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ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

First Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37<sup>e</sup> législature

**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Tuesday 7 December 1999**

**Mardi 7 décembre 1999**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 décembre 1999

*The House met at 1845.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999  
LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ  
DANS LES RUES

Mr Martiniuk moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.

**Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge):** I will be sharing my time this evening with my distinguished colleague the member for Northumberland and also the ever-popular member for Durham, who will be arriving shortly.

This bill went to the standing committee on justice and social policy for public hearings. Various individuals and groups had the opportunity to voice their opinion, some nine presentations in all. I was the member on that committee for that period. No amendments to the bill were moved by any member of the committee; therefore, the bill stands as originally presented to this House.

All members will recall that the basis of this bill really goes back to the founder of our police systems, Sir Robert Peel, who in one of his nine principles—actually, his first principle—stated that it was the duty of the public and the police to control crime and disorder, not just crime as we know it but in fact disorder.

Why would disorder, as compared to crime, be important? I think in our many visits across this province, some 70 in all, as a co-commissioner of the Ontario Crime Control Commission, it became evident that people were concerned for themselves and their families and that disorder played a role in causing that concern. If there is disorder on our streets, people will vacate our streets out of concern for their safety and that void will be filled by additional crime. This is not a theory any longer. As a matter of fact, it has been proven, in my

opinion, in many different cities both in the US and the United Kingdom.

The Safe Streets Act is intended to protect the right of people in Ontario to use public places in safety. This includes driving down the road, window shopping along the sidewalk, strolling or playing with children in our parks. Individuals and families treasure the ability to do these things without being hassled, impeded or intimidated. If the Safe Streets Act passed, it would help communities control unsafe activities that interfere with the public use of the roads, sidewalks and other outdoor places. It would help enhance the quality of life in our communities. Leave us not forget that these public places have been constructed and are there for the use of the public and not necessarily for individuals seeking a fast dollar.

Bill 8 proposes to make it illegal to squeegee or conduct other commercial activity on the roadway. Towing and other emergency services would be exempt from this prohibition. The bill proposes to ban aggressive solicitation and solicitation where people cannot easily walk away, such as at bank machines or at bus stops.

The bill would also prohibit the disposal of dangerous objects, such as syringes, in outdoor places such as parks, schoolyards and laneways. One of the witnesses was a community leader in downtown Toronto with a neighbourhood group. She told us about the various problems and dangerous objects found in laneways and in schoolyards and voiced her and her association's concern for the safety of their children.

If the bill passes, police would have the power to arrest for these offences. This would supplement existing enforcement tools; namely, warnings and ticketing. Bill 8 would also allow courts to impose tough sentences for these offences: fines of up to \$500 or probation for a first conviction, and fines of up to \$1,000, probation or six months in jail for repeat offences.

The proposals in Bill 8 are a direct response to concerns from citizens and police about unsafe behaviour in public areas. Our government has heard from the people of Ontario through presentations to the Ontario crime commission and from letters sent to the Premier, as well as to myself and my predecessor. I myself have met with residents, business people and front-line police officers. I have heard over and over again how activities such as squeegeeing and aggressive solicitation have eroded people's sense of community safety.

Frequently, people ask the police for help, but current laws are totally inadequate. In turn, the police and

municipal leaders appealed to the province for legislation that would give them the tools they need to serve and protect the people of their communities. That's what we have done with Bill 8. We developed this legislation because we believe it is responsive and responsible leadership. We made the bill a priority because community safety is a priority for the people of Ontario.

There has been a lot of debate over Bill 8, both inside and outside this place. Unfortunately, the public has been subject to a lot of exaggeration and misinformation about the intent of Bill 8; this from critics with their own agendas. We have been told that the passage of the Safe Streets Act will somehow result in poor people being swept off the streets. We have heard that the bill would force the police to arrest Boy Scouts for selling apples and that it would make others think twice about asking for a quarter to use a phone. We have been told that if this bill comes into effect, street people will turn to crime, as that is the only available alternative.

Furthermore, there has been an undercurrent in the criticism that I quite frankly have found distasteful and certainly unfair. It has been implied that only so-called affluent people in Ontario care about the quality of life in our communities. Opponents of this bill would have us believe that ordinary people, regardless of their income, do not value their right to unrestricted passage on a roadway or sidewalk.

