for Oshawa—it could be any member of the opposition, but it has to be an opposition member.

Part of that, of course, will be, eventually, a decant of this place, renovations and upgrades to this place, which will go back through the procedure and House affairs committee. But at the same time, it is their job, it is their mandate, to ensure that whoever this House, whoever we as members of the Board of Internal Economy put forward to you as having made a decision on your behalf—that committee should get the opportunity to take a look at the work that we have done. That's the whole point of why we put that committee in place in the last Parliament. And if any one person thinks that they are above that, they're

sorely mistaken, because the power rests in the members of this place. It does not rest in any one person.

We've talked a lot about office space. The members say, “Oh, well, it's just office space. We can do whatever we want.” Well, we can't do whatever we want, because the legislation doesn't allow us to do what we want, nor are we suggesting in this legislation that we should be able to. But what we are suggesting is that members of Parliament need to have access to reasonable office space to do their jobs.

Madam Speaker, you're far too young to remember, but in the 1970s, members of Parliament didn't get office space in here. They didn't get constituency offices. It was reserved for cabinet ministers, this place. But they decided that members could not do their job if they did not have the ability to represent their community, have space and do their work in this building.

And not all members are going to get an office in here, obviously. The building is too small. The building needs renovations. We need storage. But there should not be empty offices that members cannot have access to. That should not be the case. Members should not have to beg, plead, to get access to their own building. It is inappropriate and this legislation will change that—not in favour of the government, but in favour of all members of this House, and I think that that is the way that it should be.

The member talks about the authority of the Speaker. What the bill does, of course, is put the authority—the day-to-day authority, it rests within the Speaker's hands. The bill does that. But it then, again, puts the decision-making of other parts of this place back into the hands of the members, as expressed through the Board of Internal Economy. The member opposite forgets that even a Speaker can be fired by the members of Parliament. He suggests that that's not possible. Well, it is possible: 66% of the members of this place can get up and fire a Speaker any time they want. Nobody's contemplating that, but that is the reality. That's the reality. And that is why we have a Board of Internal Economy for consistency. That is why it is equal, and that is why, I suggest, probably, they made it equal: so that no one person, no one party has more authority over this place than does somebody else.

The changes that they are against were made in 2018. And the member's right. They were made in 2018. He voted against it. It's easy for me to say he voted against it, but it was in a budget bill and they weren't going to support the budget bill in any way, shape or form. We know that. They ran against it. They weren't going to support our budget in 2018, and I don't fault them for that. They're in opposition. They wanted to do that.

But looking back at the debates of that time, not one concern was raised over the changes that were made in 2018. Not one member—of a larger NDP caucus, granted, at that time—suggested that there was a problem with the changes that were being made. Nobody got up in their place. Nobody talked about it. Nobody suggested it was wrong, that it had to be changed, that what the government was suggesting was wrong. There was a lot of focus on the budget measures. And now we've brought forward a process, as I said, that would allow us to put back control

of many of the aspects of how this place is governed to the way it was prior to 2018.

As the member for Kitchener–Conestoga talked about, there was a time when the government decided how members were treated in this place. And there are other legislatures in this country that make that exact same determination. It's not something that any of us want because, as the member said, we could one day be over there; you could be over here. And that is why the legislation ensures that it is the Board of Internal Economy that makes the decisions on how this place is governed. That is what members expect. That is what this House voted on in 2012—a minority government at the time—and that is what will continue beyond this.

#### 2020

But let's be under no illusion, colleagues: Anybody can change that any time they want. This has no impact on whether me or you, if you're sitting over here—or the Liberals, if they wanted to change the makeup of the Board of Internal Economy. I look back at 2012. I don't see any great consultation about changing the Board of Internal Economy and its membership at the time. There was no great consultation in the chamber. There was no massive talk about it. The NDP weren't manning the barricades demanding changes. The members knew it had to happen. The members knew it had to happen because the place had to be modernized. That's what we do. We modernize the place. We make changes all the time to make this place better for its members. At least, that's what I hope we would do. We have a massive majority—

#### *Interjection.*

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes, we're happy about that, and we could make life increasingly more difficult for the opposition, but we haven't gone in that direction.

The member talks about wanting to win. I'm a House leader for the government side. Do I want to win all the time? You're darn right I do. It's not my job to help you win. It's not my job to frustrate the legislation that I think is important to the people of the province of Ontario. It's not my job to slow it down. It's my job to get it passed. It's this caucus's job to bring it to the House, get it passed and do its job. It is your job to do what you think is right.

We've put in a lot of processes in place to allow them to continue to frustrate. That's what amazes me. I guarantee you, colleagues, we're not going to be here till midnight tonight debating this bill. We've put all kinds of things in place. Concurrence debates: They didn't have that. When a bill comes back from a committee, we put a debate in place where the opposition, if they don't like it, have just got to stand 12 people and that starts an immediate debate for half an hour on a bill. Why did we do that? Not only for the opposition, but for the independents, who otherwise might not get an opportunity to comment on a piece of government legislation. Do you know how many times it's been used? Once. No, no, colleagues: one time.

