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of Ontario



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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

T-28

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

T-28

**Standing Committee on
Regulations and Private Bills**

Ontario Day Act, 2021

1st Session
42nd Parliament
Friday 5 March 2021

**Comité permanent des
règlements et des projets
de loi d'intérêt privé**

Loi de 2021 sur le Jour
de l'Ontario

1^{re} session
42^e législature
Jeudi 5 mars 2021

Chair: Logan Kanapathi
Clerk: Isaiah Thorning

Président : Logan Kanapathi
Greffier : Isaiah Thorning

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

**STANDING COMMITTEE
ON REGULATIONS
AND PRIVATE BILLS**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DES
RÈGLEMENTS ET DES PROJETS
DE LOI D'INTÉRÊT PRIVÉ**

Friday 5 March 2021

Jeudi 5 mars 2021

The committee met at 0900 in room 151 and by video conference.

ONTARIO DAY ACT, 2021

LOI DE 2021 SUR LE JOUR DE L'ONTARIO

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day / Projet de loi 173, Loi proclamant le Jour de l'Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Good morning, everyone. The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills will now come to order. We are here for public hearings on Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day.

We have the following members on Zoom: MPP Billy Pang, MPP Paul Miller, MPP Jeremy Roberts, MPP Dave Smith, MPP Daisy Wai, MPP Jamie West, MPP Amy Fee and MPP Michael Parsa.

We are also joined by staff from legislative research, Hansard, and broadcast and recording.

Please speak slowly and clearly, and wait until I recognize you before starting to speak. Please take a brief pause before speaking. As always, all comments should go through the Chair.

Are there any questions before we begin? Seeing none, our first presenter today is the sponsor of Bill 173, the member for Aurora–Oak Ridges–Richmond Hill, MPP Michael Parsa. He will have 15 minutes to make an opening statement, followed by 45 minutes for questions and answers, divided into three rounds of six minutes for the government members, three rounds of six minutes for the official opposition members, and two rounds of 4.5 minutes for the independent members.

I will ask MPP Michael Parsa to open up the presentation.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Good morning, Chair. Good morning, committee members. Thank you all for providing me with the opportunity to appear before you today to speak to something that is near and dear to all our hearts: the celebration of our province and all its residents, both past and present. I'm excited to be here with all of you to share why I think my proposal to create Ontario Day would be a great step towards recognizing and celebrating the contributions of Ontario and all its people.

I know that some of you may be thinking right now, how do we celebrate Ontario? And what does it mean to be Ontarian? Ontario might mean one thing to me and

something completely different to someone else. That's exactly what Ontario Day is meant to be—a celebration of histories, culture, accomplishments and peoples; a celebration of our diversity, our communities, our lifestyle and our faiths. In essence, it's a celebration and recognition of what we think of what makes Ontario such a great place to live, work and grow our lives.

Every single one of us has a story and our own reasons to celebrate. For some, it can be a time to recognize that we're Canada's most populous province or that we have Canada's largest economy. For others, Ontario Day might be a time to cherish their Indigenous heritage and their ties to this land. After all, our province would not be what it is today without the vital contributions of our many Indigenous peoples.

Coincidentally, June, the proposed month for Ontario Day, is also National Indigenous History Month. How great would it be to take the opportunity to celebrate Ontario during the same month as we do the traditional inhabitants and tribes of the land?

On the other side of the token are the countless millions who have moved to this province and call it home. My family and I were one of the millions of families who were given the opportunity to start a new life in this province, and were given boundless opportunities to excel and succeed. Where in the world do such opportunities exist—that allow a young child from an immigrant family to rise up and become a member of provincial Parliament in the province of Ontario? The answer is, very few such places exist, and Ontario is truly one them. So to me, Ontario is a manifestation of opportunity, unique and a beacon of hope that allows us to be an inspiration for other places on earth.

In some parts of the world, differences divide humankind, but not here in Ontario. Here, we have learned that by embracing our differences, we're brought closer together and live richer lives as a result. The sheer diversity that we share should be cause enough for celebrating the place that has allowed us to come together in this way, as Ontario is truly a rarity in this world.

I'm sure there are hundreds of remarkable things about Ontario, if not millions, and each and every one of them is a good reason to celebrate our province. In our history, our achievements, our institutions, or our people, there's more than enough to cherish and to be proud of.

For starters, of Canada's top 10 universities, five are right here in Ontario. Students from all over the world

come to our province to receive a world-class education at our premier academic institutions, and the credentials earned by students here in Ontario are valued and prized around the world. Better yet, we put those credentials to good use right here in our province, where you'll find some of the world's most cutting-edge technologies created and pioneered in Ontario cities like Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo and others.

Ontario really is home to some of the most creative and hard-working people on earth, many of whom have changed the world with their ideas and their passion. Think of the many Ontarians who have accomplished incredible things in the fields of science and medicine; for example, George Klein, who invented the electric wheelchair, or Sir Frederick Banting, who made history in 1921 right here in Toronto by discovering how to extract insulin to help treat diabetes. Ontarians' contributions in these fields have changed and saved lives for decades and they continue to do so today.

We can also be proud of the medical institutions across our province that shine brightly on the world stage as some of the premier medical facilities in their respective fields. The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, for example, stands as the largest centre of its kind in Canada and one of the five largest cancer centres in the entire world. And who could forget the Hospital for Sick Children? SickKids is one of the biggest and best of its kind anywhere, and we can proudly say it is right here in our own backyard.

If our medical institutions aren't proof enough of our first-class health care system then look no further, because our doctors and medical professionals are. If what our doctors, nurses, medical professionals and PSWs have done throughout this pandemic isn't a cause for celebration on Ontario Day, then I truly don't know what is. After this pandemic is over, I would love to be able to celebrate their commitments and sacrifice on behalf of Ontarians, on Ontario Day.

On that same Ontario Day, Ontario health care workers, who have shouldered so much during this pandemic—they should also be celebrating them.

We should also celebrate the amazing work of every individual who kept our province going during these difficult times. On Ontario Day, we should celebrate our front-line workers, our police, paramedics, our grocery store workers, our truck drivers—the list goes on.

And our farmers: How can we forget to celebrate the amazing men and women of the agriculture sector who continuously make sure we have food to put on our tables? Honestly, we produce some of the highest-quality foods and livestock found anywhere in the world—not only because we have high standards and advanced methods, but because we have some of the greatest farmers in the world who make all of this possible. I would love to be able to celebrate them on Ontario Day.

Members, as you can see there's a common theme developing here: Ontario and Ontarians play a huge role in the world. There is not a place you can visit in the world where an Ontario brand, product, landmark or person is not recognized. No matter where you go, an Ontario-made

person or product isn't too hard to find. If you don't believe me, then just look at households around the world. If there is an electric oven in the house, then thank Ottawa's very own Thomas Ahearn, who patented the electric oven in 1892. I think the world owes us on that one, and perhaps they should all be joining us in celebrating Ontario Day, as well—but I digress.

Speaking about our Ontarians' legacy and successes, we cannot forget to remember the strong cultural identity we have woven in our province. Institutions of learning, research and heritage such as the beautiful Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario make us proud of the many pieces of world history and art that we have the privilege of being able to enjoy right here at home. They deserve to be cherished and celebrated, along with the many world-renowned actors, writers, artists who have come to Ontario over the years and have helped us grow our province. From the Toronto International Film Festival to the Stratford Festival, Ontario is home to one of the world's most vibrant hubs of arts and culture.

0910

The great works of many Ontarians are proudly recognized around the world; for example, the all-Canadian show by our very own Eugene and Dan Levy, *Schitt's Creek*, which was recognized at the 72nd Primetime Emmy Awards. The series' final season won all seven major comedy awards, making it the first time in history that a comedy or drama series earned such praise.

There are also many other beloved titans of comedy who have come from Ontario, like our very own Jim Carrey and John Candy from Newmarket, and Mike Myers from Scarborough, who have all brought smiles and laughter to our theatres and our homes.

And who can forget about the giants of music who call Ontario home? Justin Bieber, The Tragically Hip, Drake, and The Weeknd, who most recently represented Canadians and Ontarians for the first time ever at the Super Bowl.

Speaking of sporting events, let's not forget that Ontario is home to some of the greatest athletes to ever walk on earth. Beloved heroes like Bianca Andreescu, Donovan Bailey, Mike Weir and Wayne Gretzky are all from right here in Ontario, and they have set a standard of excellence that athletes from around the world aspire to. The Ottawa Senators and the Toronto Maple Leafs, which I'm a diehard fan of, have become the favourite teams of many Ontarians, like me, drawing the hearts and cheers of folks across the world of sport. The Toronto Maple Leafs, I have to add, have won 13 Stanley Cups. One might say that they still have to catch up to the Montreal Canadiens's 24 wins—but don't worry, they'll catch up; they're just playing the long game.

Of course, there is our beloved Toronto Raptors, our province's very own basketball team and the greatest NBA champions to have ever played the game, if you ask me; although I'm sure some will debate that point.

What can't be debated is the fact that the game of basketball was invented right here in Ontario by our very own James Naismith. He probably didn't know it at the

time, but the game he created would end up being watched by millions around the world every year—yet another important Ontarian contributing to world history without even knowing it at the time.