Just as unfair is the suggestion that some Ontarians are uncaring simply because they believe they should not be subject to verbal abuse after saying no to a solicitation or because they object to syringes, for instance, strewn along laneways and in parks.

We need to debunk such baseless concerns raised by those individuals who just don't like Bill 8. We need to get back to the heart of the matter. The proposed Safe Streets Act is about ensuring quality of life in our communities, and that benefits everyone. Make no mistake, the Safe Streets Act is about the public taking back their public places. It has absolutely nothing to do with the poor or the homeless.

First of all, if passed, Bill 8 would be provincial legislation. Only the federal government can enact criminal laws, and this therefore is not a criminal act. The proposed offences would be provincial offences, and persons convicted under the proposed Safe Streets Act would not carry a criminal record.

This bill also does not target the poor. If Bill 8 is enacted, no one, regardless of social circumstances, would be permitted to abuse someone whom they are trying to solicit. No one, regardless of social status, would be allowed to hang around the bank machine to solicit from a person withdrawing cash.

If the Safe Streets Act becomes law, it would be applied to control activities, not persons. It would be used to ensure safe access to public places for all the people of Ontario, no matter who they are, where they live or what they earn.

Some people claim that Bill 8 is not necessary. They say the federal Criminal Code already covers extreme

cases of aggressive solicitation. I believe that is absolutely incorrect.

#### 1900

However, Bill 8 is not concerned with criminal activity. If someone commits a crime, the police can in fact make an arrest under the Criminal Code. Bill 8 is provincial legislation designed to regulate the use of our sidewalks, streets and other public places. It would ensure that members of the public are able to enjoy walking in their communities. People should be able to do so without anxiety, intimidation or harassment. They should not have to put up with having their paths blocked, being followed, being sworn at or being threatened. The Safe Streets Act, if passed, would help make our streets safe and secure for all members of the public.

The issues surrounding this bill are not cut and dried. I acknowledge that there are complex issues of homelessness and unemployment. However, I have also pointed out that this government spends millions each year on job training for our youth and adults, on housing and housing support, on services for people who are mentally ill. These services are available and accessible in communities across Ontario. This government remains committed to giving those in need the opportunity to improve their lives. It is unfortunate that some of the people who spend their time shouting down this bill don't use this time instead to encourage those people to use such services. These critics are also blind to the fact that the public and our government do care about people who are struggling.

Those short-sighted critics suggest that if you're a caring person, then it is somehow wrong for you to want to go about your business without being blocked by aggressive solicitation. They say it is wrong for you to want to pull up to an intersection in your car without having to worry about getting into an accident because of someone approaching with a squeegee. They say it is wrong to want your child to be able to play in a schoolyard without getting injured by a discarded syringe. I ask you this: Are such situations acceptable to the people who want us to do away with this bill?

The people of Ontario know what they want and what they value. They know if Bill 8 passes they will be able to build the kind of community life in which people are free to care about each other without having to worry about their own personal safety.

Bill 8 does not place a value judgment on individuals. It does not diminish the rights of anyone in Ontario. If the bill becomes law, it will help people to be safe and feel safe in their communities.

I want to stress that nothing in this bill prevents someone from soliciting for himself or herself or for others, provided that this is done without aggression or at locations where people are free to come and go. Nothing in this bill prevents unemployed people from using the many government programs that can help them train for a job and a better future. Nothing in this bill prevents anyone from giving money willingly.

The people of Ontario are caring and concerned. Hundreds of community groups and volunteers help

people of all backgrounds. This includes working with the homeless and the unemployed. Citizens do this because the sustaining force of community life is its capacity to bind us together. They want government action to deal with activities that interfere with their safety and the safety of their families and communities. Bill 8 is consistent with community values. Our government wants Ontario to be a safe place for individuals and for families. The passage of the Safe Streets Act would help us achieve this goal. I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe there is unanimous consent to divide the time equally among the three caucuses.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin):** Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Further debate?

**Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's):** I rise today to speak on behalf of the official opposition at this stage of debate of the safe streets bill. We oppose the bill on a number of grounds which I've already mentioned in this House and I will mention again.

