

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011

*Mrs. Witmer moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It is an honour and a privilege to rise in the Legislature today to speak to Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month. I want to warmly welcome all those who are here today and those watching this debate on TV. I'd like to extend a special warm welcome to the Consul of the Netherlands, Arie Plieger, who is here today, and also to Wilmar Kortleever, the President of Dutch Treat, which is a social and cultural organization. Welcome. Dutch Treat actually does a lot to keep the Dutch culture alive, and each year they celebrate Sinterklaasfeest with Sinterklaas, which is very similar to our Santa Claus. I appreciate their contribution to doing that. I also want to acknowledge Jacob van der Laan of Burlington, who is watching this debate on TV. For many years, Jack has spearheaded efforts through the Canada Netherlands Friendship Association to strengthen the ties of friendship between the two countries and keep alive the history of the sacrifices made by Canadians to liberate the Netherlands. There will once again be a celebration this May in Burlington to do exactly that. I want to acknowledge and thank the co-sponsors of this bill: the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Maria Van Bommel, who like me was born in Holland, and the member from Parkdale–High Park, Cheri DiNovo. I also want to recognize the other two members in this House who are of Dutch descent: first, my colleague Ernie Hardeman, the MPP for Oxford, and of course my colleague the Honourable John Gerretsen, the member for Kingston and the Islands. I'm also pleased that all three parties in this Legislature are going to support third reading passage of this bill today, thereby allowing our province to declare May as Dutch Heritage Month in Ontario. The month of May is appropriate because every year on May 5, the people in the Netherlands celebrate their independence and their liberation, as well as the heroic efforts of the Canadian Forces and the pivotal role that they played in liberating Holland, with a national holiday known as Liberation Day. The Dutch will eternally be grateful to the Canadians for playing such an important role in their history. Even today, Dutch children are taught about the very significant, important role that our Canadian Forces played in the liberation. When our soldiers have returned to the Netherlands, they have always been hailed as heroes. In fact, I would say to you personally that when we first came to Canada, my mom and dad were new to Exeter. They went into a local butcher shop and there was a person called Fred Darling. Well, of course, he recognized that they were Dutch and he told them that he had been one of the soldiers who had been there for the liberation. They hugged and they kissed, and until the day that Fred Darling passed away, my mom and dad had a great friendship with that man because they were so appreciative that he had been one of the liberators. The month of May is also the time when tulips bloom, and tulips have become the symbol of the friendship between Canada and the Netherlands—a friendship, I will say to you, that has grown stronger over the years. Princess Juliana first sent tulips to the city of Ottawa as a token of her gratitude for the safe haven and hospitality the Dutch royal family received while living in Ottawa during the Second World War. Indeed, her daughter, Princess Margriet, was born in Ontario during that time. One million tulips now bloom in Canada's capital each year. Thus, by proclaiming the month of May as Dutch Heritage Month, the province of Ontario recognizes and celebrates the bonds of friendship established in 1945 between Canada and the Netherlands. This bill also celebrates and recognizes the significant contributions that Dutch Canadians have made to the growth and prosperity of Ontario, particularly in the economic, political, social and cultural fields. Today, Ontario is home to about 500,000 Ontarians of Dutch descent, and there are roughly one million Dutch Canadians in Canada. The Dutch first came to Canada in the early 1800s. However, Canada became a strongly favoured destination of choice after the Second