As Ontarians know—and they should remember what they have contributed to the world—folks like these have become household names here in Ontario and have inspired a new generation of Ontarians to pursue their dreams and passions. However, do we really take the time to properly appreciate all that Ontario and Ontarians have done? It is my belief that we don't. We're often so busy with our daily lives that we don't take the time to appreciate the history, culture and essence of the place we call home.

There are countless communities throughout this province that have made invaluable social, economic and cultural contributions for generations. Yet we don't have a day that we can celebrate them as a part of the greater fabric of our province's history. In Ontario, we truly offer the world in one place, and you don't have to go far to be able to experience the many different cultures from around the world that are part of our communities. Whether you want to visit Chinatown or Little Portugal and attend a cultural festivity like the Taste of the Danforth or Caribana, the rich mosaic of our province has made Ontario a tourist destination unlike any other.

Although we come from every corner of the world, have different traditions and worship in our own unique ways, we live peacefully alongside each other in a way that is truly extraordinary. If we all take a minute to really think about it, Ontario is a true rarity in this world. There aren't many places on earth that have what we have. We should take every opportunity we have to celebrate our strong democracy, our vibrant cultural mosaic, our storied history and our abundance of richness, of landscape and of people. All of these great many things have allowed our province and its residents to thrive and live their best lives in whatever way they want. No matter how you identify or what makes you the person you are today, in Ontario you are free to live your life as you wish.

It is for these reasons that I believe Ontario to be the vibrant, beating heart of Canada, and we owe it to ourselves and every Ontarian to recognize and preserve our province's legacy by celebrating it every year.

Following the incredibly difficult year that Ontarians have endured and continue to endure, I sincerely believe that there's no better time for us to come together and celebrate our province and its people. By establishing Ontario Day, we can bring the people of this province together to celebrate the actions and sacrifices of all residents in the past year, from our front-line health care workers to teachers and long-term-care workers.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): One more minute left, Mr. Parsa.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I know that there are countless people out there who are grateful, as I am, here in this province. We have countless heroes across our communities who deserve to be celebrated. What better way to do that than Ontario Day?

I know my time is coming to an end, but I just want to end by saying that although Canada is the greatest country in the world, there's something uniquely different about Ontario. Be it our history, our diversity, the outstanding contributions of Ontarians to the world or the quality of life which attracts millions to come to build a better life, there is something special about our province. I can't pinpoint exactly what attracts people, but it's something special about this province. What I do know is that, like millions of other Ontarians, I am proud to be able to call the province my home and I am proud of the incredible things that have been achieved in Ontario by Ontarians.

Allow me to end my remarks today with a brief quote from an Ontarian so extraordinary that through his work he was able to reach the stars—literally. Astronaut Chris Hadfield is among the world's most recognizable Ontarians, and his achievements have placed Canada and Ontario in the spotlight for millions of people. He said, "Every single day, you're the result of what you did on the days prior. So if you turn that around, you can start turning yourself into who you want to be based on what you decide to do today. What food do you put in your mouth? What book do you read? What movie do you watch? What do you do with your spare time? Do you study, do you learn something? If you ... make deliberate choices with your life, it's amazing after a week or a month or a year the changes that you can effect, and you literally turn yourself into the person that you're going to become."

So to every young boy and girl in Ontario who looks up at the stars and wishes they could be an astronaut just like Chris Hadfield—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Michael Parsa, for that presentation.

This round of questions—

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We have MPP Jamie West. Can you confirm that you are present and that you are currently in Ontario?

Mr. Jamie West: I was having connectivity issues this morning. I apologize for being late. I'm MPP West. I am in my office in office in Sudbury.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you.

At this time, this round of questions starts with the opposition. The official opposition has six minutes. MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I'd like to thank MPP Parsa for bringing this forward at this time. It's certainly a feel-good bill. I probably would have thought about doing that myself, bringing something forward like that, because it is a good thing. Unfortunately, it might have been stolen by the government. I'll leave it with you at this point so at least maybe it will get through.

I'm just curious—I'd ask of MPP Parsa why this is being brought forward at this time. I know it's a feel-good bill, and it certainly makes Ontarians proud of the province they live in—and Canadians, of course—but I'm not sure of the timing, when we've got a pandemic and all the things going on right now. Is this done for raising profile? I hope not. Is it done for raising the party's profile? I hope

not. Things have been pretty down for the last year, as you know. I hope this isn't just a diversion, attempting to divert from what's going on in the province. That would be unfortunate, if that was the case.

0920

Second reading was, I believe, about a month before the pandemic hit. I guess they were well aware that it was coming, too. And now we're into pushing for third reading, when we're in the middle of getting people inoculated throughout the province. We're probably way behind schedule, for various reasons, I'm sure.

By the way, I'll be splitting some time with MPP West. I'm sure he would like to say a few things.

I've always been a big promoter. I've been an MPP for Ontario for many years, and I always like to see good things happen and people to celebrate their cultures and the history of this province, which has been here since 1867, officially. It certainly is beneficial to be proud of where we are, what we do and where we come from. I have no problem with that, and I have no problem supporting MPP Parsa's bill, because like I said, it's a small light in the tunnel we've been going through.

But I am also concerned about the timing. I think there are a lot of other priorities that we should be dealing with. This could have been brought up after the pandemic or years before the pandemic—and all of a sudden, it shows up. So that's my concern. I don't know if he wants to answer that or not. That's up to him.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Miller, for the comments and questions.

MPP Michael Parsa, would you like to respond?

Mr. Michael Parsa: Yes. Thank you very much, MPP Miller. You raised some points that I think it's important for me to point out.

Why wasn't it presented years ago, Mr. Miller? I can't answer that. I've been an MPP for only two and a half years. This was my first ballot, this was my first idea, and I'm very proud of it. As you said, it's something that I wish somebody had thought of or had brought forward sooner, but better late than never.

Ontario Day doesn't belong to anyone or to any particular party. As I mentioned during my speech, my family immigrated to this country because we all get to be what we want to be in this country, in this province, free of any pressure or persecution. To me, Ontario Day is a day for you to celebrate the way you want, what Ontario has been able to do for you. For me, this particular year—and initially, when I thought about this, that wasn't the case. But this year, the very first time when Ontario Day is official, if it becomes law, I'm going to be celebrating by thinking about all the front-line workers in this pandemic.

As you said, as far as the timing of it, I don't think there is a better time to bring this forward than now, when people need to celebrate our province. We need to celebrate all the people who have done all the work during the last year.

I appreciate your comments, but those are my points.

When you think back to—the Premier calls it the Ontario spirit, Mr. Miller. Look at what all our factories and our businesses were able to do at a time when we needed PPE. We were short of PPE, and we asked—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Michael Parsa.

Mr. Paul Miller: Yes, thanks, MPP Parsa. I believe you're into our time quite a lot there. I would like MPP West to have a chance to say something.

Jamie, do you want to say something?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: I want to congratulate MPP Parsa for his bill.

I agree with MPP Miller: It's a feel-good bill. But we're in a time when we need to feel good. I think it's going to pass and go through. I was concerned earlier this week—when we went in camera, it seemed unusual for a bill like this, which seems pretty straightforward.

I apologize again for being late, MPP Parsa. I heard most of your speech, but I missed the beginning. I want to ensure that there is acknowledgement of the importance of the francophone community. The drapeau franco-ontarien, the Franco-Ontarian flag, was created in Sudbury, and I know it's one of the things that was accomplished. I know you only have enough time to say certain things; I just want to make sure that—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP West.

We are moving on to the government side. MPP Jeremy Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: MPP Parsa, thank you for bringing forward this bill. I think this is a fantastic initiative and something that you should be very proud of. It's great to hear your story and hear how it inspired you to bring this forward—although I will note, of course, that we have two hockey teams in Ontario, and you left out the better of the two, the Ottawa Senators. I'm sure there will be plenty of time for us to celebrate the Sens as part of Ontario Day.

But I did appreciate the shout-out to Mr. Naismith, who came from a little town just outside of Ottawa, Almonte, which is where my parents happen to work and have built their career. It's always wonderful for Almonte to get a little shout-out.

As I was listening to you speak, I was reflecting on the fact that oftentimes, when you talk to people around Canada and you ask, "Where are you from?" they jump to their province: "Oh, I'm from Newfoundland," or, "Oh, I'm from Alberta," or, "I'm from beautiful British Columbia." But when you ask people from Ontario, they always answer with what city they're from. A lot of people in Ontario don't seem to have that drive, that Ontario pride, the same way that some other provinces have—let alone some of the states down in the US, where they have a lot of state pride.

As you started doing some research for this bill and started hearing stories from people around the province, what were some of the most fascinating things you heard about Ontario that you didn't know, which this day and

this celebration could help bring to light for the people of Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Michael Parsa, would you like to respond?

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much. I apologize; I'll be much quicker, because I think I took a lot of time answering the last question.

MPP Roberts, in my speech, I did start off with the Ottawa Senators, because I have to tell you, after the Toronto Maple Leafs, they are my next-favourite team. So if the Toronto Maple Leafs can't make it, I always cheer for the Ottawa Senators, as they are Ontario's other team.

What I heard was the uniqueness of our province. We're all very proud Canadians, and to everybody who I talked to—you know what it takes, especially for somebody like me, who immigrated here with my family when I was quite young. To us, we're proud of talking about the fact that we're Canadians. But within Canada, there's something special about this province. When you talk to people, they reference it. Whether it's the arts or the culture or whether it's sport, there's something special about our province that I think we should be celebrating within Canada.

