

Private Members' Public Business

Rea and Walter Act (Truss and Lightweight Construction Identification), 2017 / Loi Rea et Walter de 2017 sur l'identification des composants structuraux à ossature légère

Mr. Pettapiece moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act governing the identification of truss and lightweight construction in buildings / Projet de loi 105, Loi régissant l'identification des composants structuraux à ossature légère incorporés aux bâtiments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: In introducing the Rea and Walter Act, I'm aware that it recalls a heartbreaking chapter in the history of our area. It's also a painful chapter for firefighters across the province and beyond.

Six years ago, on March 17, 2011, fire engulfed a dollar store in downtown Listowel. That fire claimed the lives of two North Perth volunteer firefighters, Ken Rea and Ray Walter.

Ken Rea was 56. He was a board member for victim services of Perth county, and for 37 years, he was a volunteer firefighter, becoming deputy district chief at the Atwood station.

Ray Walter was 30. He was vice-president of the Kinsmen Club of Listowel and joined the volunteer fire department in 2008.

Ken and Ray were inside the dollar store as the fire spread. They were searching for possible victims; they were searching for the source of the fire. Suddenly, the roof collapsed, leaving Ken and Ray with no escape. Rescue was impossible.

I was in town that day with former member Tim Hudak. We saw the dark, black, heavy smoke. We heard rumours that someone was hurt or killed in the blaze.

My first thought was of my son, also a North Perth volunteer firefighter. You can imagine my concern. But he was safe, taking phone calls pouring in to the Monkton station.

The memorial service was held a week later. It drew thousands of firefighters, paramedics and police officers from across Canada and the United States. It was a tremendous show of support for our community's devastating loss.

Investigations followed, and they revealed what firefighters did not know, what they could not have known, on that day: Initially undetected, the fire started behind some insulation and was degrading the lightweight wooden roof trusses. Collapse was inevitable.

This afternoon, I will explain how the Rea and Walter Act will give firefighters better information, which they can use to plan their attack in situations like this.

I intend to do three things: I'll describe truss and lightweight construction, or TLC, and why it matters; I'll explain how the bill uses a practical and proven way to identify TLC; and I'll show broad support for this bill.

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. Ultimately, that's what TLC identification is about and what this bill would do.

First, we need to understand truss and lightweight construction. TLC is increasingly commonplace as a building method. It refers to wood-frame building materials where the roof- or floor-supporting systems are constructed of lightweight, prefabricated materials. Wooden I-beams pose the same issue and are also addressed in our bill.

So what's the problem? The problem is not TLC. Modern homes use it, and many commercial and industrial buildings use it. These buildings are safe. The problem is what happens when lightweight construction is exposed to fire. While traditional floor joists burn in about 15 minutes, pre-engineered joists can take only about six minutes to burn—six minutes. They don't even have to be on fire to pose a danger. High heat can make the wood unstable by melting the glue that holds the joists together.

Suppose you're a firefighter arriving at the scene of a blaze. You probably arrived in about five minutes, as the average fire department response time is between four and six minutes. As an incident commander, you immediately face a critical decision: Do

you advance to the building's roof or floor to fight the fire at its source, or do you fight it from other angles in other ways?

In many buildings, you might have the time and opportunity to advance, but if the building uses TLC, time might have run out. These joists are already beginning to burn. The roof or floor may already be on the brink of collapse, and you have no way to know.

Fire crews cannot be expected to know the construction type of every building every time they pull up to a fire. But there is a way: by identifying truss- and lightweight-constructed buildings, to get them better information. That's where the Rea and Walter Act comes in.

It brings me to my second point. Placarding, as set out in the bill, is a practical and proven way to identify truss- and lightweight-constructed buildings. It's practical because it starts with something as simple as a sticker. The bill requires a round, reflective emblem with a white background and a red border to be displayed on buildings using TLC. There will be three types:

- "F" decals if only the floor of the building uses TLC;
- "R" decals if only the roof of the building uses TLC; and
- "FR" decals if both the floor and the roof of the building use TLC.