World War, during the period of 1950 to 1955, when large numbers of Dutch citizens made the crossing to Canada, including a number of war brides of Canadian soldiers. It was during this time that I arrived in Canada from the port of Rotterdam with my mother, father and brother. My mother tells me it was a rough trip of seven days on the ocean in a ship called the *Vollendam*. We landed in Halifax at Pier 21, as did so many other immigrants. My family came with little in the way of material goods, but they came with that desire to work hard to provide a better life, a better future and more opportunity for their children. Work hard they did as they settled in Exeter, Ontario, doing whatever job was available and sometimes working at two or three jobs at a time in order to support their family and put food on the table. I want to thank my parents for the sacrifices they made for me, as many other immigrants have done for their children. I know that my mother is watching today. She just turned 90, and I just want to wish her a happy birthday. Many of the immigrants who came after World War II settled in rural Ontario and found jobs in the agricultural sector. They quickly adapted to their new country, Canada, and they became involved and respected members of their communities. Many of the descendants of the original settlers still remain in these rural communities throughout Ontario to this day, but many others, like myself and my brother, have relocated to urban communities. Today fewer Dutch immigrants come to Ontario, but, like the original immigrants who made the journey, the modern-day immigrants come with the same entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic and the desire to contribute to our great province and our great country. I would say to you that like all the previous immigrants, they soon come to love this country with their whole heart, as our family did, and consider themselves Canadians. Today, I'm proud to say that the province of Ontario and the Netherlands are close and reliable partners. We share innovation, ingenuity and creativity. We share common values and goals, and we work together to produce, innovate and build. Whether in the sphere of the green economy, engineering, architecture, urban planning, agriculture or sustainable development, we work together to create more prosperous and healthier communities. We share expertise and experience. Our governments and private sector firms collaborate to work co-operatively in the global economy. There are also strong ties and partnerships between the universities in Ontario and the Netherlands. This includes a recent partnership between McMaster University in Hamilton and the University of Maastricht to develop a program of global health. It is intended to educate the leaders who will work in global health in the future. We are very fortunate to have both Ambassador Geerts in Ottawa and Consul General Horbach in Toronto, who actively support and encourage the partnerships between business and also are involved in the maintenance of the Dutch cultural traditions in Ontario and Canada. In particular, they were very involved in the recent celebrations to commemorate the 65 years of friendship between our two countries. These celebrations included a very strong emphasis on the pivotal role our Canadian men and women in uniform played in securing freedom for the Dutch people. As well, in many Canadian cities we had "Go Green, Go Dutch, Go Bike" bike rides to focus on the environment, health, bike safety and bike infrastructure. By passing this particular act and proclaiming May as Dutch Heritage Month in Ontario, we will be able to recognize those special bonds of friendship between Ontario and the Netherlands, and we will also be able to recognize the contributions of Canadians of Dutch descent to the growth and prosperity of our great province. We not only will be able to look back to our history, but we will be able to look forward to our shared future as partners and as friends. Again, I thank all those of Dutch descent who have played a significant role in the growth and prosperity of Ontario. There are so many that I couldn't possibly name all of the individuals. I also want to thank the co-sponsors of my bill. I would ask you to give your support today in order that we can recognize this group of people and our shared friendship and partnership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise very much in support of this bill and I thank the mover for moving it. As I stand here—and I hope I don't tear up. My father died two years ago. He was one of those thousands of men and women who fought their way through the streets and canals of Holland. He

instilled in me his love and admiration for the people he met there, because when he got there, it was after that horrible winter, before the liberation, when the people were starving, when they had been reduced to total poverty, when many of the buildings in which they lived had been reduced to rubble and they had very little or nothing, except an enormous hope that they would soon be free. He had a very strong pride in Holland and in the Dutch people. He had that pride and was overjoyed when the pride that he had was reciprocated to Canadians, particularly after he came back to Canada in 1945. He ended the war in Germany, not in Holland. He often told me of stories of all of the countries where he was forced to fight and that he had visited as a young man. As a young man, he took me to Ottawa for the first time to see the tulip festival. I think I was about 15 or 16 years old, and I had never been to Ottawa from Toronto. It seems so close today, but it was so far away in those days. We went to see the tulips that were a gift from a grateful nation. My father often talked about wanting to go back to Holland. In fact, almost every time I would see him throughout my entire life, going to visit, he'd always talk about Holland and always say that one day he wanted to go back. He lived till 88 years of age, but unfortunately, he never got back there. But it has been my privilege to go back for him. I've been there twice. It's an amazing place. It's absolutely wonderful. Anyone who has never been there, you deserve an opportunity to go to see a beautiful country. I mean, it doesn't have too many hills or mountains or things like that; it's pretty flat. But it is absolutely pristine and beautiful for the length and breadth of that place. If you travel by boat up and down the canals or along the rivers or in the Zuiderzee, you will see amazing architecture. You will see beautiful countryside. You will see trees and orchards and farms. You will see water. You will see places of culture. If you have an opportunity to go into Amsterdam, you'll probably see one of the most vibrant cities on the entire earth. It is a place of great culture and of freedom and of the mixing of peoples. That is what I have experienced here with the Dutch in Canada as well and, in fact, when I have travelled around the world to those places that were formally part of Holland, like Indonesia. If you go there and see the Dutch influence and what was left behind, if you go to little places in the Caribbean, like St. Maarten, and see the influence and what was left behind, it was all good. So we who live here in Canada and who have known the Dutch for our lives, know of them as people who came here with a huge work ethic, with a real desire to make this their own country, with a real desire to share with us the very best of their own culture. And I have to say, they often do it in a very quiet, unassuming way. You would sometimes not even know of their Dutch ancestry, but very subtly you would be influenced by the things they had to say. I know when I was a boy, my father's friends, many of whom were soldiers and buddies he had met in the army, were married to Dutch women. It wasn't till I was a little older I discovered the reason why is because they had met them in Holland and had sent for them or brought them back as war brides. They were all, I remember in my youth, such wonderful women who spoke so very well and who looked after their children so incredibly well. This is a bill that needs to pass. I did not know that the member was hoping to get third reading today. I had not been informed of that. Usually you have to seek permission from the whip in order for to you vote that way. But being unaware, and he not being here, I can give you every assurance that, whether I'm supposed to or not, I will because I think this needs to pass. I don't want for this to be stuck in a committee somewhere as so many other bills are. There is absolutely not a person in this province that I am aware of, not a soul who would resent that this bill became law, and certainly many, many hundreds of thousands of people of Dutch ancestry want it to pass. I also have to close with a statement that I am a very proud member of the Royal Canadian Legion. I'm an associate member because I was never a soldier, and I'm a member because my father was and because he had served. There is a huge love for the Dutch people, a huge sense of pride and accomplishment that one can hear, no country and certainly in this entire province. If they have one thing for which they are proud, and universally proud, it's the role that Canada played in Holland. When you talk to the men and women who were there, when you talk to the sons and daughters of those men and women, unfortunately many of whom are now deceased, you will know that this is a sense of