When I put this idea forward and I started talking to people, they were quite excited about it. They were embracing it. They said, "We can't wait to start talking about all the landmarks, all the things Ontario has to offer, and start promoting it on that day." Again, Ontario Day is going to be what you want it to be, to you and to each individual.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Billy Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: MPP Parsa, I echo your feelings, as a first-generation immigrant myself. This is my 21st year in Canada.

One of the reasons I decided to come to Ontario, as you shared, is that Ontario is a very diverse province that celebrates different cultures. I want you to make more elaborations on how this is important to you.

For me, Ontario has a lot of memories. I was an overseas student before I decided to immigrate to Canada and to Ontario.

What was the significance for you when, as a first-generation, you moved to Canada and you decided to stay in Ontario?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Michael Parsa.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Billy, Canada and Ontario have literally given my family everything we have. When we moved to Canada, we left persecution in a country where democracy was not something that was practised, and it was very difficult. But when you come to Canada—and we came straight to Ontario—it was just this place that offered everything to you. As I said in my speech, it's literally everything, all in one province.

0930

I'll go back to 2019, for example. Canada welcomed about 341,000 new Canadians; 45% of them chose Ontario to come to. There's a reason for that.

We are 38% of Canada's population. There's just so much to be proud of in this province, as I mentioned to you, whether it's our academia, our athletes, our arts and culture, various folks who have really led their fields, in whatever they did. It's something for us to celebrate, and I wanted to make sure we have that opportunity to do so.

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to follow up, if I have time, Mr. Chair.

MPP Parsa, how do you see Ontario celebrating Ontario Day?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, MPP Billy Pang and MPP Michael Parsa.

Now we're going back to the opposition. MPP Jamie West.

Mr. Jamie West: Thank you, Chair. I have to keep turning off my video because of the Internet connection in the north. That's one of the things we could work on and be more proud of in Ontario. I'm sure that southern Ontario has the same issues in a lot of the rural areas.

I just want to complete my comment to MPP Parsa from previously about the Franco-Ontarian flag. I apologize—because I know in debate it was brought up as well, the franco community, but in his speech, I wasn't sure it was brought up. I think it's important to reflect the strong Franco-Ontarian connection that we have here in the bill, and being a bilingual country.

I was just wondering if you had any comments about that, MPP Parsa.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Thank you very much, MPP West. I appreciate it.

I should have also highlighted the fact that half of my family is from Quebec and they're French Canadians. My wife is French Canadian.

We have to go back and look at what has made this province so great—100%. As I said, when you have 341,000 people coming to Canada and 45% of them come to Ontario, there is a reason. We have to look back and we have to see everything that has made this province so great. We have to celebrate every single one of those items.

Thanks for bringing that up. You're absolutely right.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Do you have any more questions?

Mr. Jamie West: I'll hand it off to MPP Miller at this time.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Miller, go ahead, please.

Mr. Paul Miller: Following up on MPP West's comments: As you know, MPP Parsa, a lot of the festivals and concerts and big events in the last year have been cancelled because of COVID-19. It has been a real financial burden on a lot of these festivals, because they prepare a year in advance to do the things. I actually take part in the Battle of Stoney Creek 1812, 1814. I'm a re-enactor. It's very expensive. My uniform and my accessories were \$3,500—just for my uniform and sword and things portraying a British captain. So these types of situations are very expensive.

I'm just wondering where the government is going once we, hopefully, get out of this pandemic and can start to gather again at sporting events, festivals and all the things that make Ontario great, as you said. I don't know if the government has dipped into their pockets—because I get constant complaints about lack of funding from Skate Ontario, from amateur hockey. They're all concerned about registration fees. They're concerned about being able to activate their festivals on time once we get out of this mess, if we get out of it in time. I hope it's not going to have a negative impact on Ontario Day, for the government or anyone else—because a lot of these people can't celebrate the things they're used to doing. So I hope that the government is starting to take into consideration a few months before Ontario Day is celebrated that they are going to take a look at the needs of the cultural organizations, the sporting organizations, the concert organizations and all the other events that take place and make our province great. I know you mentioned a lot of that.

You mentioned hockey. The stadiums are still empty.

I'm a Leafs fan and have been all my life. I was actually there the last time the Maple Leafs won the Stanley Cup in 1967. I was at the game. I was a young lad of 16.

A lot of people are very concerned about the lack of money and the lack of investment and the lack of—and every city in the province, I'm sure, is suffering from lack of funding and the lack of support that they need to weather the storm and to get back into action. Everywhere from Niagara Falls to Kenora to Ottawa has been hit hard in tourism and sport. So I hope this government is going to take a real hard look at this in conjunction with Ontario Day—to celebrate it and also support the people in this province.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Michael Parsa.

Mr. Michael Parsa: I'll be very, very quick this time, in case they need more time.

Mr. Miller, you're absolutely right. We know this is an industry and a sector that has been hard hit. We haven't been able to have any sporting events, we haven't had any theatre; we just can't, in order to deal with keeping people safe. Their well-being comes first, and those were decisions made to protect the people.

We have the parliamentary assistant to the minister relevant, so I think I'll let him, if he wants, chime in with the exact—but you're absolutely right. The minister has been very clear that we will be supportive of the sector and those who are involved to make sure that we rebound once we have put this pandemic behind us.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We are moving on to the government side. MPP Billy Pang.

Mr. Billy Pang: I want to follow up on my previous question.

Ontario is a very diverse province, so how do you see Ontarians celebrating Ontario Day? What would be your proposal for us to celebrate? How are we going to celebrate Ontario Day?

Mr. Michael Parsa: That's a very good question.

Ontario Day, in my view, is what you want it to be, is how each Ontarian wants to celebrate it, however they want. On this particular Ontario Day, my first one, I'm going to be celebrating it thinking about all our front-line heroes, the people I named in my speech who went above and beyond to serve us. Last year, when this virus first came out, we were being asked to stay home to be safe and secure; it was the exact opposite for our health care professionals. They were going in every single day to fight this and to protect us. So in my first year of celebration, I'm going to be thinking about them. I'm going to be dedicating it to them. But it's a personal choice. Everybody can celebrate it the way they want. That's the beauty of this bill—that it's a true reflection of our province.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Before we continue, I'd like to confirm—MPP Vincent Ke, confirm you are present and confirm you are currently in Ontario, please.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Yes, I'm Vincent Ke from Don Valley North, and I'm in North York.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you.

MPP Daisy Wai, please go ahead.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I am so happy that we are bringing forward this special act on Ontario Day. Like MPP Billy Pang, I immigrated, a first-generation immigrant. I've been here over 38 years. It's exciting to see that we're doing something to celebrate Ontario. This is something that I would like to see, as well.

I would like to ask two questions: How will Ontario Day impact our future generations? And how will Ontario Day support the diverse communities that we have in Ontario?

0940

Mr. Michael Parsa: It's a very good question. I referenced this, again, in my speech when I talked about the fact that it's important for us to recognize the people who have made those—the invaluable work that they've done in their fields, their sectors, for us to be able to talk about them and to recognize them. They do come from our province, and we should feel proud of it. Future generations should know about that. Once a year, we should have the opportunity to celebrate those who come from this province. That's something that was in my mind when I was speaking of this bill, when I brought it forward.

Sorry; what was the second part of your question? I apologize, MPP Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: The second part is, how will Ontario Day help the diverse backgrounds that we have in Ontario?

Mr. Michael Parsa: Again, Ontario Day would be what you want it to be. When you talk about an immigrant family like mine who comes here, we will be thinking about the opportunities that this province has given us. My family went on to open up a business. This business has been operating in this province 30-plus years. You look back and think of what this province means to you.

What has made this province so great is the people. So once a year, we get to look back, each of us, in different ways. Some will have similarities and there will be

common areas that we are going to be celebrating; there's no doubt about that. But that's the beauty of this: We all get to celebrate it for whatever we want and however we want.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): The last round of questions and concerns, going back to the opposition.

Interjection.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Yes, thank you. We still have time for the government, if anybody would like to speak. Thank you.

We are going back to the official opposition for six minutes. MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: To MPP Parsa: I like the idea of the diversification of all people in the province celebrating for different reasons, different cultures. But I also would suggest, in your bill, that the government should announce, during the—for the bill itself, the day, they should focus on different sectors of our population, whether it be the steelworkers or whether it be the sports events or the cultural events. I think that there should be something to go along with it. You can't just call it Ontario Day without bringing to the attention of the people of the province the different cultural contributions to our province and what they've done to make it a stronger province, as you've pointed out.

I think you should be putting in—I don't know—spend an hour talking about the steelworkers, half an hour or whatever talking about tourism. Whatever you want to do—you should bring these to a focal point, because a lot of people, with all due respect, really don't know what the day represents, because they are not used to it. It's new. They don't really know what it's all about and where this came from. Are they going to get a day off work? A lot of questions will be asked about Ontario Day and what it means to people.

I think if you're going to promote the cultural aspect of it and the contributions that different cultures have made to our society—it doesn't matter what nationality. As you know, MPP Parsa, we have over 200 cultures in Ontario. Nowhere else in the world do they have 200 cultures in one province. We should be the poster boy for the United Nations, because we have so many different—I've got at least 60 to 70 different cultures just in my riding alone.

I think we need to break it down a little better and try to focus on the people—what they do to contribute to our society, how they did it, when they came.