But let me start out by saying this about this bill. To my mind, the safe streets bill, the squeegee bill, is symbolic of what this particular legislative session is all about. It's symbolic in the sense that we had an election on a number of very important issues. I'm sure on each side of the House we could at least agree that the issues were about the economy and jobs. I know the government would say also taxes, balancing the budget, also health care, education and justice. That's what the election was about. If there are some more issues I missed, I'm sure I'll be reminded in responses to what I have to say.

But those were the issues that I dealt with when I was at the doors during the election. St Paul's is considered a bellwether riding. It wasn't this time around, but it does provide a cross-section of opinion in Ontario, and I can tell you not one person said to me at the doors that what we really need to do first and foremost is bring forth a law that in effect criminalizes squeegeeing. Not once. It didn't come up in the all-candidates debates. It didn't come up in any of the questionnaires that were circulated. It never came up in terms of the thousands of phone calls and questions that we got.

Instead, what happened was that the safety of our streets became a growing issue, and I believe the thinking from the government was that squeegeeing was somehow symptomatic of a lower civility in our urban centre. They may have been right, that it is symptomatic of a lowering of civility in our urban centre.

Is it the most important issue? Is it the first criminal justice issue that we should be dealing with? I say no, and I'll pause on that point for a second before moving on, because we have the bill here and I plan on speaking to it. But of all the criminal justice issues that this government could have addressed in its first criminal justice bill, a Safe Streets Act on squeegeeing, I would have

thought, would have been at the bottom of the priority, not the top of the priority.

This is what I mean by it being a symbolic bill. Of all the issues that we had in front of us, we're not dealing with a growing number of guns in our cities; we're not dealing with the rise of domestic violence in the homes of Ontario; we're not dealing with hate crimes performed in shadows, never out front, in the dark; the vandalism to synagogues; and the assaults, apparently hate- and race-motivated, that have taken place in the city of Toronto. Nor are we dealing with the rise of commercial crime and house break-ins in certain sectors of the province. No. We're going to deal with squeegeeing.

My first submission, my first point, is that even within the criminal justice rubric, this should have been at the bottom of the priority, not at the top. As I go through the various submissions made by those who were gracious enough to come and speak to the committee, all nine of them, I'll be returning to this point. But I want to leave it behind.

**1910**

Let us say that if there has been something that has been in the news over and over again over the last few weeks and raised in this House over and over again, it has been the mockery of this government focusing on squeegees instead of the issues of the day. I find it insulting to the intelligence of voters that they would think this is at the forefront of Ontarians' concerns.

Now let me deal with the bill itself, because it's in front of us and it deserves our attention right now. Alan Borovoy, the general counsel to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, came in and he did not simply give it a typical civil libertarian critique. He called the bill mean and silly. He pointed out flaws within the bill, assuming that in fact the bill was a valid venture. In other words, he agreed for the moment, for the purposes of the submission, that it made sense to bring forth a bill to try and make our streets safer.

Let me say right now that we on this side of the House support legislative measures and other measures to try and make our streets safer; there's no doubt about that. Our quarrel is not with respect to whether it ought to be done. Our quarrel is when and our quarrel is how and our quarrel, frankly, is why, and I'll get to that in a moment.

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet):** Are you going to vote for it?

**Mr Bryant:** No, we're not supporting it. The member for—you'll forgive me; I haven't memorized everybody's seat here—Haliburton-Victoria-Brock said, "Are you going to vote for it?" No. I've already said we're not going to support it, for the simple reason that, in a nutshell, the bill's not going to work. I would never encourage this party nor would I ever vote for a bill that is never going to work. I would never vote for a bill that, in the words of Alan Borovoy—and I think he's right on this front—is mean and silly.

Why did he say it was mean and silly? "Because," he said, "look at the way it's drafted." We opposed every single provision in the bill; there was no tinkering or

fixing a bill that was inherently flawed from top to bottom. He said: "Look at the fact that you could be at a payphone and missing a quarter. You ask for a quarter and you have to look around. Are there any police standing around?" It's sort of like when you're driving over the speed limit and you're looking to see—

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** Hey, hey.