We added members to committees of this place. We didn't have to. We could have just said, "No, we're going to just sit with what we've got." But we added members. The results of the election weren't as you had hoped; they

were better than we had hoped. The way the rules are in this place, we could have taken severe measures against the members of the opposition and basically shut them out of—put one person on committees. We didn't do that. We actually had to fight to put more NDP members on committees and then we had to fight to put the independents on the committees so that we can have legislation debated more often. We had to fight to get that done because the members opposite—and, I grant it, maybe it's me—always are looking for the hidden agenda.

Well, let me be very clear to the opposition. I'll be as clear as I can possibly be: There is not one moment in this place where you are going to find me not representing my community and not doing what I can do on behalf of the government to make sure that what we bring forward isn't passed as quickly as possible if I think it is the right thing to do.

But by "as quickly as possible," what does that mean? It means maybe sending things on the road, sending it on committees, which we have done. We've heard time and time and time again, "Well, you don't send bills on the road." Well, when we send them on the road, they don't show up. What is it that you want us to do? So not only do we have to send committees on the road, then we've got to beg them to actually send their members to participate in the committees that are going on the road. That's a decision that you can make. I get it. I completely understand. But don't say that the processes are lacking democratic accountability when all of the measures that have been taken in this place have been about improving, for everybody, how this place works. Every decision that has been made has been about improving accountability in this place, way before the last election.

We've modified committees. Why did we modify committees? Because they needed to be updated. There needed to be more of them. They needed to do more work. They needed to do studies—studies such as the procedure and House affairs committee is doing right now. Like other committees in other Parliaments in other Legislatures, they need to go on the road. We televised those committees. They didn't have cameras in the room—what a secret agenda: The government paid to have cameras put in our committee rooms so that people could actually watch what the people of Ontario paid their members of Parliament to do. How anti-democratic of us to do that. We paid for technology so that we could get Zoom on the road. Everybody knows about Zoom. It shouldn't just be the purview that if you can come here to Toronto, you can participate in the committee—no, it shouldn't be that way. So we paid to have all of that upgraded.

We're looking at how we can make this place better; that is what is encompassed in this.

I'm sorry; the members opposite are getting—they might find that I'm getting heated and hot about it, because I do care about this place. More importantly, I care about all of the members of this place.

We spent 15 years on the opposition benches, so I think the Conservative caucus knows a little about being on that side of the House. Granted, you're the only party that has

spent more time over there than us, but there will come a time, one day—

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Don't say it.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** —when you might be in the third-party spot again. I don't know when, but it could happen. And the way I am treating the independents, I will treat—if I'm lucky enough to still be here. I've been kicked out of office. It's fine. It happens. Very few of us get to leave this place on our own, because we want to leave. We love the work that we do.

There's no member of this place who should feel they can't do their job because Parliament doesn't let them do their job. I shouldn't have members of my caucus running half an hour down the road, back and forth, maybe visiting their office once a week, if they're lucky, trying to find space where they can meet people who are having receptions in this place. You can have a reception in this place, but half of my members can't meet with somebody in this place. That's wrong. It might not always be the case—there are still going to be some members of this place who can't do that, because there won't be enough space here for everybody. But the legislation ensures that, for now, myself and the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane will have a voice at that table and will get to decide and help put in place a framework where all members are treated equally, so that no member is discriminated against because of what they do or how they do it—but that protects the opposition in its ability to do the job of holding government accountable, because, obviously, that is a job they have to do.

Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for all of the people who work here. I know that the last week has been a bit challenging for people in this place, and that's fine. But I will reiterate: This place is about the people who send us here. We occupy a chair for a little bit of time, and eventually somebody else will occupy the chair. Even the people who were here the longest, either by their own choice or by somebody else's choice, no longer sit in the chair that the people gave them the opportunity to do. It is not good enough for us to sit here and say that just because that's the way it has been done for the longest time, that's the way it should happen.

This is the fifth-largest government in North America and the second-largest government in Canada. We are responsible, as the member opposite said, for incredible decisions that impact the lives of the people of this province and beyond—not just Ontario. If we can't take responsibility for our own House, then how the heck can we go out there and take responsibility for the decisions that we're making?

I will reiterate: This House isn't about me, it's not about them, it's not about the members who sit at the table and do absolutely great work; it is about the people who sent us here. No one should ever think they are above the people who sent them here; if they do, this House needs to ensure that the power comes back to the people who sent them here. That's what this legislation does.

I hope the members will support the legislation.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Ms. Jennifer K. French:** I'm glad to follow the government House leader.

I do have a question about accessibility. Section 103 is replaced, and it provides that the BOIE, instead of the Speaker, will prepare accessibility plans.

**2030**

I will say that the cameras in committee have been a welcome change. I know the member from Brampton North was pleased about the cameras at the procedure and House affairs committee recently.

In terms of accessibility and access to this space—my question is, what expertise or what strengths will the BOIE bring, in terms of preparing those accessibility plans, that we aren't seeing now? What will the difference be to ensure that this place is more accessible for Ontarians?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Obviously, as you change the other aspects of the legislation to put it from the Speaker, who has the right to delegate that authority to somebody else—when you make the change to the Board of Internal Economy, you have to ensure that the wording is consistent.