overwhelming pride and commitment that each and every member of the Royal Canadian Legion shares. I thank the member for bringing this forward. I will vote for it on second reading, and if it gets to third reading, I will vote again. Thank you very much for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: First of all, I want to thank Ms. Witmer for asking me to co-sponsor this bill. I feel very honoured to have done that as we both share our Dutch heritage. Certainly, as she has said, the real Dutch love affair with Canada began during and after the Second World War. My own family came here in 1948 on the Kota Inten, which was a troopship. At that time, the men were at one end and the women and children at the other and everybody slept in hammocks. They came across in March, it was a really awful trip. Everyone was just simply glad to arrive at pier 21 in Halifax. My husband René's family came in 1957. By that time, passenger liners were bringing them, and he came on what was known as the Maasdam. My mom was always a great storyteller. One of the things that made doing the dishes—and I'm the oldest of 10, so you can imagine the amount of dishes that that implies—was the fact that during dishes mom would tell her stories. She certainly told her stories about being in Holland during the Second World War, about the hongerwinter, about the soldiers coming and the vlucht. My mom left with her mother from their home. They were forced out of their home, and they lived with other Dutch families waiting to return. She'd tell the story of waiting for the Canadians, and a rumour had already come out that the Canadians were coming. She said that on about the third day she started to worry that maybe they weren't. But she said, "True to their word, there they were." The Canadians were so trusted by the Dutch and so embraced by the Dutch that when it came time, at the end of the war, when the country was so war torn and families started to look for places to move to, as Ms. Witmer said, Canada was the first choice. That was simply because we had links there. My own grandfather, my mother's father, was a klompenmaker. He made wooden shoes. My mother never had anything but wooden shoes until her wedding day, and on her wedding day she got leather shoes. Three days later, she got on the Kota Inten to come to Canada with her new husband. On the way, because it was so rough on the seas, there was an event that led to her losing her nice leather shoes, so she got off the boat in her wooden shoes. She tells us about this all the time. There she was on pier 21, and she was so proud that she had these lovely shoes, and she still had to wear her wooden shoes to get off the boat. That was the kind of thing that we heard about as children—and the fact that our parents wanted to come here so badly. We've heard so many stories—and we heard earlier today during the Greek independence festivities—about immigrants coming here with nothing in their pockets. I think that could be said of every nationality: that so many of our ancestors immigrated here with nothing in their pockets. I think the one thing that can be said of Canada is that we are not a melting pot; we are a quilt. We are a beautiful quilt of many colours and wondrous shapes that have been stitched together to become a blanket for those who need it. That's what Canada is to many of us. As Ms. Witmer said, the majority of Dutch immigrants settled here in Ontario. They pursued many careers—teachers, doctors, nurses—but the majority started their lives here in Canada as farm labourers and working in hospitals and factories. But from there, they grew. When Mr. Prue was talking about the affiliation and the love that the Legion has for the Dutch, I think they also have a pride in where the Dutch have gone since they came here, and I think they share in that, as we do. I'm also an associate member of the Legion, just simply because I was taught by my parents that we owed them that. We have a debt to Canadians and to Canadian soldiers for what they did for our home country. If I look in my own riding, I see that a number of my constituents of Dutch descent are farmers. They certainly brought their love of growing things like tulips here to this country. The concession roads are dotted with mailboxes that all have Dutch names on them. As you go along, these are now third generation, as is my own son, and a lot of them are still on the original farms that their families bought. They grouped together and created a credit union in our area called the St. Willibrord Credit Union. This was a way of helping each other, in a co-op, to become farmers and to own their own properties. Now they're