**Mr Bryant:** Yes, I know.

You're looking to see if there's a speed trap. Similarly, you say, "Is a policeman around?" Because if he is and I ask for that quarter for the telephone, whether I be in Forest Hill Village or whether I be at a highway exit somewhere in Ontario, I'd have to look around because I wouldn't want to be arrested or fined or questioned or charged for asking for some help.

Granted, we know that what we're talking about here are anomalous examples, but nonetheless they exist. They're examples that were not in any way covered by the legislation.

**Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek):** It's discretionary.

**Mr Bryant:** The honourable member mentions discretion. The discretion lies with the legislators and the drafting of the legislation. This was rushed through, rammed through, fast-tracked, and no attention was paid to the bill whatsoever, so much so—and I found this remarkable—that the definition of aggressive panhandling under the act has no provincial anchor. In other words, there's no reference to aggressive solicitation on the streets.

I'm sure that's what was intended. The bill's called the Safe Streets Act, so presumably aggressive solicitation on the streets is what's being prohibited. I know that was the intent, because that's all we've heard the government talk about, providing for safe streets, except that there's nothing in the act and nothing in the provisions whatsoever that limits "aggressive solicitation" to aggressive solicitation in public places or sidewalks or roads.

As Mr Borovoy pointed out, nor does it limit it to personal contact. In fact, if you read the provision, it could include—and there's no doubt about this—telephone solicitation. We've all received telephone solicitations from political parties or charities or from our telephone companies, and this is covered under the act. Again, the argument from the other side is, "Oh, come on, discretion's going to be exercised." Yes, but the responsibility for discretion to be exercised ought to be covered off in the legislation and not left open, as it is right now.

Mr John Fraser of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation came in. Mr Fraser was really concerned that what this bill was doing—and I don't know the intention of this government and I hope we hear tonight from this government that it's not its intention to do this, but the concern was that the old vagrancy laws that had been repealed in 1971 by the federal government and which had not been enforced in Canada at that time for over 20 years—it was at the time of debtors' prisons that the vagrancy laws were actually being used. The idea was that if you were poor or if you were somehow unattractive and we didn't want to see you, we'd get rid of you. You were a vagrant and, literally, loitering and

wandering around the streets and looking unseemly was a crime.

It may have been a crime in the early part of this century, but it's frightening to think that at the end of this century a vagrancy law that had never been prosecuted in over 50 years, over a half-century, would now be revived. Why would it be revived? Because a lot of what the people are doing on the streets, Mr Fraser said, a lot of what is unappealing to it—the fear Mr Fraser had was that people just didn't like the looks of the squeegee kids, with their nose rings and purple hair and half-shorts and aggressive manner; there was just something frightening about them and they were somehow vagrant and should be locked up. I hope that's not the intention. It would be frightening to think that this is in fact the revival of the vagrancy laws. Both Mr Fraser's and Mr Borovoy's prediction was that if it was ever interpreted by the courts as a vagrancy law, we would find that the law would be struck down.

Brian Enns and Andrea Earl of the Mennonite Central Committee came in and spoke about something which the government has called fearmongering. It's odd to accuse the Mennonite Central Committee of fearmongering. This committee and numerous others who work with the poor and work with street people have said the same thing. They said: "Look, we're talking about the marginalized of society. We're talking about a very tiny percentage of our population. They are at the margins right now. Yes, we'd love them to have jobs"—and I want to talk about these people as people, their stories, because we haven't talked about that today but we heard about it in the committee.

"These people are on the margins. Wouldn't it be nice if they had a job, but for one reason or another they don't and they can't. They have no fixed address. Some are mentally ill. Some are abusing substances. They need some treatment. They're just trying to survive. In trying to survive they have to spend time during the day and the evenings and they have to make enough money to feed themselves." This is what the committee said. They went on to say: "There are various options here. They can panhandle and they can squeegee. Those are options one and two."

"We don't condone those options," said the committee, and we in the Liberal Party don't condone those options. We don't want anybody in Ontario to either be forced to get their income through panhandling and squeegeeing nor do it at all. We don't, but it happens. We all know it happens. "Brother Can You Spare A Dime" is not a song that was written in the last six years.

#### 1920

What are they going to do to make their money? "They can panhandle," said the committee, "they can squeegee, or they can turn to other forms of crime," and there are other forms of crime that they have turned to: the drug trade, the sex trade and breaking and entering.