The Board of Internal Economy is myself and the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. What expertise do we bring? Probably nothing. That's why we will rely on the professionals who run this place on our behalf to continue to provide that experience for us and that excellence in helping us meet the obligations that all Ontarians would expect.

So it's a matter of ensuring that the wording is consistent.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Mr. Mike Harris:** There was an interesting comment that I heard from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane a little earlier. He was talking about the hidden agenda—and we've heard that a little bit today. He was talking about us getting rid of reasoned amendments, and he said—I'm going to paraphrase a little bit; it's not a direct quote—that was a way for the opposition to slow things down.

My question to the government House leader is—I always thought reasoned amendments were a way for the opposition to put forward thoughtful, responsible changes to a bill, not slow things down. I wonder if he could elaborate a little bit more on that.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Here's the funny thing: Reasoned amendments are actually still part of the process. We never eliminated reasoned amendments. So the opposition still has the ability to provide a reasoned amendment on any bill that we introduce.

The member opposite is correct; it will not delay us debating—that's what we're talking about, that a reasoned amendment stops us from debating a bill. They can still do reasoned amendments—it's still there—but it does not stop the entire Legislature from debating a bill. We thought it was important that we have that debate. And if you look at the record, Madam Speaker, you will find that we have had more hours of debate on more bills and more committee studies than any government, really, in a very long time.

Directly to your question: Reasoned amendments are actually still in the standing orders, and the opposition still has the opportunity to provide a reasoned amendment.



**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** The government House leader definitely is one of the best orators we have in this House, and I appreciate that he did, at length, reveal some of his intentions, his motivations as to why these changes are coming. In light of that and in the spirit of that, I'm asking the government House leader, who I know holds a lot of power in this government: Will he commit and give his word that the Board of Internal Economy, until the next election, will continue to have parity between official opposition and government?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** Yes—because if I wanted to do it, I wouldn't have gone through the trouble of drafting a bill; I would have simply brought two lines to this House that said, "I'm changing the makeup of the Board of Internal Economy to majority government rule." I would have done that already.

That's the folly of this whole thing. There's nothing in the bill that they can find fault with—so they go on with the "what could," "what might," "this is what should," "maybe, you never know, 10, 15 or 20 years from now."

But directly to the member opposite—no, because if I wanted to take control, I have the largest majority government caucus in many, many, many years, and I would not need their permission to do it. But the reality is that we're not doing it, because that's not what this is about. It's about putting power back into the hands of all of the members. That's what it's about.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Mr. Anthony Leardi:** The government House leader did such a fine job of explaining the bill that I hardly imagine how anybody could actually have any questions about it anymore.

What I will ask is for the government House leader to comment on this very curious situation—I believe every taxpayer in the province of Ontario would find it curious and strange that there are actually members of this assembly who don't have offices and don't have them in this building.

How will the passage of this legislation assist in remedying the very curious situation where we seem to have a building here which has enough space for the storage of old pieces of furniture but doesn't have an office for the publicly elected representatives of the taxpayers of Ontario?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** It might seem like a small point—"you'll get an office somewhere" is what people will tell you, but it's not the way it works. You have to follow certain rules. As the member for Kitchener-Conestoga talked about, there are certain meetings that you can have here and certain meetings that you have to have somewhere else. As the government, you want to be here, debating in the legislative precinct.

We have an entire government complex which is closed. Members are half an hour away—some are even further than half an hour away. And yet, in this building, there are offices which are empty. There might be some

very good reasons why some of those offices are empty. Some may need to be fixed, some may need to have accessibility changes made to them—completely reasonable. But it is up to the members, as expressed through the Board of Internal Economy, to be able to go through, to look and to see if there are spaces where members can have offices.

No member should be told that they can't have a space in the Legislature if it is available—but as I said, always guaranteeing that the opposition gets first access to those offices so that they can fulfill their important role of holding any government accountable.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** It's always great to listen to the government House leader debate. He walked through the bill—all the reasons why and everything—and I do appreciate that.

My question is on timing. It was tabled yesterday, and we're sitting this evening on it. It seems very rushed. Even if it's a great bill—when someone comes up to you and says, "I have a great idea for you. Just sign," you hesitate a bit. It's not partisan—I'm just curious: Why are we rushing through this? Why isn't it just normal debate, running through the process? Why are we having House sittings to discuss this, instead of just doing it next week?

**Interjection:** Night sittings.

**MPP Jamie West:** Night sittings, I mean. With all sincerity, I just don't understand.

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** That's a great question.

First and foremost, I think a new process to hire a Sergeant-at-Arms benefits all members of this place. Our Sergeant-at-Arms is leaving this place at the end of December. We need to have a process that respects all members—and this legislation does that.

Secondly, this House adjourns at the end of the week and doesn't come back until February. I want to ensure that as many members as possible can have that opportunity to come back into this place, so that they can start their session as effectively as possible in February. It gives us the maximum amount of time to do it.