You mentioned that your family came years ago. Well, my family came in 1907, so we've been around a while and have served in different capacities. My uncle was the mayor of Hamilton. We've served in different capacities. He was from St. Helens in Lancashire, near Manchester. My dad came from Glasgow, Scotland. He made contributions in the sports area, and he was a steelworker. It's important to the people of Hamilton. For example, my family had cousins and brothers—we had over 300 years' combined service in Stelco and probably the most seniority of any family in the city.

Those types of things are important to people—the contributions they've made to build our society. That

would be important to include in your bill so people get a real grasp of what it's all about. I think that would be good.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Chair, may I make a very quick point?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Please go ahead.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Mr. Miller, you're absolutely right. When I talked about for us to not only celebrate and recognize what's so great about Ontario now—but we have to look at what has made Ontario so great. You're 100% right.

You alluded to the fact that more than 200 cultures in Ontario are living in harmony. That doesn't happen in other parts of the world, as you know very well, Mr. Miller. The differences in many parts of the world divide people. Here in Ontario, we embrace them. They bring us closer. We celebrate our differences.

So thanks very much. I appreciate you sharing that.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: Back to MPP Parsa: Because you've had a lot of time to think about it, and I know all the work that goes into a private member's bill, I would be interested in how you see an Ontario Day celebration happening—if you have unique ideas or if you think it's similar to what happens for Canada Day. I'm just curious about what your flavour of this would be.

Mr. Michael Parsa: That's a very good question.

Initially, when I was thinking about this, I thought about how our good people were going to be celebrating it. You won't believe it, MPP West, but everybody I talked to had a different idea. They had a different way of celebrating, and I can appreciate that and I can respect that. Again, that's what makes us so great. That's what makes Ontario so great—that we have the opportunity to do that.

For me, it's a day—and MPP Miller alluded to this earlier—for us to be able to reflect, look back and think of why this province is so great, talk about it, discuss it, perhaps pass it on to younger people and celebrate it. It's one of those things where you don't want to tell people how to celebrate; everybody would celebrate things differently. For me, it might be over a drink of coffee with somebody and talking about why Ontario means so much. Everybody will have a different way of celebrating.

If it does fall on a weekend, I'll definitely be having a barbecue, enjoying myself and, hopefully, inviting some of you to join us. If all of you are available, you're more than welcome. That's what Ontario Day will mean to me.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Now we are moving to the government side. Any questions or comments from the government side? Seeing none, this ends the first round of presentation and questions.

We are now moving into the second round of questions and comments. Each presenter will have seven minutes for their presentation. After we have heard from all three presenters, the remaining 39 minutes of the time slot will be for questions from members of the committee. The time for the questions will be broken down into two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the government members, two rounds of 7.5 minutes for the official opposition and two rounds of

4.5 minutes for the independent members as a group. Are there any questions?

0950

COCONUT VILLAGE NAILS AND SPA

CITY OF RICHMOND HILL

MR. STEVE ARMES

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Scheduled presenters: I will now call Phiona Durrant, owner, Coconut Village Nails and Spa. You have seven minutes for the presentation. Please go ahead.

Ms. Phiona Durrant: Good morning. I'm Phiona Durrant, the CEO of Coconut Village and the president of the Aurora Black Community Diverse and Inclusive Association. It is my pleasure to join you at the decision table this morning, so thank you for having me.

Of the many different ways I wanted to express my support for Bill 173, I kept going back to the simple analogy of family. You look in each home and you see family. Many of us even, say, share the same last name within our family, yet it would be very thoughtless, for lack of a better word, to say we celebrate together the one birthday or that we not identify individual achievements or accomplishments and celebrate those things that make us so different but yet one—and it's so that I look at Canada as the umbrella family and our province as its children. I understand that there is no need for anyone—we know that we're not here to debate the importance of individual celebration and to be recognized. So I'm pleased that that's not what we're here to do today—that we're not here to convince you, but it's really more of an opportunity, rather, to just be a part of the body who is making the request, for this to be of mere formality.

Canada as a whole is a beautiful, diverse country—and so is Ontario, yet we still struggle to understand the importance to celebrate even something like Black History Month. This is why this bill is so important to me—because it proves to us that because we celebrate something individually, it doesn't mean that is them versus us; it's not this province versus that province, or Canada versus Ontario.

We have over 200 different ethnic and cultural origins that are reported Black, according to the 2011 and 2016 censuses—and those are newcomers. It just reminds us how important it is to not let one decision have a separate celebration—to make it seem like we're segregating. As I look at that—we understand that it's more the learning that we're unique and that there are different, unique pieces of us that make us a country, a province and its people. So the decision to not join, or join, an event or a part of a celebration is really us taking away that opportunity to be who we are, and to be a part of understanding and learning and growing together about who we are.

My only request for this formal document that will be used to solidify Bill 173 is that it will include other persons of colour who are notable Ontarians. We have notable Ontarians such as Elijah McCoy, William Peyton Hubbard

and others who have contributed to and were born in Ontario, and they have contributed to the notable Ontarians we have.

I cannot thank MPP Parsa and the others who have brought this bill together to the table enough, because, again, it just solidifies the importance of how it's not them versus us. There are other provinces that we have—I know of Saskatchewan; we know there are other provinces and territories that do have these celebrations. It doesn't separate us from being Canadian. It doesn't separate us from valuing everything that Canada is. Rather, it just makes us more what the definition of Canada is—it just identifies that uniqueness, identifies the individual province's contribution to what we bring to Canada.

Most importantly, it will remind Ontarians, Canadians, that when we're celebrating individual things, it does not take away from who we are as Canadians, but it can just bring us together as we bridge that culture.

Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, Phiona Durrant, for that presentation.

The next presenter is from the city of Richmond Hill: Tom Muench, councillor. Welcome.

Mr. Tom Muench: Good day, everybody. It's good to see you.

I'm going to put this on in the background so you guys can hear it. It really is, "What is Ontario, and why do we want to do this?" When I say, "Give us a place to stand and give us a place to grow, because we are all in Ontario"—you need to build a massive pride. Those of us who are in this room today are all proud to be Ontarians. I'm proud to be a Richmond Hiller. I'm proud to live in Canada.

We hear lots of words like "diversity." We hear words about how we are inclusive and that we're all happy to be here—best places to live. You heard Phiona talk about how it's great for her to represent her heritage, but she just wishes she was walking in that snow that I heard her talk about earlier.

The greatness of what we're going to talk about is Ontario, and we need to celebrate that, because many people don't know.

I'll just run you through. How many lakes are there in Ontario? What's the official flower? Who are some great Canadians? How many municipalities are there in Ontario? What do we stand for?

When we talk about this—"Give us a place to stand / And a place to grow.... / And we will build Ontario / A place to stand, a place to grow / Ontari-ari-ari-o"—we lose context, because all of us want to build here for safety and security and love. If we can't celebrate that here in Ontario—and it's such a great lovefest that we have, but I'll give you another reason why we have to have it.

When I go to Quebec and I say, "I'm going to go after and talk about Trois-Rivières, and we're going to change this in Montreal. We're going to make do. What's going on?", the entire Quebec population comes up and says, "Hold it. That's our culture."

What is the greatest place in Ontario? Is it Niagara Falls? Is it our campgrounds? Is it our natural heritage? Is it our beautiful cities? Is it our landscape?

We just got an award for the most treed area in Ontario here in Richmond Hill—the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt.

We talk about prosperity, success, livelihood, families, pride, respect, honour, law, order, peace and good government. Why are we not celebrating that?

How can somebody from outside our area understand what it is to have a cottage—and for those who didn't have a cottage life, how important it was as part of our culture?

And our inclusivity: How we can speak different languages—to be a German Canadian or a Philippine Canadian or an Iranian Persian Canadian?

This is a fantastic idea. Congratulations. And it came from our Richmond Hill MPP, Michael Parsa—another great place to live; I'm sure you all heard that.

I say to you, ladies and gentlemen: If anybody doesn't love and want to embrace Ontario—we should be doing that every day, obviously in the context of other things we do, and embrace what it means to be friendly, to be loved, to feel safe, to have prosperity.

People come here from all over the world, and I often say this: “Why did you choose to come to Canada? Are you happy you moved here? What did you learn? I'm happy you're here. You matter. You're safe. You're free.”

I know we're talking about the province and Ontario, but we're the only country in the world that evolved through evolution. We can separate because the population says, “Hey, we want to leave”—no problem; no war. We work together in harmony. We may not agree, obviously.

I want us to enhance and embrace more, and that's what this is all about—about celebrating our diversity, celebrating our heritage. Isn't it great that we have leadership that cares to say, “We want to celebrate. We're 154 years old, going on 155 this year. Let's talk about all these great things that we are together and why it's important”?

I wrote some trivia. What does “Ontario” mean? Does anybody know? “Sparkling water.” Did you guys know there are 444 municipalities? What is the oldest Ontario town? Sault Ste. Marie. What about our fruits? Is Ontario bigger than France? What is Ontario known for? Who are some of our greatest celebrities? Jim Carrey, for example—or what about Drake or Howie Mandel? What about John Candy—for those who remember, a very, very funny man? What about our Argos and our celebration of our culture and the people who are doing that? How about we build these community centres and we build these Air Canada Centres—obviously, it changed name, but sorry; I'm an older guy.

So I say to you, ladies and gentlemen: Congratulations for celebrating Ontario.