These requirements are set out in the proposed amendments to both the building code, affecting new buildings, and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, affecting existing buildings. They would apply to commercial and industrial buildings as well as multi-family dwellings of three or more units, other than townhouses.

To building owners and to building inspectors, the impact of such an emblem is negligible, but to firefighters, its impact is invaluable.

What about insurance rates? According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, they would be unaffected. We checked. We also checked into other jurisdictions that recognize the need to identify truss and lightweight construction. New Jersey, New York, Illinois and Florida have all passed state legislation to require it. It's my understanding that the

three emblems, F, R and FR, are standardized and recognized across many jurisdictions. If they can do it, why can't we?

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. These emblems are already in use in the city of Stratford. Firefighter Mike Lukachko, who is here today, helped persuade the city council to pass a bylaw.

Other communities I represent, including the township of Perth East, the municipality of West Perth and the township of Perth South, have also passed bylaws. North Huron did too, and I want to thank the member from Huron-Bruce for allowing me to help install a decal at her constituency office.

The movement is growing, Madam Speaker, and it demonstrates my third and final point: Support for this initiative is clear and overwhelming. I have received dozens of supportive letters and emails from municipalities and fire departments. The township of Maple and its fire chief, Rick Richardson, who is here today, wrote, "I believe that making more fire department personnel aware of these risks will save lives for future firefighters."

In Stratford, Chief John Paradis describes the bill as another tool in the tool box to identify potential hazards prior to sending firefighters inside a burning structure. Paradis adds that the city's efforts "are having a positive reception from business owners, who are more than happy to support the safety of their local firefighters."

From the town of Erin, Fire Chief Dan Callaghan wrote, "This proposed bill will save lives of firefighters in the future ... Knowledge is protection."

South Stormont fire chief Gilles Crepeau wrote, "I am the chief of 100 volunteers, who fully support this bill."

And there are many more.

I have spoken to firefighters across the province. I have been to Carleton Place, Northumberland county, Windsor, Essex and Kenora. I have also talked to the Ontario fire marshal's office, the Ontario Building Officials Association, the Ontario Professional

Fire Fighters Association and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. I have met with the Minister of Community Safety and her staff, and I appreciate their interest and advice.

But I must emphasize, the momentum to identify TLC did not begin yesterday and did not begin with me. It began years ago, thanks to the efforts of North Perth Fire Chief Ed Smith. In 2012, Chief Smith introduced a resolution to the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. It petitioned the province that certain lightweight-constructed buildings should have a standard plaque. He was successful and continued to speak up. Many others did too.

Last June, I met with Mike Lukachko and fire chiefs Ed Smith of North Perth, Chris Harrow of the town of Minto, John Paradis of Stratford and Bill Hunter of Perth East and West Perth. They're also here today, and so are Neil Anderson, Stratford's deputy chief; Richard Anderson, chief with the town of St. Marys; and certainly many others. Thank you for coming today.

In September, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs passed a resolution of support for our bill. I want to thank the O AFC, which represents the chief fire officers of the 449 municipal fire departments in Ontario, for their support. In particular, I want to thank Chief Harrow, who serves on the board of directors, for his leadership. To all of these people and many others I've missed, I want to thank you for your advice and your support.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, I say this: Throughout our province, we have dedicated professional firefighters and volunteer firefighters to keep us safe. Often they do that at considerable risk to their own safety. Again, to minimize their risk, we have to maximize their information. Our bill does just that. This issue is important enough to warrant a province-wide solution, not just a patchwork of local bylaws.

Finally, I want to recognize the Rea and Walter families. The Rea family is up there, and the Walter family is over here.

The Walter family: Ray's widow, Holly, is here; his father, Ron; his mother, Rosemary; his sister, Rachel; and Holly's partner, Andy, and her mother, Linda.

Louise Rea, Ken's widow, has also made the journey to Queen's Park to be with us today.