I'm going to be very clear to the member: I'm going to use all of the tools at my disposal to make sure that this legislation passes, so that we can bring in the new rules and get a new Sergeant-at-Arms elected on behalf of all of the members, and so that we can have the space that is required to do our jobs in this place. I'm being very sincere about it. I want to make sure that when we come back in February, we have the people we need in place to do the jobs that we're asking them to do, and that the members who are elected to do a job can do that job as effectively as possible—because, I would submit to you, right now that does not happen; it cannot happen. In February, when we come back, it will happen and it will be the case.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Unfortunately we do not have enough time for further questions, but we do have time for further debate.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's always an honour to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin, and to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 51, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act.

I'm one of those saps who has really romanticized this place. I've been here for 12 years now. I look around the room and I'm just wondering: Is there anybody that can lift their hand as far as having been here for 12 years? I don't see any.

**2040**

One of the things that I want to talk about is some of the history of this place and some of the changes that have come over the course of those 12 years. One of the things that disadvantages a lot of us that are in here—and the new members that are here now that just got elected in the last election, this is normal to you, all of this. You haven't seen those changes, the incremental changes, that have happened over the course of the last 12 years, so all of this is normal.

I really enjoyed—if you look at the exchange that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga had with the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, a lot of that happened here a long time ago. There was a lot of that cordial relationship that happened. There was a lot of trust. There was a different decorum that was going on between discussions, between the House. We saw a lot of sidebars that were going on.

One of the things that I'm happy that we're having now is those receptions that we're seeing, where we have the opportunity now to have a chat and just compliment each other about a moment in the House, a good speech or a good point: "Hey, I never thought about that." Those receptions are going to be really key to the good function of what we do in this Legislature. Some of the changes that have happened in recent years have taken away those opportunities from us, because a lot of that work used to be done while we were on committee, while we were away from this place, where we actually put our guard down, put the partisanship away, and we actually talked to each other.

When I was first elected in 2011 and I came into this place, there was a group of us. We were roughly, I think, between 22 and 27 new MPPs that came in at that point in time. The Clerks brought us in, gave us formal training, and an introduction 101 to what goes on at the Legislature. We learned about the daily process, about being here at 9 o'clock, the questions in question period and what to expect. That group, we kind of held tight. There is still a group of us who are here from 2011.

The interesting part is, I remember us going down to receptions and we would gather. There were Liberals, there were NDP and there were Conservatives, and we'd look at each other and say, "What the hell is going on in that room? Holy jeez, is this how they conduct themselves? We've got to change that." And to a certain point, we did. I think there has been a level of respect from that group.

The reason why I wanted to explain that to those that are in the House, the new members, is that what we're

doing right now wasn't the norm. There are a lot of things we can do if we actually talk to each other.

I know I've talked to some of my caucus members, and I've shared this story often with opposition members and even members from the third party. It's the "walk the rock." We sit here, and I often tell members, "Listen, you can keep throwing stones and rocks across the way, and you're going to get those rocks being thrown at you eventually. But one of these days, grab that rock and walk it across, and put it in a hand or put it in a shoe." Just to give them the thought that, "Oh, jeez, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin came over and talked to me about something." At the end of the day, I want to go back to what the House leader said as well. It's not just about who's sitting in here; it's about who's not sitting here, and that's Ontarians. What is it that we can do together to improve their lives? What is it that we should do together to improve things? We should think about that each and every day when we come in here: How can I walk that rock across?

Because I've often gone to government members and I've talked to them: "Listen, I put this question to you." "Mike. I'm getting some pushback from the bureaucrats. They're not listening," or "I hear what you're saying, Mike, but I need your help." "Okay, well how can I help you?" We have had those sidebars, and we've had those discussions about what it is that you need pushed so you can go back to your ministry and say, "Hey, wait a second; the opposition are really pushing me on this. We need to move." We can have those discussions. We can still do that.

One of the biggest disadvantages that all of us in here are at is—other than the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and the government House leader; they're the only ones that sit at BOIE. They're the only ones that have been there. We've never been privy to the discussions that are there, and for good reason. There are some major decisions you've got to get done there. So none of us know the discussions that get there. You have the Speaker that sits there. You have the Clerks that are sitting there. You have the Sergeant-at-Arms. And the structure of that is one that is equal, and it's been working. That balance was actually struck by the then member for Timmins–James Bay, who was Gilles Bisson. I often talked to Gilles, and I think it's one of the most successful things that he actually has done in this place, bringing that balance and the consensus model that is done at BOIE.

I would like to think it brings the best of both of us, when we're sitting down—and again, I have not been in those discussions. I'm sure; I've heard the level of respect that both the House leader and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane have expressed—to themselves. But having the Clerks sit at that committee along with the Speaker in a consensus model gives me some reassurance that the decisions that are going to be made there are not going to be partisan.

That's really key, because I know I just heard the House leader, in his comments, answer the member from Humber River–Black Creek. He said, "Absolutely, no; we are not

going to be changing the structure of the BOIE committee.” But two breaths before he had said that, I also heard him say “for now.”

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** No, I did not.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Then I will stand corrected. But—

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I absolutely did not say that.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I heard it. I wrote it down, which is why—I wrote it. I wouldn't be standing here saying it because—I wrote it down; it really jumped at me, House leader—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Through the Speaker, please. Through the Speaker.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Sorry. If it wasn't meant, if I misunderstood, I will take my words back. But I heard those exact two words.