So what they said—and this has created an ultimatum. In the view of the government it has created an unacceptable ultimatum. The ultimatum is this: "Look, either you

let us panhandle and squeegee or we're going to be showing up at a neighbourhood near you with a crowbar." Quite rightly, the response to that ultimatum is: "No, no, no. We can't operate with a gun to the head as if criminality is the only option."

So it must be the responsibility of this government. When they take away panhandling and squeegeeing as an option for street kids, there must be something else they are going to be directing them to. If they know very well, de facto, that they are going to end up at a suburban neighbourhood near you with a crowbar, then surely their responsibility is to divert them into something which is not harmful and, even better, more productive, something that will lead them down the path of a more productive life. If this government is going to take the step of regulating this activity, then it has to take the further step that was taken in other jurisdictions—in the city of New York, in the city of Vancouver—other directions which will permit them to get a leg up, which will basically help them lead more productive lives. The government can either do nothing, the status quo—and I think we all agree that's unacceptable—or they can do something.

What they've done is they have created the penalties, they've created the punitive measures, without the alternatives. The only option for these people, supposedly, is that they'll go to jail. As I'll tell you in a moment, they're not going to be going to jail because no justice of the peace, no provincial prosecutor, no Highway Traffic Act prosecutor, none of them, none that I spoke to, none in my experience and none that anybody can imagine, is going to lock them up. When they don't lock people up for breaking and entering, do you think they're going to lock somebody up for putting a squeegee on a window? Of course not. They're going to send them right back out on the streets.

That's why I say, and I'll return to this point again and again, this act does nothing but throw the street people of Toronto and various other urban centres in Ontario into a revolving door of our criminal justice system. Yes, they get the charge, maybe they get the record, it's even harder to get a job, but no, that's what the government wants to do: It wants to sweep them under the rug.

The problem is this government has decided it wants to carry the ball on this but has not followed through on the commitment. The problem is that a year from now or two years from now we are going to see that the problem hasn't gone away. I'll be coming to that in a moment.

We don't need to look far. We just need to look over to Montreal, Quebec, to see that if all you do is provide the punitive measures without any alternatives and diversion avenues to direct these people, all you're going to do is shoo them from one street corner to another.

Gerri Orwin, the founding member of SOBRA, came in, and this was a residents' association which ostensibly supported the bill. They wanted an amendment to the minimum sentences under the act. They know, because they live in that neighbourhood, that a lot of people in that neighbourhood are being charged for a variety of crimes but most of them are coming right back out on the

streets. So what they wanted was a minimum charge and a minimum fine to ensure that these people were locked up, because the residents' associations in this area are desperate. Their parks and their streets are full of syringes. They live with the drug trade and the sex trade. They want to get rid of it.

The only problem with using this act to get rid of it is, you can't lock people up for life for squeegeeing, so you're going to have to deal with the fact that they may or may not go to jail but they are going to have to come back out. You're going to have to also deal with the fact that we don't even have a minimum sentence in this province for criminal negligence or homicide, so it's difficult to imagine we're going to have a minimum sentence for squeegeeing.

The point is, they wanted something done and they realized that, as it stood, this act was not going to solve the problem.

Low Income Families Together, Ms Walsh, came in and spoke about government training and how options other than squeegeeing are worse. Her concern was that by criminalizing this activity and not doing anything else to divert these people, we are just going to be sweeping them under the rug.

Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman came in. He spoke in favour of the bill, but his assumption, I know, is that resources are going to be provided to police squeegeeing and panhandling. Let me say with the greatest respect to Mr Kinsman, I can imagine a better use for the police of Toronto than spending their time doing surveillance to catch squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** What?

**Mr Bryant:** "What?" the honourable member says. How shall I count the ways? Homicide, domestic assault, use of guns, hate crimes, break and enter, injury to person, trespass to person—crimes that affect people more than a 15-second nuisance. There's no doubt it's a nuisance, and for many it's intimidating, but I would rather the police deal with those crimes than deal with the nuisance that is squeegeeing.