very successful families, who are third generation with multiple brothers and sisters, all operating in farm operations. The Dutch have a great sense of humour, I think. We may be quiet about it, but we always tease each other and say, “If you’re not Dutch, you’re not much.” We certainly enjoy laughing at ourselves. I am very proud to have been asked to participate in this and certainly very proud to have been asked to be a co-sponsor of this bill. I certainly feel that there is a special bond between Canada and the Dutch nation, and I think a heritage month is very appropriate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I am so pleased to stand in support of my colleague and friend the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. She’s doing for her community what I would expect of her, because she so typifies the strength of character that I have come to know is really emblematic of Dutch Ontarians and Dutch Canadians in general. My ties to Holland are tenuous but not zero. First of all, I can tell you that there are Shurmans in Holland to this day. I’ve had the pleasure of visiting the country and visiting some of my relatives and have enjoyed every moment of it and taken an interest in the country as a result. Further to that, as members know, I represent a riding that is one of the most—if not the most—diverse ridings in the entire country. One of the things the last four years has given me is an opportunity to look first-hand at the cultural backgrounds of people who have come together, all of us from different lands—being separated from them by one, two, three generations, whatever it happens to be—to preserve them and at the same time integrate those cultural elements into the Canadian fact. Dutch immigrants to Canada have had such a vibrant history of community building and civic responsibility, and that’s one of the reasons I’m sure my colleague got into this business in the first place. This bill honours those Dutch Canadians who have added and enhanced the Canadian experience for so many of us. We have a spate of these bills setting aside days or weeks or months to honour different cultures. We heard one earlier this afternoon on Ukrainian Ontarians. Now, we’re dealing with Dutch Ontarians. A couple of months ago, I, together with the member for Trinity–Spadina and the member for York West, were successful in getting a bill passed to honour Italian Ontarians. I think these are important things to do. When you have a province like this, where, really, the only people who can say that they were originals are Native Canadians, we have to set people aside and direct something in their way by way of a week or some sort of recognition to honour their contribution. The 2006 Statistics Canada census recorded 1,035,965 people of Dutch origin in Canada. Think about that: That’s about 3% of the entire population. I, like many in this Legislature, had parents who immigrated to Canada from Europe, all of them—my parents and everybody else—seeking a better life in Canada. I think I can say with agreement from everybody here and everybody I know that they found a better life, and that we all continue to contribute to making it so. I have a full appreciation for the struggles that many immigrants have endured in order to come to our country and enhance their lives. One of the things that occurs to me when I think about Dutch Canadians is that about 15, 16 or 17 years ago, I learned how to fly an airplane. I learned from a young girl, 21 at the time, who came from a dairy farm in southwestern Ontario. Her mother’s side was entirely Dutch. I had the pleasure of going to that farm and seeing how a modern dairy farm works, and I was informed at the time that a lot of people who settled in our midst from Holland wound up gravitating towards southwestern Ontario, and very particularly into farming and dairy farming. Lest anybody think, when you say the word “farmer”—if you’re not a person who has visited a farm or knows about farming, farmers are not people who ride the turnip truck; farmers are people who are educated, and no more so than people of Dutch origin who have gone into this business. And it is a business: agribusiness. That farm watered crops on the basis of satellite feeds to computers. My pilot friend’s dad was a Bachelor of Science graduate from Guelph University.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Whoo-hoo!