So, again, I just enjoy walking in the hallways here and speaking with some of our security that we have here. I've had many discussions with the Clerk's table, the security guards, our cleaning staff, cafeteria workers, Hansard, our broadcast people—I know they tolerate a lot of this stuff that I request from them—the pages that are here, the tour staff that we have at the entrance. All of them are key individuals of this place. And if you haven't walked—particularly for the new members, if you haven't gotten lost in this place, get lost in it, and find out some of the nooks and crannies that are here. There's—

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** We do, because we don't have offices.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Pardon me?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** It's easy to get lost because some of us don't have offices.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Keep the comments through the Chair, please.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Oh, sorry. I always enjoy talking to the member.

2050

But there are areas that are quite intriguing in this place, and there are spaces I believe on the fourth floor that I don't think—if you haven't gone up there, there's some interesting stuff that you can find up there.

I want to come back to some of the comments that the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had made, and he really brought a really important point to my attention: the non-partisan positions that all of our Clerks actually take. Often, I go down to the table and I put questions to them. They can answer those questions, but they will never answer something that you don't ask.

And I've learned from the original—the first Clerk I met was Deb Deller. I walked down to her and I wanted to know something that the then-Liberal government was doing. She said, “Well, ask the right question.” And that's what you get from the table, because they don't play sides. Once you start learning that process, you start learning what questions to ask, and I've really enjoyed and learned quite a bit from them.

I want to warn everybody in here that if you are seen by the Clerks' table reading the standing orders book, they're going to be worried, because it means you're starting to

learn the process. It means you're going to have more questions for them, and they're going to be looking at you. So that's also a good thing to do.

I do want to share a story about how security has been so generous with their time, particularly for me, because I've pushed every button that is possibly able to be pushed as a member here. I've been caught by security in this building playing hide and seek with my kids.

**Mr. Nolan Quinn:** Have you pushed the panic button too?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** No, I didn't push the panic button. But I did take—sorry, I borrowed—one of the poinsettias, the pots, one of those brass pots they have at the entrance here, and there was a tree that I borrowed from the Speaker's office. They magically appeared in my office. Lo and behold, I found out that that pot I had taken was a brass pot and was quite an antique and quite valuable. I had security show up at my office in a very quick fashion the following morning, asking me, “Mr. Mantha, you were observed on the camera taking a poinsettia from the lobby area. It was contained in a very valuable pot, and we expect you to return the pot.” I still have the pot in my office.

I think the next time of generosity that the security had demonstrated to me was: Early in the previous mandate this government had, we were here on a night sitting and it was about 12 o'clock at night. We were doing different shifts, and I was the late shift so I went home. I did my own thing; I was exercising. I was out in the park taking a run, and I decided to come in and visit to give a little bit of a rally cry to those that were here late in the evening. So I ran back into the House, and as I'm coming through, I had headphones on and I'm just running through, and I burst through those doors and one of the security guards said, “Michael you were within a fraction of a second of being tackled,” because they didn't recognize me. I had my hat on, I had a pair of jogging shoes on and just some shorts, and I was just coming to say hi to everybody, to cheer them on.

But that's some of the stuff that these individuals do. The nice part about it is you can talk to them about the history of this place. I kind of want to tail into that part, where I started with a comment about being one of those MPPs that romanticizes about the effectiveness of this place and actually what we get done and what we do.

I came into this place thinking that I'm going to be able to change the world. I'm going to do things. I'm going to be different. And I pride myself, in the last 12 years, that I have done what people in Algoma–Manitoulin have expected me to do, which is to come here and be a difference-maker. There are a lot of suggestions and proposals that I've made to this government and the previous government, and I will continue doing that. One of these days I hope that I can get across the way and start implementing some of those ideas as well.

In saying that, I want to make sure that I do it in a way that is going to be fair, that is just, that is right. When I look at some of the changes that have come from this government, it leaves me with some concerns, because again, if I go with how the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane—his tone, as far as what he was bringing

forward and what we're trying to bring forward with some of the concerns that we have here in this bill, and then I listen to the tone that the government House leader had, it raises some red flags with me. If a lot of these things are non-controversial and they're not going to be meant to, again, put a rock or the utilization of a hammer—the tone that the government House leader used is quite concerning.

Again I look across this room. The disadvantage that we all have is none of us have been part of the BOIE structure or the discussions. That's limited to the two individuals, the government House leader and the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. That structure needs to, hopefully, continue on in the way that seems to be functioning now.

I do want to try to look at section 76 here as well. It says, "Section 76 is amended to provide for the Board of Internal Economy, rather than the Speaker, to appoint or dismiss employees of the Office of the Legislative Assembly." That is a red flag.

Again, when we're looking at eliminating certain roles and functions of this place that have been historically working for years, and to change them for the sake of changing—if you're changing something, there's always a why. I often look at why these changes are happening. I've seen changes that this government has brought in the past, some of them good, some of them bad. Some of them have taken away the opportunity for participation by the opposition to put certain individuals of strength on certain committees. That has been taken away, and the opportunity where we could have certain of our members on these committees, key individuals who could be very strong members as far as what the issues are and how to approach certain discussions or certain topics—it just raises concern.