I am so proud to serve Ontario as one of the many lucky, proven elected representatives. I'm not doing so because it's a job for me; it's because I love Ontario. As a municipality, I am a child of the province, so I follow their lead, regardless of what their leadership is. I was there

when Kathleen Wynne was there; I'm there proudly when Doug Ford is there.

I say to you, not because I'm partisan, but because we love Ontario, why are we not celebrating our diversity and explaining our history and telling people where we're at and telling them why we moved here and why we need to embrace it more and how we're together and how we'll help those who need help and how we'll engage prosperity and prosper and grow and live?

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Give us place to stand
And a place to grow ...
And we will build Ontario
A place to stand, a place to grow
Ontari-ari-ari-o!

There's a more modern version of that. I'm sorry to say, I kind of like the old one with the old orchestra, and I'm an older guy.

I ask you all to please embrace this because it doesn't get any better. This is what unifies us. Thank you.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you, Councillor Tom Muench.

The next presenter is Steve Armes. You have seven minutes to present, please. Welcome.

Mr. Steve Armes: Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

And Tom, thank you for singing, because now they don't have to listen to me sing.

My name is Steve Armes. I'm a resident of the town of Aurora. I'm honoured and pleased to join you today to speak in support of Mr. Parsa's private member's bill for the creation of Ontario Day.

As a proud Auroran, Ontarian and Canadian—it's only fitting we should have a day to recognize this great province and celebrate its past, present and future.

My great-great-grandparents came to Ontario from Ireland in the 1860s, right around the time of Confederation, and settled near Lindsay, Ontario. My great-grandmother Maud McNichol used to tell my sister and me stories from her childhood, including the neighbours next door who lived in a house made out of rolls of sod.

Today, along with my wife and son, we live in a home that was built in 1863, four years prior to Confederation, when this province was still called Upper Canada. I wonder what the builders of our home would think of this amazing province now.

This place we call home, originally settled by our First Nations brothers and sisters thousands of years ago, has become home to generation after generation of newcomers from all over the world, creating a beautiful tapestry of cultures, languages and dreams. It offers the hustle and bustle of a busy metropolis like Toronto along with idyllic country living in small towns across the province, like Stirling, Ontario, where my wife grew up.

It takes more than a full day to drive across the province on the Trans-Canada Highway, with incredible landscapes

along the shores of Lake Superior, the Canadian Shield, rolling hills and farmland, all the way to the sand dunes of Prince Edward county and the frequent gridlock of Toronto. Our province has grown from the factories of Hamilton and Sudbury, as well as the vineyards of Niagara and the financial heart of our entire country, Bay Street, here in Toronto.

So many amazing inventions and discoveries have taken place here, and many of them have benefited people around the world. Banting and Best discovered insulin in Ontario. The invention of the cardiac pacemaker was at Toronto General Hospital. The baby food Pablum was invented at SickKids hospital. The electric wheelchair was invented here—as well as more recent technology leadership from companies like Research in Motion, now known as BlackBerry.

Also, a fun fact: The first painted road lines in the world were between Ontario and Quebec.

Our province has welcomed countless newcomers with a dream, like young Frank Stronach, who arrived from Austria with only a few dollars in his pocket and built a world-leading automotive parts manufacturer right here in Aurora. This story has been repeated by countless others, all coming to Ontario to fulfill their own dream.

All of this and much, much more makes Ontario a wonderful place to live, raise our families and build a future together.

As we look back and celebrate our past and present, we must also look forward to the future together. We must continue to strive and work to build a province that's a leader not just in our own country but in the world—a place where all are welcome, valued and where differences are embraced and celebrated, and where our First Nations people are treated with honour and respect and afforded the same opportunities and support as any other citizen; a place that embraces change and growth that is inclusive, open and caring to all who call it home; a place that protects and preserves the environment for future generations, while developing and growing in a clean, green and responsible fashion.

All of these things are what make Ontario great and deserving of an official day to recognize and celebrate.

My hope is that once the pandemic is over, we'll all make an effort to get to know more of this beautiful province—visit Lake Superior or the Soo; ride the railway through the Agawa Canyon in Algoma; see the northern lights near James Bay; visit Prince Edward county, or Ottawa, or somewhere you haven't seen before.

Similar to Tom, as a very small boy, I remember my dad playing a 45 record—oh, my gosh, I am aging myself—of a song written for the Ontario pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal. It was written by Dolores Claman. She also wrote the theme for Hockey Night in Canada. The song was commissioned by the Progressive Conservative government of Premier John Robarts, and it has become Ontario's unofficial anthem. It was also featured in the province of Ontario's short film exhibit, *A Place to Stand*, which actually won the 1967 Academy Award for a live-action short film.

As Phiona and Tom have said, by creating an official Ontario Day, we can all work together to ensure that our province remains “A place to stand, a place to grow”—and, like Tom, I still think of it as “Ontari-ari-ari-o.”

Mr. Parsa, thank you so much for all your efforts in bringing this bill forward and pushing forward for Ontario Day. It's time, and it's well-deserved.

And thank you to the committee for allowing me to speak. I welcome any questions you may have.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for that presentation.

Now we are moving into the round of questions. We'll start with the government members. MPP Jeremy Roberts.

Mr. Jeremy Roberts: I note that MPP Wai also wants to ask a question. Hopefully, we can split our time, Daisy.

To all three presenters, thank you so much. First of all, I feel like I'm learning a ton more about Ontario as I'm hearing all of your presentations.

Tom, my gosh, I haven't had my caffeine yet this morning, and you've energized me with your presentation, so thank you for that.

I want to focus my questions on Phiona.

Phiona, I really appreciated your presentation and your discussion of the importance of family in the Ontario story. I think that's so true. Each of us are so proud of our different family stories, and we want to celebrate and share those stories. Particularly, you talked a little bit about how one of the things that concerns you is that in celebrating our diversity, we risk siloing ourselves rather than integrating.

That struck a chord with me, because I always remember that one of the things I used to love, growing up in Ottawa, in such a diverse city, was when we would have school potlucks and everybody would bring dishes that their families cooked. We would all put them on the table and everyone would be digging into a little bit of Persian food, a little bit of Somalian food, a little bit of—I would always bring tourtière to represent my French-Canadian history. That was always so wonderful—that integration and that celebration of diversity in that way.

Similarly, as an elected official in Ottawa—we have a lot of cultural festivals. We've got GreekFest—we've got all the different festivals. One of the things I love there is, when you go to the festival, it's not just a whole bunch of the Hellenic community at GreekFest; it's everyone from Ottawa coming to experience it and celebrate it.

As MPP Parsa said in his presentation, I imagine a big part of Ontario Day will be that each of us figure out how to celebrate it as best we can. But as elected officials, as community leaders, I think we're all going to want to try to take a leadership role in our community and demonstrate good ways to celebrate.

I wonder if you had any thoughts on how we, as elected officials, can set the standard on how we celebrate Ontario Day—to integrate that diversity rather than silo it.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Phiona, would you like to respond?

Ms. Phiona Durrant: Yes, sir.

Thank you so much, MPP Roberts, for your question and your explanation.

I came to Canada in 1998. I was 18. I came to Ontario. I did not want to come to Canada because, for one, I was scared—I was really scared of not knowing. Just being in a community where I could find people who embraced me—and they weren't Black—and appreciated me, it was easy to transition. So now, as I continue to grow and the community continue to grow and the community continues to grow and you mix with diverse cultures, it has been my focus in Aurora, in particular, as we build this community—we call it “culture bridging,” because what I realized is, people thought that if you celebrate something, you're excluding, but it's more, “Let's come together.”

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One of the first things I did for the Aurora Black community is, I started this thing called “let's do a movie review.” Because I wanted to cook for people, I would cook food. They would come, they would pick it up at my door—because we were trying to do this during COVID-19. We would go back, watch the movie independently and come to review it. The first movie I picked was The Grizzlies—because I want people to understand that because it was the Aurora Black community, it's not a Black-people place or another space for Black people; it's for everybody. Most importantly, I said I didn't care what your background is. Remember, we are Canadian first. We chose to be here. We chose to be called Canadian.

In my duty as a community person, as a resident, as a mom, a wife or business owner—thoughtfully explaining this—keeping leadership accountable is very important to me, because as you ask how you can play a role and make this more of an “us” than a segregated event is how you demonstrate that. You're living the experience.

I keep calling on my councillors and MPPs and different people here to say, “How are you?” We know the duties are hard for you guys. You have a role that is—you're not enough to fill what you're called to do. Therefore, I feel that it's important that we can have people who are helping you to—when I'm going on your page, because that's where the platform is, did I see that my MPP shared about Black History Month? Did I see that they shared about Persian Heritage Month? Are they celebrating the Chinese month? That's the best way you can—it's being a part as often as you can, being a voice and not being silent. Often, these celebrations can become more of politics, where you don't want to share your views as it might affect your politician role or your lead or whatever it might be. But we want it to be more, “We are family. We're in it together.” I don't have to agree with you to celebrate with you. We are a community, and the differences that we have are what make us beautiful.

Hopefully, that helps to answer your question.

Again, we ask our leaders to be a part of the action, not just the plan-making. Get involved with your community and celebrate with them.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Daisy Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Do I still have the time to ask some questions?

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You have one minute and 20 seconds.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Very quickly, then, first of all, I want to thank all three presenters. It's really very entertaining, I should say, to hear Councillor Muench singing and telling us all the great things about Ontario—same with Steve. You remind us of all the great things Ontario has. I believe this is what Ontario Day is all about—it's just reminding us. I would like to get to Phiona, as well.