Thank you to each of you and to all the firefighters and municipal officials for making the trip to Queen's Park. As community leaders, your presence means so much and you deserve our full support. I look forward to the debate this afternoon.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's always a privilege and an honour to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin, and to speak to my colleague's bill, Bill 105, the Rea and Walter Act.

Let me start by saying that this is a good bill. It's straightforward for what it is trying to accomplish. Keeping our Ontario firefighters safe is something that we can all agree on. In Algoma–Manitoulin, the firefighters across my riding are incredible, dedicated women and men who have always put the needs of their communities first. Our firefighters are out in their communities every week fighting house fires and saving lives.

What the member for Perth–Wellington is proposing is just basic common sense.

Not that long ago in Elliot Lake, we suffered a great tragedy with the Elliot Lake mall collapse. I had a high respect for firefighters before, but, along with our paramedics, the OPP, the mine-rescue people and the firefighters who are there, I take my hat off to you men and women. You do amazing, amazing work.

When our firefighters are going into a burning house, a crumbling building, a disaster, they're always at risk. It's an even greater risk when they don't have the full story of what type of building they are entering into and whether there is a high risk that it may collapse suddenly.

Tests conducted by the National Research Council of Canada have shown that there is a greater risk of structural failure during a fire when a building is built out of truss and lightweight material. A building can collapse during a fire in as little as six minutes. For firefighters, when seconds make the difference between a building collapsing and everyone making it out, having a sign for what type of building material was used could really help inform our firefighters in making the right call.

The bill that the MPP from Perth–Wellington is introducing can potentially save lives of firefighters. For that, I commend him for his work on this. Similar bylaws have been successfully implemented in Ontario at the municipal level in various regions in Perth as well as in the town of Stratford.

Giving firefighters the tools and knowledge to do their job, we can all agree, is key to creating safer communities and lowering the number of tragedies that follow from house fires. But not every community in Ontario has firefighters who are given the tools and funds to protect their residents from fire.

Last week, the Toronto Star came out with an investigative report on fire-related deaths on First Nations across Canada. Between 2010 and 2016, there have been over 44 fire-related deaths on First Nations in Ontario. Currently, if you're living on a First Nation, the chances of dying in a house fire are 10 times higher than in the rest of the country. This is unacceptable. There's no reason that this should be the reality for many of our First Nations communities.

These fires are a crisis for many of our Ontario First Nations, especially in northern Ontario. While it's important that this bill that my colleague has proposed passes, we also need to make sure that our First Nations communities are given the resources they need to keep their communities safe from fire.

A year ago, the Pikangikum First Nation community lost six adults and three children to a house fire. Last week, Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation, which represents 49 First Nations in northern Ontario, sent a letter to Ontario's chief coroner asking for an inquest that would examine the cause of these tragic fires. Our First Nations leaders have heard nothing but silence from this province. They are still waiting for a response from this government on this very issue.

If the federal government is not meeting their obligations to Ontario First Nations, the province has a role to play in holding them accountable. If the government committed to examining the causes of these deaths, we would have data on how to prevent these kinds of tragedies in the future. Fire safety is a real concern for these communities. Let's make sure that the voices of First Nations are heard.

It's good that we are proposing bills like this one today. It will help make our firefighters safer. But last year, when the Pikangikum First Nation could only respond to that tragic

house fire with one fire truck, no water and their reserve fire chief as the only firefighter for that community—we've got problems. That's not just a safety risk for firefighters; that's a safety risk for the entire community.

I wanted to bring this to the attention of the House because Bill 105, proposed by the MPP from Perth–Wellington, is putting in new protections for our province's firefighters. It's a good initiative. But there are still a lot of issues across the province in northern Ontario First Nations that have been neglected by federal and provincial governments. I commend the member once again.

I tip my hat each and every day to the firefighters, men and women, across this province who are here today and across the country.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: I'm always pleased to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the constituents of the great riding of Trinity–Spadina. I'm speaking in support of this great bill. I want to thank the member from Perth–Wellington for bringing this legislation forward.