There are certain changes that this government has brought forward that have been beneficial. I really enjoy the process of our question period now. I really enjoy the process of our debates that we're having. It's nice having questions put to you. Actually, the most difficult questions that we often get asked are from our own members.

But again, I just want to raise the concern that maintaining the consensus model is going to be very key. I'm looking to this government to make sure that that continues.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I appreciate the opportunity to ask a quick question.

I reiterate again that at no point did I ever say that I had any intention of doing anything but maintaining the Board of Internal Economy the way it was.

I just want to seize on one thing that he mentioned at the end, with respect to committee Chairs; I've somewhat taken it to heart. I leave an open invitation to the member opposite: If he can identify for me which of the NDP members who are current Chairs of the committees aren't strong enough to fulfill that role—if he could make some suggestions of who would be stronger in his caucus, I'd be happy to take a look at that for him.

**2100**

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's not a matter of the committees being strong or not—I think all of our members are strong; it's the ability of determining which members are going to be on those committees. That process, through the tinkering or the playing in the weeds, is what this government has changed with some of the standing orders that they've put in place.

Again, I will put any of our members on any one of the committees, as Chairs—and they will hold their own water on their own.

Going back to some of the comments that the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane made, when you start playing in the weeds of things, playing with the processes, playing with those leverages—and we all know that on all committees, the government has the majority. So it is the tinkering—that this government has been playing around with the standing orders.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** Thank you to the member for Algoma–Manitoulin. I really appreciated his debate. I like the idea of romanticizing the building. Early on, he talked about—I forget how many years he had, but more years than the members who were around the table. He said, "You should have seen how it used to be, and the changes coming along."

This is a question I used to ask people when I worked in health and safety: If there was one thing you could change, if there was one thing where you could say, "I don't why we don't just do this"—and it is just because I'm interested in the history. Is there something that we used to do that was a better way—or is there something that we're doing now that you think we could adjust that would make things better for everybody?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I think one of the things that I'd like to see more of is us getting out of this place—and that is more committee work within the communities and giving ourselves the time to get out there. What I mean is—now legislation is introduced on a Monday; by Wednesday or Thursday, we're voting on it; the following Monday morning, it's in committee and off we go—there was time for us to prepare and really pull in and have meaningful discussions with all stakeholders and people who are going to be impacted by that legislation. Getting out on the road, laying down our guard and just having the evening discussions that we had—doing committee work was really engaging, and it really took away from the partisanship that we see, and it reflected itself in the legislation. A lot of the legislation that was drafted then has withstood the test of time and is still in place today.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Like the member, I really appreciate how he said he romanticizes this House—I try to, and I do, every day; I do when I drive in to work from Brampton most days—I know sometimes me driving to work gets me in trouble in this House.

I learned how to drive from my father. My father, Duncan McGregor, moved here with his parents from Scotland when he was 15. He loved Canada so much that

when they moved back when he was 21, he chose to stay here.

I'm very, very proud that in the 43rd Parliament, the first private member's bill was one that came from me, and it was about building Highway 413, which is a critical investment for my community. I know members of this House disagree on that, but it mattered, and I take pride in it every day.

I haven't been able to walk in and see my name on a door of an office in Queen's Park; the member has. I'm wondering if he could tell me what that feels like.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** It's awesome. And do you know what? Those are the discussions that need to take place over at the BOIE. Yes, let's look at what's here, let's have the discussion, and let's see if there's opportunity.

I tell you, that first time I walked in—and I still get kind of fuzzy. You walk in—“That's my name. That's me.” You take a selfie with it. You send it to your kids and your family.

The other exciting part is when you get your name on the granite. That's something—because the next time you see your name on granite, you're probably going to be six feet under it.

I think it's something that each and every one of the members should experience. It is something to call your own. When you walk into your office and you open up that door, it is an incredible feeling, and it's one that doesn't go away.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** I really appreciate the speech from my good friend and colleague. He definitely enjoys the respect of all members of the House.

I just want to say—and this is a big if—if a government brings in legislation that improves the lives of all Ontarians, we all win, including the opposition. It's an “if”—but when that happens, we all win.

So my question is: Can you tell us how a strong opposition and collaboration can help improve legislation and help all Ontarians?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** Like I said earlier, the toughest questions come from your own members.

I want to thank the member from Humber River–Black Creek.

The easiest way to answer that is, be an effective opposition. Find the holes in the legislation. Raise the concerns that are there. Identify the red flags that you see in the legislation. Walk across and have a discussion about what your concerns are. Bring the issues to the floor. Bring the ideas and the frustrations that your constituents or stakeholders are feeling. If you're going to be effective in your role, I think that's ultimately what you have to do as an opposition—but not only just oppose, also propose. Work towards influencing the government to seeing your side, and really take heed of why the eagle is up there versus the owl behind you. These are some of the things that are here and are available to all of us—

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Question?

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** Madam Speaker, I may not frame this as nicely to the member—for group hugs and

nostalgia, but that's precisely the point of what this debate is about.

The House leader and I served in Ottawa. I think it's pretty safe to say that one of the reasons it was difficult to lose in 2015 isn't for any other reason than we had an office in this place.