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Guelph. Mom considered this farm business very much a personal thing, and it was entirely family in orientation. The Dutch side of it settled in

the second migration, which was between 1923 and 1930, where we saw settlement here in Ontario, in Alberta and in British Columbia. There's a lot of significance to what the contribution is from Dutch Ontarians; there will continue to be, undoubtedly. My time is up, so I'll say simply this: I'm proud to be a supporter of this bill and I look forward to its passage later today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure again to speak to another bill, Dutch Heritage Month, that is very similar to the one we dealt with about an hour ago, Ukrainian Heritage Day. It is really a treat to listen to the different stories from different members. What you realize is that, unless you are a refugee—and refugees have a different experience than other immigrants—the rest of us have really talked about the same kind of immigrant experience. It was fun to talk about Italian Heritage Month just about a year ago, and we've done the same with the Portuguese. We do the same with so many other different communities. That is the remarkable beauty of what we represent here as MPPs and just as a community. There is no one singular identity, but there is one Canadian identity made up of a multiplicity of linguistic and racial communities, and it's just beautiful. I just get excited every time we talk about our differences, because as we do we realize how similar we are. As I talk about the issue of Dutch heritage month—for me, everything is personal; how do I relate to the different communities? The way I relate to the Dutch is through soccer. I'm a big Italian fan, obviously. So when the World Cup and the European Cup come, I'm just there. So immediately, my relationship to the Dutch is through soccer players, and there are quite a number of greats. I had to think of the many greats I could remember, and where I couldn't, I called my son, Michael Marchese, who filled in. Who are these greats? Well, we have Rafael van der Vaart; Ruud van Nistelrooy; Jaap Stam, a defenceman—I forget whether he played for Inter Milan or Juventus; Dennis Bergkamp, a well-known striker; Edgar Davids, a great player who used to play for Juventus; Edwin van der Sar; Patrick Kluivert—a long-time national soccer scorer; and Arjen Robben: great soccer players. That's how I relate to you guys, because you are strong opponents of the Italian team.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We beat you most of the time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: From time to time you beat us, but it's not usually the case.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Most of the time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't get carried away. The other relationship I have with the Dutch is that my son, Michael Marchese, has a partner—they bought a house a year ago—and she's half Dutch. Her name is Angela Westelaken; a delightful person, happy to have her in the family. They're not married yet; they might at some point, given that they bought a house. They could potentially at some point. But I'm happy to have met Angela, and my son is quite happy with her. These are the relationships we build with people on the basis of so many contact points. This is what Ontario is about; this is what Canada is about. It's a wonderful thing to be part of, and as I said earlier, this is our identity and when we mix them together we create one hell of a race. Congratulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to speak to this bill as well. It brings back so many memories. I, perhaps a bit unlike the other members of Dutch descent, came here a little bit later on in life. My dad always used to call me a half-price Canadian, because when we got on the boat on June 8, 1954, I was 11 years old and when we got off the Ryndam in Montreal I was 12. We settled in Kingston shortly thereafter. Of course, the one thing I remember quite vividly is that I finished all of my grade schooling in Holland. I finished grade six. I think they gave me a special exemption in the last two weeks of June to actually finish it. But what I do remember very vividly and very correctly is that far as the Dutch history books were concerned in those days, the liberators of Holland were the Canadians. With all due respect to the Americans, the Brits and what have you, in the Dutch history books, the Canadians liberated Holland. I can remember my mother telling me—I was about three or four years old when the war actually finished—that she remembered so vividly the Canadian soldiers coming into our city. I was born in Hilversum; my