First off, what happened in North Perth six years ago was a terrible tragedy. My condolences go out to the families and friends and the community. This bill brings forward a good opportunity for further discussion on the conditions our firefighters work in. They do a tremendous job every day in the face of life-threatening conditions, and, for that, we're in debt to them forever.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank them for the other work they do in our communities, which is going out there, attending events and making sure the community is strengthened and welcoming, especially to those newcomers into our community.

In addition to analyzing what the proposed legislation is bringing forward, we would like to explore alternative approaches that could meet the intent of the bill, which is to give firefighters the information they need to keep them safe when responding to an incident.

Fire safety and protecting our dedicated firefighters is an important issue for everyone. Ontario is one of the leading jurisdictions in the world when it comes to fire safety and delivery of fire services. Ontario's firefighters are respected worldwide for the outstanding work they do in emergency response and fire safety education.

Enhanced fire codes and fire prevention awareness have changed the landscape for our province's firefighters. Between 1995 and 2015, the annual number of fires in Ontario, excluding federal and First Nation properties, dropped by almost 45%. There will always be years when the number of fires jumps. In 2015, for example, we experienced a year-over-year increase in fires. Overall, however, the number of fires, and fire-related deaths, is trending downward.

We want to see that trend continue, and must start to address the gaps in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, to improve fire safety. The act is almost 20 years old, and has not been modernized to keep pace with advancements in technology and new challenges.

Some challenges, including training, standardized fire code inspections, dispatch and greater public information are contained in a number of coroners' inquests and, most recently, an inquest into house fires in Whitby and East Gwillimbury which took the lives of eight people.

This is why our government launched the Fire Safety Technical Table, in which the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services meets with fire chiefs, fire safety representatives and municipal representatives to examine current and emerging fire safety challenges and opportunities. The input and advice from this table will inform the ministry's recommendations to enhance fire safety in Ontario and help to ensure that our firefighters return home safe to their families.

We know from prior experience that the round table approach works. In early 2012, the fire marshal set up a technical advisory committee to recommend new initiatives to better protect residents in licensed retirement homes and care facilities. This committee included expert representation from the firefighter community, community stakeholders and owners and operators of retirement homes and care facilities. Aided by their excellent work, Ontario became the first province to make automatic sprinklers mandatory in these buildings.

We are looking for frank and open discussions, using the same evidence-based thinking that was part of the Technical Advisory Committee.

I'm very pleased to speak to this private member's bill, brought forward by my good friend across the floor. Thank you very much for this opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of the Rea and Walter Act, a bill that aims to reduce the risk of firefighter injuries and deaths and to save lives.

I have the greatest respect for our firefighters, both volunteer and professional, and I extend a sincere thank you to those in the audience and those listening at home, and to every firefighter who has ever served in our community, and to their families, for your dedicated service.

Firefighters are our first responders, and they risk their own lives every day to keep our communities safe. Today it's our turn to ensure that we keep them safe, by passing Bill 105. The Rea and Walter Act would achieve this by ensuring that firefighters know when they're battling fires in buildings of lightweight construction framing. This includes lightweight truss roof assemblies and lightweight truss floor joists, all of which pose an added hazard of injuries and deaths, and whose use in home construction has become widespread.

Bill 105 would compel that such material, used in commercial and industrial buildings, as well as dwellings of three or more units other than a townhouse, be identified and visible to the firefighters, alerting them to the presence of volatile material that rapidly loses strength when exposed to fire.

In fact, structures using truss and lightweight framing can fail and collapse in as little as six minutes. Using a display emblem on those products is the kind of safety piece that could have prevented the deaths of Ken Rea and Ray Walter, two volunteer firefighters who lost their lives in 2011 when a roof they were on collapsed in a fire. I extend my sincere condolences to the family members joining us here in Queen's Park today, and thank them for their families' service.