I think of Leo Bernier, who served for a long time in this place, and wonder how he would feel, coming from the riding that is actually the farthest away from this place—and could never see their name on that door. I don't think that's going to happen in my time here—but I sure as heck know that there are a lot of caucus colleagues in here who couldn't raise their hand if asked if they had an office here. The seniority card doesn't work for me.

Does this member honestly think that one person is above all other decision-making in here, that would give members the right and the opportunity to have a chance to have an office in this building?

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I want to thank the Minister of Northern Development. I'm not sure where that comes from, but I thought, in the previous question, that I did raise that—that it's awesome having your name on the door. And if there are doors that are available that are here—

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** I didn't ask you how you felt, Mike.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I'm answering your question.

**Hon. Greg Rickford:** No, you're not.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Through the Chair, please.

**Mr. Michael Mantha:** I think if there are availabilities that are here, that's a decision and discussion that the BOIE needs to have—in order to identify and study what's available or what could be created.

I think it would be fair for everybody—if we could fit everybody in this building, let's look at doing that. Let's have those discussions. Let's look at the studies. Let's look at the available spaces that we have.

But this bill goes well beyond just office space. There are other things in here that are concerning. As an opposition, it's our role to raise those concerns so that we can get some type of an answer from the government. To reassure those who are not in this building but who like to come visit this building—to visit people with names on their doors and offices—would be beneficial to everyone.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** We have no more time for questions, but we do have time for debate.

Further debate?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** It is my pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 51 today. I really think it's an act that will make the Legislature better.

As I mentioned in my question prior, one of the big things that I would love to see and have the ability to do is have my name on the door of an office here one day. I know that's a feeling that many new members got to experience one day, when they joined this Legislature. Not just myself, but many of the new MPP colleagues haven't been able to see that, as well.

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We're all here because we're serving the constituents we have back home—for myself, that's Brampton North; for the colleagues I have around me, that is Perth–Wellington, Chatham–Kent–Leamington, Markham–Thornhill, Scarborough Centre, Windsor–Tecumseh, Hastings–Lennox and Addington.

Anyway, I think we should all vote for this bill. It's a great idea.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**MPP Jamie West:** The member from Brampton North spoke very briefly about it.

Aside from having your name on the side of the door, what do you like in the bill?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** I think the government House leader outlined it. Nobody who is in this building—whether it's you, whether it's an officer of the assembly, whether it's anybody here—should forget that we're all here to serve the people of Ontario.

What I like about this bill is, it puts a little bit more decision-making in the hands of elected members of this assembly, who are accountable at election season to the public of Ontario, the people of Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I wonder if the member opposite is as encouraged as I am, after having heard the member for Algoma–Manitoulin talk about the Board of Internal Economy—having a discussion about office space. Of course, it's not allowed unless the bill is passed. So I wonder if he's as encouraged as I am by the words of the member for Algoma–Manitoulin that that provision in the bill is an important one—to allow members to take back control of their building.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** Yes—very, very encouraged actually. I'll note that the motion on Highway 413—it would've been great to be able to draft that down the hall.

I'll talk a bit about the need for the 413. We have in Brampton, where I represent—it's the fourth-biggest city in Ontario, the ninth-biggest city in Canada. Getting us a bypass highway around our city shouldn't have been something that has taken as long as it has—and it won't, certainly, under our government.

There are a lot of good initiatives like that that we're getting done for the people of Brampton. And I'd really love to be able to do some of that work closer to the chamber, so I could fulfill my parliamentary duties but also work for my constituents.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Questions?

**Mr. Tom Rakocevic:** There has been a lot of frustration in this debate, really, and actually, on our side, it is a little surprising. But I get it—it's about respect; it's about the fact that you believe that you should have space in this building. And I was surprised, when I was new, to see that we weren't all in this place.

I have a question, and it's a hypothetical. If you had a choice, would you choose to have an office somewhere, with the entire power of the entire tens of thousands of bureaucrats in this entire government, all the workers behind you, 100% of the power in this office, a ministry, all the staff and everything that comes with it—or would

you want to take that all away and have an office in this building?

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** The member for Humber River–Black Creek is a fabulous orator. Actually, generally, us folks who sit here on the same side as him—many times, when he speaks, I've got to look at my notes or something, because he's just so darn convincing that he might actually convince me one day. Heaven forbid, because the idea of an NDP cabinet minister or NDP in cabinet would be a disaster for Ontario. We'd never build long-term-care homes. We'd never build hospitals. We'd never build houses. That would be a disaster for our province. Heaven forbid that ever happens.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further questions?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** I didn't want to get up again, but the member for Humber River–Black Creek is almost forcing me, because he misses the entire point.

When members talk about having an office in the building, it's about ensuring that all members—not just offices in the building—have the opportunity to share in how this place is governed, that members on all sides are respected. And it's not just about the members; it's about the people who send them here. It's about ensuring, through legislation, that no one person thinks they are above anybody else.

I wonder if the member opposite would agree with me. It doesn't matter if you're a cabinet minister, a parliamentary assistant, or Leader of the Opposition—all members deserve to have the opportunity to be respected in this place, on behalf of the constituents who send them here.