parents were both born in Amsterdam. Hilversum is one of the few places that is actually above sea level. We always used to call it the Hollywood of Holland. It's where the communications, radio, television and movie industries are located. As a matter of fact, as a youngster I sang in a radio choir, believe it or not, once a week for a good three or four years. These are all very vivid personal memories that I have. One of the things my mother always tells me is that she can remember what the Canadian soldiers did as they came down the main street—we lived on one of the main streets; my dad had a store there at the time. They were handing out, dare I say, cigarettes and chocolate. The other picture that we have is that right after the war you would have these neighbourhood celebrations, and for some strange reason I was the child that cut the ribbon that actually started the festivities that day. Now, I have no idea whether that's got any connection with my political career, but there it is, for whatever it's worth. I had the great privilege of being part of the Canadian delegation in 2005, as Minister responsible for seniors, at the 60th Anniversary of the Liberation of Holland events. I can remember going to cemeteries, like Holten, and there are so many others, particularly in the southern part of Holland, where tremendous fighting took place in 1944 where literally thousands upon thousands of graves are there that have young Canadian soldiers in them. I was extremely moved by all that because I was told of situations, for example, where on Christmas Eve children from those communities still to this day, three or four generations later, light a candle at each and every gravesite of each and every soldier, and there are thousands of them buried there. I always believed that one of the reasons why there is such a great interaction between Canada and the Netherlands is that we're both mid-sized powers. We're not quite up there with the big guys, but we both feel that we have an influence around the rest of the world because we are a balanced people. I think what the Dutch always pride themselves on is the ability to look at both sides of an argument and, yes, come down on one side or the other, and sometimes it's not necessarily the same side, but that's the way we view ourselves. We've always been sort of regarding ourselves as the negotiators in the world, the kinds of people that try to bring a consensus amongst people. May is a very appropriate month. On April 30, which is actually the day before May 1, the queen's birthday is always celebrated. With Queen Juliana, who was the queen for many, many years after the Second World War, who followed her mother, Queen Wilhelmina, that was April 30, and current Queen Beatrix has kept that date. It's followed, as has already been mentioned by Ms. Witmer, on May 5 by Liberation Day, but there's a very significant event that takes place on May 4 at 8 o'clock in the evening. That is the time when the whole country comes to a standstill and we remember the tremendous sacrifices that the Canadian soldiers, by and large, made to liberate us in Holland. When I think of my parents—and I haven't got much time left—they were 40 years old, like so many of the other people that we've talked about, other immigrants as well. They came to this country—and we didn't have to come; quite frankly, we had it quite good in Holland, comparatively speaking, to the rest of the Dutch population. But what they always felt was that this was the country where they could give their kids—and there were three of us at the time—the best possible start in life. That's why they came here at age 40 without speaking a word of English and with all of the things and all of the problems that people initially have, without, I might dare say, any government support in those days. But they made it, like so many other people from so many other countries. That is truly what has made this province and this country great. We're all the beneficiaries of that. I'm very pleased to be part of this, to be able to speak today on the contribution that the Dutch have made to this province in declaring the month of May Dutch Heritage Month. I'd like to thank the mover and seconder for moving this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this chance this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 166, the Dutch Heritage Month Act. This idea was originally initiated by my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I want to commend and congratulate her, and also acknowledge the co-sponsors of the bill. This gives me the opportunity to talk about the contributions of Dutch Canadians, the contributions they have made and continue to make in our

communities and in our country. When I think of the courage and the character of the Dutch people who came to live in Canada after the Second World War, I'm reminded of a Dutch family I have come to know quite well: a young couple who together survived the hardships of the war and the occupation, and we know how the people of Holland suffered. When it was finally over, they were blessed with two children. Like so many of their neighbours, they dreamed of a better life in a distant land, and they made the decision to come to Canada, but when they arrived here, in 1951, their dream of a better life was almost shattered. After arriving in Halifax during the month of March, a four-day train trip to Alberta followed. The train cars had no heat and they had no winter clothes. Fortunately, someone had insisted that they take the blankets from the ship so that the children could be kept warm on the long train journey. When they arrived at their destination, a farm near Lethbridge where they had been offered work, their new home was little better than a shed—one room, no running water, no kitchen, no washroom, scant furnishings. They were all expected to work, even the children aged four and three, tending a 12-acre field of sugar beets. The work was manual, hard—horrible, even. It became more than they could bear, and when the chance came to move once more, this time to southwestern Ontario, they were back on a train, this time heading east to Ontario. With the help of a local church, they were welcomed into a new community, and it was their faith and the love and mutual support of the family that allowed them to make it. They made this new community their own, contributing to it and to the province of Ontario as a whole in more ways than I will go into this afternoon. With all the hardships they endured, all the challenges they overcame, all of it was worth it. Like so many who came to Canada from the Netherlands, they did it for the sake of their children. Their story is not unique. Many Dutch families had the same experience. And this beautiful, wonderful lady I know, who just celebrated her 90th birthday, told me this morning how proud she is to be able to say that she is a Canadian. This family and stories like theirs make me proud to say that I'm a Canadian. That's why I'm very pleased to speak in support of Bill 166, which recognizes the more than half a million Dutch immigrants who have made Ontario their home. Dutch Canadians have made important contributions to the life of our province, from the essential role Canadian soldiers played in the liberation of the Netherlands to the enduring friendships we see today. Dutch Canadians know how to be loyal to their roots and traditions while at the same time being very proud Canadians. Many Dutch Canadians have become farm leaders here in Ontario. Think of the Holland Marsh near Barrie, or, closer to home for us in Wellington County, the hundreds of farm families of Dutch descent who strengthen our community. And so I want to congratulate the many Dutch Canadians who are making such a difference in our communities, one of whom is our very own member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Coming here with their dreams and a willingness to work hard and sacrifice much, they realized their dreams, and in the realization of those dreams, Canada has been enriched and strengthened, helping to make us the best country in the world. Remarks in Dutch.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Frank—the honourable member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I think you should put some time back on the clock here for me. I'm honoured to have just a couple of minutes to speak to this. First, to my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I want to say through you to your mother: happy birthday. An immigrant as well, we celebrate our origins and our cultures. I want to tell the member who made reference to Holland Marsh that while in fact it was Dutch settlers, the term “Holland Marsh” was not because of that. It was actually named after Major J.A. Holland, who was not Dutch. But it does consist of 7,000 acres of reclaimed land in the Schomberg River Valley. John Snor, the Canadian representative of the Netherlands Emigration Foundation, visited that area in 1931 and proposed that in fact Dutch settlers should go there. As a result of that, the pioneer Dutch settlers did end up there, and we know it now as the breadbasket of Ontario. A number of farmers joined that settlement: the families of Voorberg, Verkaik, Snor, van der Kooij and Rupke. In fact, it was Jack Rupke who nominated me when I first ran as a candidate in 1995 for the PC Party. So I