I thank you, Jeremy, for asking those questions. Actually, it's a similar question that I would like to ask.

I've experienced for myself, as a Chinese, and I've come here—first of all, just as you say, I'm very focused on my own community, and very soon I find out that—

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): You have 30 seconds left, MPP Daisy Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: — we are living in a silo.

I appreciate that we have a Black heritage month, which I celebrate a lot, and I also have somebody I recommended for that month—somebody from Richmond Hill.

So, yes, we celebrate each other, but I agree with what Councillor Muench says: Unity is what we can celebrate through this day.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We are now moving on to the opposition side. MPP Miller, please go ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank all the presenters—really great input and very enthusiastic. If I wasn't woken up, I am now. I'll tell you, it was really good.

I'll direct this to Phiona—a very nice presentation, Phiona, and I'm glad to have you as part of our family. At two years younger than you when you came to Canada—I was 16 years old—I recall my family taking me to Expo 67. Expo 67 had the participation of 62 nations, and it has been rated as the most successful world's fair in the 20th century. That was in Montreal.

I had another good thing happen that year: I happened to be at the Leafs game when they won the Stanley Cup—the last time they won it, in 1967. My brother was at Ryerson University, and we managed to get to the scalpers to get a couple of tickets. We sat up in the nosebleeds, but it was exciting. Toronto went crazy when they won. I got to meet Johnny Bower, too, which was kind of cool. Actually, the lady who babysat Johnny Bower's kids when he was with the Leafs worked in my office at Queen's Park. She was part of their family, almost. So it was kind of exciting.

Also, I just had the honour of attending a Black History Month event in my city of Hamilton—it was mostly the Caribbean French. Most of it was in French, and I tried my best to understand a little bit of it. I should partake in that. I'm getting a little older, but I think I could still pick it up a little bit. It was great. I really loved the food. It was virtual, but years before that, I attended and the food was great. The dance, the music—very interesting.

Some of the people here are talking about being old. Well, you guys are youngsters yet. You're getting there—but you're still youngsters, okay?

I did a lot of sports. Sports, in my life, were very important. I refereed OMHA for a few years. I've played a lot of hockey. My dad played pro hockey. My aunt was an Olympic swimmer. We've done a lot. That was back in the 1930s. So we've been around the game a long time.

I am so pleased with the way Ontario has grown. We've opened our doors to so many cultures. Over 200 cultures live in this province, in harmony, as Mr. Parsa said, which is a wonderful thing. I think it demonstrates to the rest of the world that people can live in peace and harmony and get along if they really work at it.

I have so many cultures in my area that I go to so many different events that—it's really interesting. I think the cultures also should invite other cultures to join in—like Scottish dancing or whatever. The cultures should not just invite the politicians; I think they should interact with each other and have joint celebrations so they can learn more about their cultures. Ignorance is a terrible thing. I think if people are educated and are exposed to other people's ways of life, they become more forgiving and more accepting of things. I think that's a good way to go. So I'd like to see more of that.

Once again, I'd like to thank you all.

Jamie has a couple of things to say. I'll pass it over to him.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Phiona, would you like to respond? You have three minutes.

Ms. Phiona Durrant: I just want to say thank you. I didn't think there was a particular question; I think he was just commenting on and concluding and just concurring with what was being said.

So thank you, again, MPP Miller. It's a pleasure meeting you, and I'm happy that you enjoyed the food. Yes, we can't wait to do that again.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Do we have any questions coming from the official opposition? MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: There's very limited time, so I'll follow up with a question after this.

I just have a comment. I want to thank Mr. Muench and Mr. Armes for the trivia.

One of the things I was thinking about for trivia, locally—Sudbury is the first place to bring in parking meters. As a suggestion for MPP Parsa—that on Ontario Day, we waive those parking meter fees. I know Councillor Muench might be worried about the income that it brings to the municipalities—so maybe the provincial government provides a subsidy to the municipalities. It's something we're known for in Sudbury, but I don't want us to celebrate being known for being the place where parking meters were first brought in.

I'll follow up with questions in the second round, Chair.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): This round of questions will start with the government side. You have 7.5 minutes.

MPP Vincent Ke, please go ahead.

1020

Mr. Vincent Ke: First of all, thank you, MPP Parsa. It's really—brands are really important today.

Tom, thank you so much for your wonderful presentation. It's what they used to say is entertainment.

I personally—1998: Phiona, we came to Canada in the same year.

Interjection.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Yes, I know.

Before I came to Canada, I was living in Germany because I did a master's degree there, and I worked there for a while. I decided to move to Canada because Canada is multicultural. It was difficult for me to choose the province to land in—Ontario or BC. I almost went to BC because BC is close to China. I was born and raised in China and was educated in China, and the weather, the climate—I grew up in China, and my hometown has weather like Florida. We don't have wintertime. So BC weather would actually be good for me. Also, when you want to go back to China, you don't need to transfer. I almost went there, but I did some studies and found out that Ontario is the economic engine of Canada. You can easily find a job. And there's more culture here. I'm lucky and I'm very, very happy to say I chose the right province, Ontario. It's calm, stable—and the bill mentions so many of Ontario's landscapes, tourism, attraction points and so on. I'm very happy to be an Ontarian for 23 years.

When MPP Miller was talking about sports—I like sports too. I built two dragon boat teams. In Toronto, I think, for over 30 years, every year they have hosted the dragon boat festival. I'm a captain. I participate every time. And two years ago, we celebrated the Raptors. So that's really—we recognize how proud to be Ontarian.

So thank you so much, Michael, again, for bringing this day.

Michael, you already explained, but I want to ask Tom—we have 200 different cultures. What do you see to celebrate this day—because this day will be different from Canada Day. Tom, maybe you can explain how you are going to celebrate this Ontario Day.

Mr. Tom Muench: Everyone is going to have an opinion. Everybody's opinion matters.

To answer your question: I think we should celebrate the cultural diversity by coming together as a united front to say how we all share the safety, the security, the food, the language, the culture and how we embrace that together here in harmony. I think a great united front—again: “Give us a place to stand / And a place to grow” together.

To have festivals uniquely catering to a certain demographic is fantastic, but I'd like to enhance that to say, all of us should embrace it. I love the idea, frankly, where you say that it's not just about us as community leaders stepping up; it should be that we are embracing together. So when you're having a dance, for example, get the Irish dancers to come up with the Aboriginal, together—and see how we're going to be having one big festival of being Canadian, and have a story and continue to tell our story going forward on how we, together, are building this great country, municipality, Ontario.

And I would love to see what we're doing in Windsor and what we're doing in Sudbury.

Just so you know, sir, I do trivia, and I will be adding parking meters to the trivia for my community—so that is going to go into our little Sudbury. That's an example of great community-building and the love of this Ontario that we all share and choose to live, work and play in, and stay together as a family in, regardless of our background.

I loved hearing the stories from everybody.

To answer your question: We need to be a community of communities embracing upon a great Ontario—not saying, “I'm German Canadian,” but, “I'm Canadian Ontarian, and I'm celebrating the cultures of everybody, with some context of German.”

And I would like to share—because I like spicy food, Phiona. Like I said, can we please share a great day together?

That unity, that pride and that happiness—this is what this motion is all about. If we do this together, the pride and the excitement that we do will be so vibrant that it will be unparalleled. That's why everybody should be coming to Ontario.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Daisy Wai, please go ahead. You have one minute and 12 seconds.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I will make good use of my one minute. I'll go directly to the question.

I again thank you, Phiona, and I thank you, Councillor Muench, for your comments.

Ontario Day is helping us with unity. Phiona, do you have any other way that you can see that is a good celebration of unity among us? We already have different heritage days.

Ms. Phiona Durrant: There are so many ways. Like many of us already said, being united comes when, first of all, we acknowledge that we're Canadian and that we are all human. We have one thing in common: We want to be accepted, to be loved, to be recognized, to be seen and to be a part. I think when we can all recognize that we want the same thing, having unity is just second nature. It's like breathing. It's a choice.

We have people who still say, “Don't celebrate Christmas”—no, no, no, we want to, and the door is open for everyone to come. You choosing to be absent is a choice—and our job is to continue to educate, to be a par and not to segregate.

Hopefully, that answers the question.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Now we are moving into a round of questions that will start with the opposition. You have 7.5 minutes to go. MPP West.

Mr. Jamie West: My first question is going to be for Phiona. I asked a similar question of MPP Parsa, and I'm going to ask one of you, as well.

You talked about Black History Month, and MPP Miller talked about Black History Month events. The first Black History Month event I went to as an MPP was called “la femme noire, la femme africaine.” During the event, I was sitting at a table and talking to people and they asked why I came. I said, “I'm here because I'm not noir, femme, africain or French, and there is a lot for me to learn.”

So with your perspective, with different cultures and different ethnicities and all the things we have—what is

your perspective? What would you like to see for Ontario Day celebrations? We'll have the day, but how do you see the celebration happening?

Ms. Phiona Durrant: Thank you so much for that question. I appreciate it.

There are so many ways. One of the ways is how we have done Black history for Aurora. This is why we know this is needed: I was, for lack of a better word, condemned for having a different culture on the platforms of Black history. They were not all Black people. We have Chinese, we have white—we have different backgrounds of people on it. Somebody said, “It's Black History Month. What is a white person or an Asian doing on it?”

