



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MPP Pettapiece spearheading new fire safety initiative

(Perth-Wellington) – On March 17, 2011, a fire claimed the lives of North Perth Fire Service members Ken Rea and Ray Walter. Perth-Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece is working on a new fire safety initiative to help address one of the factors in that tragic accident: firefighters had no way of knowing the building used truss and lightweight construction.

“Lightweight- and truss-type construction is increasingly commonplace,” Pettapiece explained. “But unless it is identified, it can pose serious risk to responding firefighters. That’s why they need as much information as possible—as soon as they arrive on scene—to assess the risk and plan their attack.”

Pettapiece is working on a private member’s bill to make sure they have better information. It would require most commercial and industrial buildings, as well as apartment complexes of three or more units, to display an emblem alerting fire crews to the building’s use of truss and lightweight construction.

Truss- and lightweight-type construction is used in almost every new home and in building renovations. The term generally refers to construction using building components that bear the weight of the building with a minimum amount of materials, rather than “overbuilding.”

Tests conducted by the National Research Council Canada show that the times to reach structural failure during a fire for truss and lightweight construction were 35-60% shorter than that for solid wood joist assembly. Structural failure can happen in as little as six minutes.

Pettapiece modeled his bill after the successful bylaw passed in the City of Stratford, which requires buildings using truss and lightweight construction to post an emblem by their door. Municipalities including West Perth, Perth East and Perth South have passed similar bylaws.

The MPP credits the hard work of firefighter Mike Lukachko, who championed the initiative in Stratford. Pettapiece also worked closely on the bill with fire chiefs from across Perth-Wellington including chiefs Chris Harrow (Minto), John Paradis (Stratford), Bill Hunter (Perth East & West Perth) and Ed Smith (North Perth).

“My bill is named after Ken Rea and Ray Walter, who lost their lives in service to their community,” said Pettapiece. “If passed, this bill will add a measure of safety to responding firefighters. It could very well save lives.”

Over the summer, Pettapiece has consulted stakeholders across the province on his bill. This week he met with fire officials in the City of Windsor; in the coming weeks he will travel to the Kenora and Ottawa areas.

Pettapiece plans to formally introduce his bill in the legislature in the fall. Debate on the bill is scheduled for October 20, 2016.

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