suppose I'm very much a part of the Dutch family, and certainly in terms of my political life I claim that background. Last year marked the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Holland by the Canadian Armed Forces. Reference has been made to that. As is the custom, the Dutch Canadian Association of Greater Toronto and the consul general of the Netherlands hosted a Thank You, Liberators conference last year, held on May 8, to express their gratitude to Canadian veterans for their sacrifice. Mr. Evert Akkerman of Newmarket, the association treasurer and conference coordinator, said at that time, "I thank these veterans, my parents thank them, my grandparents thank them; my country thanks them." Mr. Akkerman is also involved in the documentation of stories by Canadian veterans who helped liberate Holland. As he said, "These soldiers spent years away from their families. They won us our freedom. I'm still impressed that Canadians went. What happened in Europe was none of their business." It is an honour for me to support this bill to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month. This act of the Parliament of Ontario will be a historical way of saying thank you to Ontario's Dutch-Canadian community for its many historic and ongoing contributions to our province and our nation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Kitchener–Waterloo, Mrs. Witmer, has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Let me begin by thanking the members for Beaches–East York, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Wellington–Halton Hills, Kingston and the Islands, Thornhill, Trinity–Spadina and Newmarket–Aurora. I think one of the points that has emerged today is that there are extremely, extremely strong bonds of friendship between Holland—I should say the Netherlands—and the province of Ontario and Canada. I think we can see that those bonds of friendship began as a result of the Canadian forces playing such a pivotal role in the liberation of the Netherlands at the end of World War II. Like some of the speakers here today, I've heard many, many stories about the hardships that the Dutch people endured during World War II and also the joy and anticipation they had when they heard that the Canadians were going to be liberating their country. My dad was a member of the Dutch underground, and so he was personally involved in the war. As well, we have heard about the contributions that those of Dutch descent have made to the province of Ontario. Many of them who first came were involved in agriculture. But in more recent years, we've had many, many people who have made contributions: They've been business people, and we've seen them involved in construction, in finances and in technology. Certainly, they continue to value and appreciate their roots, but they're also a group of people who, like myself, have become totally integrated into the Canadian way of life. I'm sad to say my children don't speak Dutch, nor does my husband. But I will tell you, when it comes time for that Dutch soccer team to play, my kids are Dutch, and they do say, "If you're not Dutch, you're not much." Thank you today for the support that I have received.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired. It's now time to vote.

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with ballot item number 72, standing in the name of Mrs. Witmer. Mrs. Witmer has moved second reading of Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Second reading agreed to.

DUTCH HERITAGE MONTH ACT, 2011

Mrs. Witmer moved third reading of the following Bill 166, An Act to proclaim May as Dutch Heritage Month

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion. Third reading agreed to.