Speaker, we can manage risk only if we can recognize the risk in a given scenario. We know that firefighters don't have the ability to accurately recognize lightweight construction hazards. This is why they've been asking for years that truss- and lightweight-constructed buildings be identified. This marker would help them better assess the risks, so they can decide how best to respond and fight the fire.

Bill 105 is based on the resolution and feedback presented by the fire chief of North Perth, Ed Smith, which the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, OAFC, supported.

I commend my colleague Perth–Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece for listening and responding to their call, and for all of his dedication and passion to make sure that this bill becomes a reality.

I'm privileged to know many firefighters, specifically, of course, in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who support this labelling system, as it will enhance their safety and operational effectiveness.

Firefighter safety should be the number one priority of any fire service organization. I encourage all of us to ensure speedy passage of Bill 105, and reduce the risk of death and injuries to firefighters in Ontario. I close by saying, once again, thank you for your dedicated service.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too want to thank everybody who has come in today to take in the proceedings on Bill 105, An Act governing the identification of truss and lightweight construction in buildings.

I think I have shared this with the House before: My husband has been a professional firefighter for the city of Greater Sudbury and has fought many, many fires that have not gone right.

I can tell you that March 17, 2011, will be remembered for a long time in firefighters' families as the day that deputy district chief Rea and firefighter Walter lost their lives in North Perth at the Listowel Dollar Stop store fire. A delegation from Sudbury went down the following week, on March 24, 2011, to help the community do a last send-off to those two firefighters who lost their lives.

There was lots to be learned from this fire. When the fire department went in, they didn't know that there had been some roofing work done on the building at the time, earlier that day. They didn't know that the roofing work had sparked a blaze that burned undetected for upwards of 40 minutes before light smoke started to be seen. They didn't know that the fire, hidden from sight and hidden from their thermal-imaging camera, was behind insulation and behind the store's ceiling tiles, and had basically eaten away at the building's lightweight-engineered wooden roof trusses. They couldn't have known that the roof was only moments away from collapsing when they stepped inside, doing what they are trained to do: rescuing people, looking at how the fire started and putting it out.

There's lots of risk being firefighters, and we thank you, each and every one of you, for what you do, but if there is a way that we can make your work safer, then all of us in this chamber have a responsibility to do this.

I thank the member for bringing a bill forward that has the possibility to save lives. How could we not move ahead? I've listened to all sides and right now it looks like there is good support for this bill. I urge the government to move fast on the implementation of this bill. Asking that labelling be added to structures that use this lightweight material is something doable. It's something that some municipalities have taken upon themselves to do already. It is our responsibility as legislators to do this, the sooner the better, so that the families of deputy chief Rea and firefighter Walter are the last ones to have to go through the consequences of not knowing what kind of building material is there.

Don't get me wrong: There is a place for pre-building inspection and there is a place for pre-planning. I know that every fire department does this. I can tell you that in Sudbury they do this every week, where they go into each and every one of the buildings in town and they do pre-plans and they take notes and they prepare for the worst. But things could always go badly. If you have it there and it is labelled right there as you are about to enter a building, it will make all the difference. It's something that the industry is willing to do. It is something that has been well-researched by my colleague to make sure that there is no downside to this. There is no pushback to this. This is a win-win, something that we can move on right here, right now, and that will protect the men and women who have chosen to protect us by becoming firefighters. I think we owe it to them to do the right thing.

One other piece of knowledge has come from this deadly fire, and it is that we now have fire—I forgot the name. We call them fire spotters, but I think there's a more technical term for them. If you're going to do roofing, if you're going to use a torch or if you're going to use any other sort of fire material close to a building, then there has to be somebody who comes every hour and does an inspection. There has to be somebody there for three hours after the work is done to see if a spark has started something somewhere that could lead to a fire.

Those were hard lessons for the family of deputy chief Rea and the family of firefighter Walter to learn. But those are hard lessons that have been learned throughout fire departments in Ontario, and that are now being implemented through the fire code.

I am deeply sorry for your loss. Today I can guarantee you that the NDP will vote in favour of such a bill and push the government to make it through third and final reading and royal assent.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to add some comments to Bill 105 on behalf of my constituents in the fine riding of Cambridge.