**Mr. Graham McGregor:** The government House leader knows I'm not the most partisan guy. I know that all members of this House were sent here by their constituents, just like I was sent here by mine, to fight for a better community and a better future for not only the kids growing up in that community, but the people who are living there now and the seniors who built that community. That's exactly what we need to do. Every member of this House deserves the same respect and the same ability to do their job.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Harris has moved second reading of Bill 51, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until the next instance of deferred votes.

*Second reading vote deferred.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Orders of the day?

**Hon. Paul Calandra:** No further business.

**The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Donna Skelly):** Seeing there is no further business, this House is adjourned until 9 a.m. on Monday.

*The House adjourned at 2117.*







**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO**  
**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-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

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergente d'armes: Jacquelyn Gordon

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	
<b>Arnott, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (PC)</b>	Wellington—Halton Hills	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Babikian, Aris (PC)	Scarborough—Agincourt	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia—Lambton	
<b>Barnes, Patrice (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Bethlenfalvy, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Calandra, Hon. / L'hon. Paul (PC)</b>	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
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Raymond Sung Joon (PC)</b>	Scarborough North / Scarborough- Nord	Minister for Seniors and Accessibility / Ministre des Services aux aînés et de l'Accessibilité
<b>Cho, Hon. / L'hon. Stan (PC)</b>	Willowdale	Associate Minister of Transportation / Ministre associé des Transports
<b>Clark, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Collard, Lucille (LIB)</b>	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	
<b>Downey, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	Barrie—Springwater—Oro-Medonte	Attorney General / Procureur général
<b>Dunlop, Hon. / L'hon. Jill (PC)</b>	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Minister of Colleges and Universities / Ministre des Collèges et Universités
<b>Fedeli, Hon. / L'hon. Victor (PC)</b>	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	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Doug (PC)</b>	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
<b>Ford, Hon. / L'hon. Michael D. (PC)</b>	York South—Weston / York-Sud—Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Multiculturalism / Ministre des Affaires civiques et du Multiculturalisme
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
<b>Fullerton, Hon. / L'hon. Merrilee (PC)</b>	Kanata—Carleton	Minister of Children, Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et des Services sociaux et communautaires
Gallagher Murphy, Dawn (PC)	Newmarket—Aurora	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Ghamari, Goldie (PC)	Carleton	
<b>Gill, Hon. / L'hon. Parm (PC)</b>	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	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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	
<b>Jones, Hon. / L'hon. Sylvia (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Karpoche, Bhutla (NDP)</b>	Parkdale—High Park	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Première vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Ke, Vincent (PC)	Don Valley North / Don Valley-Nord	
Kernaghan, Terence (NDP)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
<b>Kerzner, Hon. / L'hon. Michael S. (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Lecce, Hon. / L'hon. Stephen (PC)</b>	King—Vaughan	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Lindo, Laura Mae (NDP)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
<b>Lumsden, Hon. / L'hon. Neil (PC)</b>	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 (NDP)	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	
<b>McNaughton, Hon. / L'hon. Monte (PC)</b>	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
<b>Mulroney, Hon. / L'hon. Caroline (PC)</b>	York—Simcoe	Minister of Francophone Affairs / Ministre des Affaires francophones Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oosterhoff, Sam (PC)	Niagara West / Niagara-Ouest	
Pang, Billy (PC)	Markham—Unionville	
<b>Parsa, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (PC)</b>	Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill	Associate Minister of Housing / Ministre associé du Logement
Pasma, Chandra (NDP)	Ottawa West—Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest—Nepean	
<b>Piccini, Hon. / L'hon. David (PC)</b>	Northumberland—Peterborough South	Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks / Ministre de l'Environnement, de la Protection de la nature et des Parcs
Pierre, Natalie (PC)	Burlington	
<b>Pirie, Hon. / L'hon. George (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Rasheed, Hon. / L'hon. Kaleed (PC)</b>	Mississauga East—Cooksville / Mississauga-Est—Cooksville	Minister of Public and Business Service Delivery / Ministre des Services au public et aux entreprises
<b>Rickford, Hon. / L'hon. Greg (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Sarkaria, Hon. / L'hon. Prabmeet Singh (PC)</b>	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	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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	
<b>Skelly, Donna (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Graydon (PC)</b>	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
<b>Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Todd (PC)</b>	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	
<b>Surma, Hon. / L'hon. Kinga (PC)</b>	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto—Danforth	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Tangri, Nina (PC)	Mississauga—Streetsville	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain / Hamilton-Mountain	
Thanigasalam, Vijay (PC)	Scarborough—Rouge Park	
<b>Thompson, Hon. / L'hon. Lisa M. (PC)</b>	Huron—Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
<b>Tibollo, Hon. / L'hon. Michael A. (PC)</b>	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	
Vaugeois, Lise (NDP)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Supérieur-Nord	
Wai, Daisy (PC)	Richmond Hill	

<b>Member and Party / Député(e) et parti</b>	<b>Constituency / Circonscription</b>	<b>Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités</b>
West, Jamie (NDP)	Sudbury	
<b>Williams, Hon. / L'hon. Charmaine A. (PC)</b>	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	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	