The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto provided a video with some human stories, and I'll be dealing with those in a second. Interestingly, the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law came in. They had done their homework. The government has not done their homework on this; they have had no response during this entire debate, if you want to call it that, to the charge that they have not done their homework and found out what these people are doing, what's going on out on the streets.

They did a study. They went out on the streets of Toronto and talked to squeegee people. Here were the conclusions of their study, having spoken with close to 100 squeegee kids. Most are young people; of those surveyed, two thirds were under 21. Most are homeless; 76% are homeless. There's this urban myth that somehow all squeegee kids are from Rosedale, they're misguided Rosedale kids; that's an empirical question, and all the evidence we had before this committee was that it

is entirely wrong. Maybe 1% of squeegee people are misguided Rosedalers, but 76% are homeless, according to the survey done this year. Many have left abusive homes. Many lack the job skills you obviously need to find employment. Most of them wanted to go back to school. The changes in the welfare law under Bill 142 made it much more difficult for 16- and 17-year-olds to obtain social assistance.

The other point made by the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law was that enforcement was obviously going to be expensive. It is a lot more expensive to lock somebody up, and it's certainly a lot more expensive to arrest them, prosecute them, bring them before the court several times—because they'll have to appear before the court several times before one goes to trial, if in fact it goes that far, and I say it never would—and then lock them up. We all know that the costs of jail are a lot more than the costs of shelters.

The other point they made—and again, they went out on the streets and said, “What’s going to happen if this bill passes and people go from person to person?” It’s a highly visible activity, they said, one that will go underground—the less desirable will go underground—and it will be more costly to the community.

#### 1930

I'd like to close with this: This government has read half the story here. They looked down south, as they often do, for their policy, to the city of New York. They found this thing called quality-of-life offences. These are the words of Mayor Giuliani; he enacted quality-of-life offences. And those are the words used by the Attorney General, “quality-of-life offences.” In New York they include squeegeeing, panhandling, even jaywalking. The problem is that Giuliani put his money where his mouth is and he provided both punitive measures as a threat and a comprehensive social safety net. Both. If you don't believe me, ask Mayor Giuliani. There was a story in the New York Times last weekend. Here's what the Times story said. It was a story critical of Giuliani:

“The city of New York has legalized the right to shelter”—imagine that with this government—“and no city in America can touch the scope or the magnitude of benefits that New York city spreads amongst the poor.” In other words, they used the midtown Manhattan core project, they used all their resources to take the squeegee people of New York City and put them into diversion programs: if they're mentally ill to get them treatment; if they needed mentoring or a job training program, they were sent there; if they wanted to go to school they were given access to schools that they couldn't otherwise get into. This is Mayor Giuliani, OK? We're not talking about a bleeding heart here.

I'm going to wrap up now. There's nothing in place today under this act, in this legislation, that will divert people off the streets and into healthier lives. Instead, squeegee kids are going to be thrown into the revolving door of the justice system and will be returning to a street corner near you. At best, Ontario cities will share the same experience as Montreal, where the squeegee kids

were shooed from one corner to the next. At worst, today's squeegee kid will be tomorrow's crowbar and crack head, thanks to the government's superficial, ham-handed effort to improve the safety of our streets. The bill is a joke. I don't mind the limited debate; I don't mind the fact that it's being fast-tracked. We need to see as soon as possible that this approach doesn't work. I look forward to seeing what alternatives are proposed by the government in the future because, mark my words, this bill won't work and it certainly won't get the support of the official opposition.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

**Mr Kormos:** Thank you, Speaker. It is Niagara Centre. It used to be Welland-Thorold; now it's Niagara Centre.

This bill, Bill 8, is going to pass.

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** Another one of your telepathic moments.

**Mr Kormos:** Exactly. After a whole lot of analysis and thought, I realized Bill 8 is going to pass. Which leads me—look, you're going to help me, aren't you, Speaker? Because I have a feeling that from time to time I may digress; I may drift off point a little bit. I'm counting on you in your usual avuncular way to bring me back on track. I'm counting on you. I think you and I can cooperate to that extent. We've had our moments, and quite frankly I suspect I've felt the same way about you as you have about me, but tonight doesn't have to be acrimonious, Speaker. Tonight we can work together as a team.