It's interesting that the member has chosen today to bring forward his private member's bill, and I know it was due to the numbering. But it's interesting and a very curious fact that this is the one-year anniversary of the PTSD legislation that was passed here in the House in order to really provide our first responders with the ability to have their trauma, due to circumstances, including this one, potentially, the one that the member is talking about—it's great that they're able to get the help that they need.

As we know, first responders, including firefighters, are twice as likely to suffer from PTSD from the cumulative effects that happen in their jobs. I worked very closely in my time as a critical care nurse with first responders. We were often the ones to accept the patients who came in through the door, usually accompanied by paramedics, but fire and police as well. I often thought about those situations that weren't addressed by us in the emergency department and the types of situations that firefighters, police officers and paramedics saw in the field. I can imagine, on that day in Listowel, how horrifying it was, not just for the residents but also for the first responders there. So I wanted to give my shout-out again to the first responders; as we often say, as we, the public, are

running away from dangerous situations, they, the first responders, are running into those burning buildings and running towards that danger in order to protect the public.

I could not be more supportive of this private member's bill, Bill 105, An Act governing the identification of truss and lightweight construction in buildings. I want to add my congratulations to the member opposite for bringing this important piece forward. I think we all around this House—you've heard already the comments in the House—believe that first responders do an incredible job. I had first-hand knowledge of it. I used to see and debrief, sometimes, with my first responder colleagues after a critical incident that happened in the community, and I just can't give more warm praise to the people, the men and women, who put themselves in danger because of this.

I also fully believe that this is an opportunity to be able to address some of the requirements that we need to add to further protect those men and women who do so much for our community.

If I could, Speaker, I wanted to just go over a little bit of the fire safety provisions in the building code. I think that the intent of this bill is directed towards keeping firefighters safe. As I said, I'm in full support of that. But looking at possible measures through the fire code and the Ontario fire marshal, I think this is a great opportunity, again, to talk about some of the provisions for fire safety that are in the building code.

The safety of all Ontarians is uppermost in our government's mind and, indeed, through all the members in this House. It's why Ontario's building code has the strongest fire safety requirements in Canada, and I think with this bill it will be strengthened even further.

While the building code is not retroactive, it does have comprehensive fire safety standards for newly constructed buildings, and for buildings that are undergoing renovations or a change of use. The building code makes use of a combination of fire safety principles to protect the safety of Ontarians in the event of a fire. The principles are detection and warning; containing and suppression, such as sprinklers; and exiting, for example, a shorter travel to building exits, and making sure that a clearly identified fire exit is there.

The building code includes a range of measures for the prevention and control of fires in new multi-unit residential buildings, including:

- fire alarm and detection systems with notification to the fire department;
- a provision for firefighters' elevators;
- pressurized firefighters' elevators in high residential buildings;
- automatic sprinklers for multi-level basements;
- emergency lighting and power generation;
- provision for central alarm and control facilities to coordinate emergency responses;
- shorter travel distances to exits;
- fire separation between units and between units and corridors; and
- protection of exits from smoke infiltration.

In previous years, our government has brought in a number of building code amendments to address fire safety in buildings, including visual fire alarms in multi-unit buildings. That came in 2015. Mandatory sprinklers, signals to fire departments and increased voice communication in treatment and care facilities began in 2014. Smoke alarms with battery backup required in single-family and large residential buildings began in 2012, and fire sprinklers required in new multi-unit residential buildings above three storeys in height came in 2010. This is an ongoing process, and we're continuously updating the building code to improve those fire safety standards.

Our government has recently completed phase 1 of consultations on an updated building code. This consultation included several proposed changes that would enhance fire safety in houses and in large buildings. Not only will we consider the comments received to date, but I certainly feel that this bill is very, very timely with this consultation.

Speaker, I just really want to again thank the member from Perth–Wellington. I think this bill really has a lot of merit, and it's very timely that we bring this forward.

