



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **MPPs unanimously support *Rea and Walter Act***

### *Randy Pettapiece's firefighter safety bill passes 2<sup>nd</sup> reading in the Ontario Legislature*

(Queen's Park) – The *Rea and Walter Act*—a bill that would give firefighters better information to fight fires—cleared a major hurdle yesterday in the Ontario legislature, where MPPs unanimously supported it.

“For local firefighters and those across the province, this is a very encouraging result,” said Perth-Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece, who introduced the bill. “This is a critical issue affecting firefighter safety, and I’m grateful that all parties could get behind the solution we proposed.”

The bill is named in honour of two North Perth Fire Service members, Ken Rea and Ray Walter, who died battling a fire in March 2011. That tragedy happened when the roof of the Listowel Dollar Stop collapsed.

Pettapiece’s legislation addresses one of the contributing factors in that tragedy: firefighters had no way to know the building used truss and lightweight construction.

The bill would require commercial and industrial buildings, as well as multi-family dwellings of three or more units, except townhouses, to display an emblem alerting fire crews to a building’s use of truss and lightweight construction.

“Truss and lightweight construction, when exposed to fire, can pose serious risks to responding firefighters. The best way to minimize their risk is to maximize their information,” Pettapiece explained during the debate.

Support for the bill from all parties was immediately apparent.

“[This] is a good bill,” said Algoma-Manitoulin MPP Michael Mantha representing the NDP. “It’s straightforward for what it is trying to accomplish. Keeping our Ontario firefighters safe is something that we can all agree on.”

“What the member for Perth-Wellington is proposing is just basic common sense,” he added.

Nickel Belt MPP France Gelinis noted that a delegation from Sudbury attended the memorial service in Listowel for Rea and Walter. She also urged the government to allow the bill to move forward through third and final reading.

It is up to the Liberal government to allow the bill to go to the committee stage for possible amendments, and be reintroduced for a final vote in the legislature.

Liberal MPP Kathryn McGarry, also the Minister of Natural Resources, congratulated Pettapiece, saying she “could not be more supportive” of the bill.

For years, many firefighters have called on the province to mandate that truss- and lightweight-constructed buildings be identified. In 2012, North Perth fire chief Ed Smith brought forward a resolution adopted at the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (O AFC).

In September 2016, O AFC reaffirmed its support with a resolution supporting the *Rea and Walter Act*.

Other jurisdictions including New Jersey, New York, Illinois and Florida have all passed state legislation similar to Pettapiece’s bill.

“But you don’t need to go to Florida to see examples of proven leadership on this issue. You just need to go to Perth-Wellington and to meet some of the people I’m privileged to represent,” Pettapiece told the legislature.

Many local municipalities already require buildings using truss and lightweight construction to post an emblem by their door. Pettapiece modeled his bill on existing bylaws in the City of Stratford and municipalities including West Perth, Perth East and Perth South.

To help craft the *Rea and Walter Act*, Pettapiece sought advice from local firefighters. He worked closely with fire chiefs including Chris Harrow (Minto), John Paradis (Stratford), Bill Hunter (Perth East & West Perth) and Ed Smith (North Perth).

He also credited Mike Lukachko, who advocated for the Stratford bylaw, and recognized Rick Richardson, chief of Mapleton Fire/Rescue, and Richard Anderson, chief of the Town of St. Marys Fire Department. All attended the debate.

In total, about 40 people were at Queen’s Park yesterday to attend the debate, including firefighters from Perth-Wellington and across the province.

“So many people in our riding have worked very hard, over several years, to push the province to identify truss and lightweight construction,” Pettapiece said.

At the end of his remarks, Pettapiece recognized members of the Rea and Walter families sitting in the gallery for the debate.

“It was a difficult day, but their support and participation means everything,” he later concluded. “As a community, we owe them so much.”

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Attached: Hansard record of debate  
Photos from April 6, 2017 at the Ontario Legislature

Link to download hi-res photos: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/randypettapiecempp/>