I said, “This is the face of Canada. This is the face of Ontario. This is the face of my city.” And in the same way that I want to be a part of something and be at a table—why wouldn't we? That's what we do. We don't want to celebrate something but create a separate segregation and division—so we're trying to fight against certain things, but still creating it in a different way. So, yes, we're creating it when we're celebrating Black history. We don't just have Black people speaking about it, because it's very ignorant to think that because you're white you don't know about Black culture or because you're Asian you don't know about Black culture. One of the ladies who was celebrating and doing the cooking for us is a white Canadian. People were asking, “How do you have a white person making a Black Jamaican rum cake?” She was raised by a father who was adopted in Jamaica, since she was four.

1030

We cannot use colour to tell who this person is. We get to know people. That's what we have to do. Take the opportunity to know people, invite everybody in the part of the planning—and that's equity—bring youth in to the planning, where we don't share the same culture. But we are learning and growing together.

I think that's the best way I can answer your question, sir.

Mr. Jamie West: I'm going to ask a very similar question to Steve and Tom. For the Chair, just wave if you want to answer the question.

One of the things I'd like to suggest, MPP Parsa, is that you tie it to tourism. Tourism is really struggling in the north. In the conversation, Tom talked about cottages. In the north, we see camps, and there's a big divide between that—if there's a tie between tourism.

To either Tom or Steve—recommendations about how you think we should celebrate, what would be good ways to tie into all the things you talked about with the cities, the lakes, the trivia. How do we tie this into Ontario Day to make it more successful?

Mr. Steve Armes: That is a really important question, especially as we come out of the pandemic.

Being born and raised here—there's a lot of the province I've never gotten to. I only got to Sudbury for the first time, to be honest, two years ago. I've travelled the country, I've travelled the world, but I haven't necessarily travelled as far as I could in the province.

So definitely, with tourism, Ontario, as the government is trying—and the government has been doing an excellent job throughout this pandemic to try to keep people together and involved. We know everyone wants to go on vacation. Why not start here at home first?

As my final point, I'd just like to go back to something that was said a moment ago about diversity and so on. All of you have offices at Queen's Park. In a few weeks—because Tom has promised us that the weather is going to be warm in a few weeks—you're going to start seeing flowers coming through those magnificent gardens around Queen's Park. Are they all one colour? No. What makes the gardens around Queen's Park so beautiful is the diversity and mixture and colour.

In many ways, that picture of Queen's Park, with these gorgeous gardens full of different colours of flowers, different types of flowers circling our Legislature, really should be the thing that—as we come into a spring when people so desperately need hope and desperately need to be excited, that is something we can focus on.

Mr. Jamie West: Steve, I'm going to pass it to MPP Miller so we don't run out of time, in case his question is going to be very important.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Miller, you have two minutes and 33 seconds left.

Mr. Paul Miller: That will be just about right.

I could send this over to Steve or Tom.

I've noticed over the years that a lot of the committees on municipalities and ad hoc committees in any level of government have a tendency to be stacked with one group over another. What I'd like to see is more diversification on all committees, that represent the demographics of the municipality you represent. I haven't seen a lot of that. Some people try to take it over and push their ideas, ignoring the other situations in the municipality.

You're a municipal official, and I was for a few years in Stoney Creek, as a councillor. I sat on—I was vice-chair of engineering and things like that.

I would like to see more people from different cultural backgrounds involved in all decisions for any celebration in any community, because I think a lot of them get ignored and left out and don't feel like part of the community. I'd like to see more of that.

I don't know if you guys agree with me or not, but that's how I think.

Mr. Steve Armes: Definitely. I think we need to have more people at the table. We need to have more people's input. I like to think of it as, rather than fighting over crumbs under the table, we should all be feasting on this banquet of plenty that, as a province, we have in culture, in arts, in education, in all of the great things and all of the great assets. Sometimes, we sell ourselves short, and I think this very much—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): One minute left.

Mr. Steve Armes: —can be a rallying point.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you to all the presenters for your presentations.

We are going to move to the next round of presenters—*Interjection.*

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): We'll have a small recess until 11 o'clock.

The committee recessed from 1035 to 1100.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Good morning, everyone. We are here for public hearings on Bill 173, An Act to proclaim Ontario Day. We finished the first round of presentations; now we are moving into the final part of the presentations.

MR. GREG SMITH

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): I would call upon Greg Smith.

Welcome. Please state your name and if you have an organization, for the record. You have seven minutes to present.

Mr. Greg Smith: Thank you for having me this morning. My name is Greg Smith. I've been a resident of Aurora, Ontario, for the last 30 years.

I would like to thank my MPP, Michael Parsa, for bringing forward this private member's bill. At first blush, you may see it as being a simple motherhood-and-apple-pie bill, but to me it's much, much more.

I'll give you a little family background. I was born and raised in Ontario. I've lived in Ontario my whole life, and so has most of my family, in all different parts of the province—blue-collar, white-collar, professionals within our family, just like many families in Ontario.

Ontario Day: I can go on and on about how wonderful Ontario is, but I think we all can agree on that. Why I chose to speak today was more about my experience with these types of days of celebration, both professionally and personally.

Professionally, I was heavily involved in Canada's 125th birthday celebration, known as Canada 125. My role was to encourage grassroots organizations from coast to coast to create activity programs in celebration of Canada's special 125th birthday. By creating a year of celebration and identifying it as such, it enabled Canadians to celebrate the way that best fit their individual needs, their communities and the groups within their communities. It was definitely a grassroots-based, bottom-up approach.

I followed this up with working with the United Nations a couple of years later, for the International Year of the Family. We applied the same principles—grassroots-based, encouraging organizations and individuals to celebrate what was important to them, as families, and their communities. That year was an overwhelming success as an international year, in my opinion.

I live in Aurora, Ontario. I volunteer extensively in the town.

I volunteer as the president of a not-for-profit called Music Aurora. We help engage and provide opportunity for youth musicians to get some confidence and to showcase their talents within our community and around the area.

Back in 2013, Aurora celebrated its 150th birthday, and I co-chaired a volunteer organization, a committee of

people from across our community—again, it was grassroots, collaborative, working together. It was a very big success.

Why create a day to celebrate? Well, a few things: It gives the people of Ontario an annual day to be proud, to boast about what is great to them about living in the province. It provides grassroots organizations with a day to showcase and celebrate with their communities, to create a ground-up approach to proudly celebrate all that is wonderful in our province. Our diverse multicultural mosaic can be encouraged to shine. For businesses, it provides a day for them to do whatever works best for them. A manufacturer can boast about their made-in-Ontario accomplishments. Artists and musicians can create pieces in celebration. A restaurant can have live music and a celebration on a day that might otherwise just be another Monday.

As a child, the song *A Place to Stand* made me feel so proud to be in Ontario. I know the words, but in the interest of your ears I will not be doing my rendition today.

Ontario Day can be and should be my granddaughters' new anthem. We have a great province. Let's shout it from the rooftops.

I want to thank you for your time. Any questions will be gladly answered.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation.

Now we're going to start with the questions. The rounds of questions will start with the opposition side. They have 7.5 minutes.

MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thanks, Greg, for your presentation. It seems like you're a passionate fellow and you've been around the game a long time, like me—too long, actually, for me.

I understand the mosaic of Ontario. I'll reiterate: In a former presentation, I mentioned the number of cultures we have—over 200 in Ontario. It's a melting pot. It's also the envy of the world. I believe Michael mentioned that we get along relatively well. There's the odd flare-up with some individuals who have not got the best of hearts for the rest of us, but I would say 99% of the time, we share cultures, we get along and we try to look for the good in people, as Ontarians and Canadians. I think that's one of the winning characteristics that we have, and I think that's very important.

Like you said in your presentation, I'd like to see more diversification in our festivals and gatherings. I'd like to see people interacting with each other with music, dance, food—but not just to their own people, not just to the councillors or the representatives of government. I'd like to see actual interaction between cultures; for instance, I invite you for Scottish dancing, you invite me for a lantern celebration or whatever—anything that we can learn from each other and we treat each other as human beings, as opposed to not liking something different. Difference is what makes the world go round. It keeps people's interest up and it keeps their enthusiasm for learning, for sharing. I think that's important.

I'd like to thank you for your presentation. There's not much more I can say because everything you said was good. I think your heart is in the right place. I wish that more people were like you in this province and that we put away the nasty stuff and got down to the good stuff, because it's going to make us better as a people.

Mr. Greg Smith: Thank you very much, MPP Miller. I've always been about collaboration. Everything I do on the volunteer—but even on my work side of things, it's all about bringing people together, because to me, one plus one can equal four or five. By working together, you can take something and amplify it and make it that much better.

Absolutely, I am not a silo guy; I'm a collaborative, work-together kind of individual.

I think that doing a day like Ontario Day will enable us, as communities across the province, to work together.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: There are few people from other parts of Ontario presenting. Did you get a list of people—that you'd only allow so many? I don't know what happened there. I was hoping there would be other jurisdictions that would be represented.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Are you asking the question to Greg Smith?

Mr. Paul Miller: I asked Michael.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Parsa.

Mr. Michael Parsa: Sorry, Chair. Thanks very much.

You're right. That's the beauty of it. Given that we're in a pandemic, it's a little bit more difficult, as you can appreciate, MPP Miller. But we are going to do our very best, and all of us as elected officials—and even as individuals.