Lastly, I really want to talk about the families and the community that surrounded Ken Rea and Ray Walter. I go past Listowel fairly often to visit friends on Lake Huron, and I

go past the building site. I remember going past just shortly after the fire and seeing some of the temporary memorials that were out there. I remember the day that those two were laid to rest and the incredible outpouring of warm remembrances from family, from government and from colleagues across the country.

We know that we want to ensure that all our firefighters in the province of Ontario remain safe and that no other family or community has to go through what this community did. Again, I just want to offer my support of this bill going forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise today to speak to Bill 105, the Rea and Walter Act (Truss and Lightweight Construction Identification). I welcome the families, too, of the two firefighters. Certainly it's little consolation, but it just shows that it's the least we can do in this Legislature.

Speaker, in Ontario we depend on the brave work of emergency first responders who never know what awaits them just around the corner during the course of a day. This legislation proposed by my colleague from Perth–Wellington highlights just some of the dangers that are lurking around the corner as they respond to their communities' urgent needs.

We look around at the firemen who are out on different days in my community, whether it be in the middle of the winter—I remember when the King George Hotel burned down in Cornwall, in sub-20-below weather. The ice was everywhere. They were out for more than 12 hours working. This is the work that we expect our first responders to respond to, regardless of what the conditions are.

I support this legislation and request that the government move quickly to put this into law. This certainly is low-hanging fruit, something that we can move on, something that doesn't need to be delayed, because these first responders are so important to our community.

As a resident of South Glengarry, we benefit from a skilled and dedicated volunteer first response team. These men and women get up each morning and retire to their beds at night not knowing if they will be called upon that day or that night to help out a neighbour, or a stranger, on the 401.

Speaker, I'd like to recount a number of instances in my own municipality where volunteers were asked to go over and above the call of duty to help out friends, neighbours and strangers.

All of the major transmission, oil and gas pipelines transverse my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, presenting a definite additional risk to the community. Late one evening in the fall of 1994, the main natural gas transmission pipeline servicing eastern Ontario ruptured in our township, releasing a large volume of volatile natural gas. To give some perspective: There's more energy in the pipeline than is produced in electricity in Canada—a huge amount of energy.

This was the first rupture of its kind in Ontario, before the days of emergency plans. Our firefighters were called out to block roads and to notify the community. The situation was considered so dangerous that the power grid was shut off in eastern Ontario and phone calls were considered too risky to make. They were worried that it might create a spark.

Shortly after the municipal amalgamations of 1998, we were hit by the great ice storm. Again, our first responders were called out. In fact, our inaugural council meeting of the township was almost cancelled due to the severe conditions.

Our firefighters were first on the scene, clearing roads and helping the community, leaving their own homes and families while they performed their duties. Speaker, this event lasted for over a month in our region: no power, trees blocking roads, trees falling on houses, and a huge amount of damage. The first responders were key in setting up emergency shelters and manning them, and helping their neighbours deal with the loss of electricity during the month of January. This meant pumping out basements; this meant helping the people in the community.

Any community that had a volunteer fire department, and in our newly amalgamated township, it wasn't them all—they had shelters. The ones that didn't have a fire department didn't have shelters. It just indicates the importance of these people who go out without worrying about what they're doing. They go out to help people and their neighbours.

Accidents on the 401: They are called out routinely for traffic direction. I know that the Minister of Transportation would say that they're not to be out there, but they're the last

resort. The OPP are out there and they have nobody else to call to help direct and control traffic, so they're called out. When I was mayor, we had a serious accident where we had to write off one of our trucks—a brand new, \$200,000 truck.

There was another accident on the 401 where a firefighter was severely injured and will likely never be able to work—at least to his full extent—again. It goes to some of the seriousness of the accidents that we have and the calls upon them.

In my own village of Williamstown, they twice have been called with defibrillators to save someone's life. It doesn't matter what function they're at, whether they're out in a charity helping out; they're just called out over and over again to help the community.

I think it's very important we look at this bill. It's low-hanging fruit. Let's just make it happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Of course, I want to rise and support Bill 105, the Rea and Walter Act, introduced by my friend and colleague from Perth–Wellington—an excellent job on bringing forward an initiative, after tragic consequences in his riding, here to the Ontario Legislature to fix this problem.

Firefighters have been telling us right across the province since 2012 that unaddressed concerns over truss and lightweight construction have put them in danger when they do their vital work saving lives and stopping the spread of fires. In fact, it was the same year that the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs passed a resolution to petition the government on this very issue. As we see today on this side of the House, we heard their concern and have taken legislative action to fix this problem.

We hear a lot from different professional organizations about the need for more instantaneous information, both to help them do their jobs better and to protect them in the workplace. We recognize that doctors and medical professionals need access to patient history and medications, police officers need records of past criminal activity, but we don't often think of our firefighters. The person kicking down the door of a burning home to come in and rescue you deserves as much information as we can provide them so that they can make informed decisions in the moment on the best way to protect you and, of course, themselves, and so they can choose the best method or

route to get to you—something as quick and easy as putting a symbol in a visible place on a building that says basically, “Hey, be careful. The materials used to build this are going to degrade quickly during a fire.” That is what this bill does. It’s a simple fix to an important issue. It gives firefighters the information they need to make the best possible decision in an emergency—decisions that could, on many occasions, spell the difference between life and death.

Certainly, this issue came close to home for people in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga as we all read about the tragic outcomes in nearby Listowel back in 2011, when two North Perth volunteer firefighters perished when the roof of the Dollar Stop collapsed during a fire. Speaker, there’s no doubt in my mind that we absolutely owe it to the memories of Ken Rea and Ray Walter and their families to take this small simple legislative step today that could prevent further tragedies for those who put themselves in harm’s way for our protection. I want to thank the families who are here today and those visiting from those communities.

Of course, several municipalities, including the city of Stratford, recognized this problem and put in bylaws requiring buildings with truss and lightweight construction to display warning emblems.

While I commend our neighbours in Perth–Wellington for taking on this initiative, I feel strongly that we should not be leaving this up to the individual municipalities. Firefighters deserve this protection, not just in Perth county, but across the province.

When the solution is so easy, it is hard for me to see where opposition to this bill could come from. We should see these warning emblems province-wide. It’s important. Tests done by the National Research Council of Canada have shown that structural failures in buildings that are built with truss or lightweight construction happen 35% to 60% faster than buildings constructed with solid wood joist assembly. When you hear that structural failure in a building can occur just six minutes after the fire starts, it brings it home that it is vital that firefighters have this information. Of course, there is no reason for us to expose first responders to this kind of risk when they have such an easy solution.

To close, I support the bill. I hope my colleagues from all sides of the House will see the sense in it and will also support it.

I thank my colleague from Perth—

The Deputy Speaker (Ms. Soo Wong): Thank you. I will return to the member from Perth–Wellington to wrap up.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: What can I say? I am overwhelmed by the support I have received here today, and I want to thank all sides for their support. To the members from Algoma–Manitoulin, Trinity–Spadina, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Nickel Belt, Kitchener–Conestoga, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and Cambridge: I want to thank you for your comments.

Speaker, I'm sure you know that as we go through life, there are some things where you just say, "Why didn't we do that? It's so simple." When somebody gets killed at an intersection where there are no warning signs, no stop signs, "Why didn't we put a stop sign there? We should have done that"—you look back at things you should have done. I think this is something we can do.

I don't want to look back at another tragedy like this happening and say, "Gosh, we should have got this in legislation so these buildings could be identified." It just happens like that. When a roof comes down on you or a floor gives way, you have no chance; you're gone. As we saw in this incident in Listowel, when the roof came down, there was no chance of rescue; it was over. I think we all have to think about that when we look at legislation such as this.

Let's get it done. This is not a partisan thing. It's a common sense thing. It's simple. It's not expensive. But the rewards are great if we get it done.