Look at the common theme that has been expressed here throughout the entire day: collaboration and inclusiveness. We're going to be continuing to do that because—again, I want to mention what I said earlier, and that is, what makes Ontario so great today is what has brought us here. We have to look back and appreciate our history—and learn from our history, because at times we have to, and that's okay.

1110

Look at some of what our last presenter talked about—the fact that he had travelled across the world but hadn't seen much of Ontario.

This will be a good opportunity for us to all get around and to not just discover other parts of Ontario, but to reach out to other areas and other people across the province.

Very good point, Mr. Miller.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: I agree with you. If people spend time travelling in Ontario, taking in the sights, doing the concerts, doing all the venues and the tourism, it's going to help our economy slowly bounce back. We've got a long way to go, but I think if we spend our money here—I wouldn't want to call it protectionism, like the Americans do, but I would say that we certainly need some help from our own people to get us back on track. I would like

to encourage people to spend their money in Ontario and help us get back on the road to recovery.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Now we are moving to a round of questions. We'll start with the government side.

MPP Daisy Wai, please go ahead.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: Thank you very much for coming and sharing your thoughts with us. It's exciting how much you have done for—when we celebrated the 125 years. You have done a great job for the community.

That's why I would like to ask you what you would recommend for us to do on Ontario Day, once this motion is passed. How would you promote this to the next generation and to the different—diversity—to get them to know more about Ontario?

Mr. Greg Smith: Back to MPP Miller's comment: I think you could get a volunteer committee, with people from across the province in different walks of life—artists, musicians, businesses, cultural groups, Indigenous groups. I think that working together to cross-promote things that are happening with Ontario Day is a phenomenal way to go about it. The whole networking and collaboration—back to what I said. I think it allows ambassadors in various regions and sectors of the province to be able to go to their communities and encourage people to work together and celebrate this wonderful day.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): MPP Ke.

Mr. Vincent Ke: Thank you for your wonderful presentation. It is very meaningful, to celebrate Ontario Day.

Ontario is a big province. Geographically, it is bigger than the country of Germany, and we have a big land in the north part of Ontario. Most of the residents are in the south of Ontario, and everyone knows we have Niagara Falls, we have the CN Tower, the Raptors, the Maple Leafs, the ROM. How can we also include the north part of Ontario? We have our miners, we have resources, we have agriculture. What is your opinion on also getting the north part of Ontario included when we celebrate Ontario Day?

Mr. Greg Smith: Thank you very much for that question. I think that goes back to collaboration and grassroots.

We have wonderful, wonderful, unexplored successes and wonderful parts of northern Ontario that many of the people in the southern region are unaware of.

I think this day is that opportunity for us to learn more about each other—cultures and groups and organizations—but also about geography.

Absolutely, 100%, I'm in agreement with you that northern Ontario is a gem. Unfortunately, yes, a lot of the spotlight might form on the southern part and the GTA. But I think this would be an opportunity to address what you're speaking to, and I think this is the opportunity, on an annual basis, to build up collaboration and awareness of all the great things in the north.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Any further questions coming from the government side? We have three minutes left for the government. None?

Now this round of questions will start with the opposition side. MPP Miller.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess you're the only game in town right now, so we're going to talk about what's going on here.

I like the fact that you touched on the point I made. I'll reiterate it: the diversification of all local committees—municipal, provincial, federal; it doesn't matter. If you want to get a unique perspective of people's background, their culture, their dance, their food, their music, you need to interact, and to interact, you have to actually take part physically—well, at this point, virtually, unfortunately—in their activities and go with some enthusiasm and some interest, that you really want to learn. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to sense that somebody is there just for the photo op, that they're not there for the real reason that you're there for: to learn and to share stories, to share your history and culture. I think that's important, and I think that the more we do that in these types of get-togethers that we have throughout the year, year in and year out, it's going to build a stronger framework for our society. I think it's going to create more understanding, more tolerance and more giving, as opposed to taking.

I would also like to see more of this in the Parliament itself. I'm a bit of a rebel when it comes to—I don't like partisan politics. I think that you're there to represent your community, and you're there to do what they elected you to do. When sometimes you get silenced by the party system, and sometimes you're put in a corner or punished if you say the thing that your people want you to say—I don't know if the other members get that, but I'm getting more and more of that in the last five years, where people are saying, "Why don't you say what we feel? Why are you silenced? Why do you have to follow the command or follow the corner office?"

I really am getting to a point in my life where you should say what you really feel and stand up for the people you represent and what they want you to say, from your mind and your heart, as opposed to being silenced or channelled in a direction that you don't want to go. I wish more parliamentarians were like that. I may not live to see it, but I hope someday we move in the direction where we can really change society, really change cultural identities and really open up to people as people—as opposed to a political machine, like, "Do as you're told, or we'll make you a private member," or, "Do as you're told. You didn't say what I wanted you to say." I just hope I live to see it; I probably won't. But I think it will be better for all of us, as people, as a society. I know I'm standing on a bit of a soapbox here. It has been an extreme frustration for me for the last 14 or 15 years, watching these activities go on in Parliament.

I think committees become ineffective when there are majorities on committees. They take their marching orders, and even if they don't believe it, they still vote that way. That's unfortunate. I hope it changes, Greg.

I'm sorry to be Mr. Doom-and-Gloom.

I hope that people start to really take a look at themselves, look in that mirror, and say, "Did I do the right thing for the people I represented? I'm not sure."

1120

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): The final round of questions will start with the government side.

MPP Amy Fee.

Ms. Amy Fee: Good morning, Greg. I want to thank you for your presentation and all of the work you are doing in your community. It sounds like you are certainly doing a lot of community building and outreach and are there for bringing that community spirit forward.

Something that has come up a lot this morning is about, obviously, that Ontario pride piece, but there's something that—I grew up here in Ontario. I came back just over 10 years ago. I lived in Saskatchewan, Alberta and BC. Especially in Saskatchewan and Alberta, the provincial pride that was there—and Saskatchewan was the first place that I lived outside of Ontario. That was something that always blew me away about that province. It was like this small and mighty group of people who were so full of pride for every accomplishment that they had. It was not something that I really saw in Ontario in the same way that I saw it there. I was in my late teens or early twenties when I moved there. I was so immersed in that—that, wow, people can really showcase their talents and what they have. I didn't feel that I really experienced that in Ontario. I think that this is what Ontario Day is going to be about—to build that up and to make sure that we get that pride into our school system and that our kids are learning about the things that go on in Ontario and Ontario's history, even more so than they are now, to experience that.

When I was living in Regina—I lived in both Saskatoon and Regina—the mayor there launched a campaign called I Love Regina. It was on billboards, and people with T-shirts. It was all about trying to connect to people you know in other parts of the country to talk about how amazing the city is, to encourage people to come for a vacation, to actually move to Regina and look at the opportunities there. I think that's something we can all learn from in Ontario—bringing out that pride and showcasing what we have here in Ontario. I don't think that we do it enough, and I don't think we take the time to have that pride.

When you are in other places in Canada, a lot of times when you say you're from Ontario, people say, "Oh, you're from the centre of the universe. You must be from Toronto." There is so much more in this province that we don't highlight; I'm really hoping that, going forward with this day, we can.

I'm really hoping that you will bring forward any ideas that you have as time goes on, to make sure that we are building up this day and building up the pride that all Ontarians should have in our province.

Thank you for everything that you do and for coming to committee this morning.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Do any MPPs want to make comments or questions?

MPP Wai.

Mrs. Daisy Wai: I do not have any more questions, but I do have some comments.

I want to say thank you to Mr. Smith for coming today and for how you have been supporting the community. We look forward to having you working together with us—especially with our MPP Michael Parsa—when we have Ontario Day in place; we just cannot wait.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our MPP and parliamentary assistant Michael Parsa for bringing this motion forward. I'm sure there are a lot of Ontarians who cannot wait. I agree with MPP Amy Fee that this is a time when we can get Ontario promoted. Let's all be very proud of being an Ontarian. What is a better time than now, after the pandemic? When we promote Ontario, we're basically promoting our economy and presenting ourselves not only in Canada but internationally. I really commend you for this motion that you brought forward. I just cannot wait to see Ontario Day come to fruition. Thank you very much for doing all this, MPP Parsa.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Mr. Smith, would you like to respond?

Mr. Greg Smith: Yes. Thank you very much.

To the last few MPPs who spoke: One of my experiences is that sometimes government in general—all levels of government—try to be the culture, instead of providing the tools, the support and the communication help, and then getting out of the way and letting groups and organizations do what they do best. So I see Ontario Day as kind of the framework to put together a tool kit of things to help groups and organizations be successful in promoting why they're proud to be part of Ontario.

Back to MPP Miller's comment: I absolutely think that collaboration—putting that aside—allowing people and communities and groups to work together for whatever is important to them, is the key. All that government needs to do is be supportive and provide the tools to assist, and things will be great.

The Chair (Mr. Logan Kanapathi): Thank you for your presentation.

That concludes our business today.

I'd like to thank you, too, MPP Michael Parsa, for your great private member's bill.

Thank you to all the committee members for your time and your passionate comments.

As a reminder, the deadline to send in written submissions will be 7 p.m. today, March 5, 2021.

The committee is now adjourned until 9 a.m. on Tuesday, March 9, 2021.

The committee adjourned at 1127.

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