Bill 8 is going to pass; I know it. I talked to one of my colleagues, and they said, “What's on tonight?” “Bill 8, the squeegee kid bill.” “My God, the government hasn't abandoned that yet?” I said, “No, it's on for third reading.” This is the response: “It's as if we had dealt with that like five year ago.”

Over the course of this bill, from November 2, its first reading, I've talked to folks about this down in Niagara Centre. I had some folks at the Slovak Hall a few weeks ago, during a dinner there on a Sunday, because they had seen my comments, who said, “Come on, Pete, you've got to get tough on the squeegee kids.” I said: “Fair enough. Tell me about it.” This woman—a nice woman, a good woman, a very Christian woman, who comes to Toronto from time to time—says she finds it very annoying when she reaches the end of one of these north-south roads and gets down to the Gardiner or Front Street and is approached by sometimes two or three squeegee kids—because, you see, they compete with each other. They do. They compete with each other: who gets there first, who has the best spin, who has the best little approach. They compete.

I said: “I understand what you're saying. You find squeegee kids annoying. Far be it from me to tell you that you don't find them annoying.” It's a very subjective evaluation. Who am I to tell her that it's not? Of course she's annoyed by it. But gosh, I find those NCC billboards over on Bay Street real annoying.

**Interjection:** I like them.



**Mr Kormos:** Exactly. I would never suggest that you illegalize anybody's right, no matter how crackpot they are, to voice their views. I think the NCC has every right to spend as much money as it wants on billboards on Bay Street. The fact that I find it annoying should not inhibit their right to express their views. I respect the right of the National Citizens' Coalition to have their views expressed on billboards, no matter how much I disagree, no matter how annoying I find it, no matter how aggravating, sometimes outright intimidating—

**Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport):** You?

**Mr Kormos:** Well, sure. Some of the things they put on those billboards scare the daylights out of me. But they have every right to do it. You know what, my friends? I will defend their right to do it.

But my friend in Welland finds squeegee kids annoying. I said, "Fair enough, because you know what?" I told her what I'm going to tell you. "When I walk to Queen's Park in the morning and I encounter half a dozen panhandlers at 8:30 or 8 in the morning, you know what? I'm annoyed too."

I'm annoyed that over the course of a few years—I'm not annoyed, I'm outright ticked off, I'm extremely disturbed about the fact that over the course of a few years the number of panhandlers out there at 8 and 8:30 in the morning has tripled and quadrupled. I'm annoyed at the fact that there seems to be a clear increase in the number of people who find themselves homeless, here in Toronto and across the province. I'm annoyed that the programs that these people could have availed themselves of before this government aren't there any more.

I'm annoyed by the fact that the mental health services—and I admit that that problem goes back a good number of years, but it has deteriorated dramatically over the course of the last four and five years. I'm annoyed that mental health services, especially those outreach services, have been allowed to deteriorate and have been compacted or eliminated so that people with mental illnesses can't get housing, can't receive sufficient levels of support to enable them to live in appropriate and decent places and are forced out on to our streets panhandling and begging others for money.

**1940**

The other day I was walking past the Bank of Nova Scotia at the corner of Carlton and Yonge Streets, and a gentleman was there panhandling outside the ATM. What he was doing was, in a most gracious way—I suppose as graciously as you can when you're living on the street, when your clothes aren't quite Armani and when maybe you haven't had a chance to shower and shave that morning—this gentleman, as gracefully as he could, like a doorman at a hotel, was opening the door for people using the ATM. He'd hold out his hand as they left in the most passive of ways. I wasn't using the bank machine, but as I walked past, I stopped and I said, "Howdy," and I reached into my pocket and found a toonie. For some reason I must have smiled, because he embarked on a lecture about how smiling releases endorphins, which are good for your health. My back was out

at the time and I was walking with a little bit of a limp, and he said, "And it's good for you physically."

I thought, my God, this guy could be a U of T professor. The gentleman was an intelligent, articulate, mature person who engaged me in conversation at a level that was social and sociable and which I found quite pleasurable. I didn't ask him his story, but I reflected on the fact that here's a gentleman—yes, a gentleman—who could have been any one of the people in this chamber, because quite frankly there but for fortune go you or I, who was, for any number of reasons, and we could start listing them, out on the street homeless, poor, busted and broke. I didn't have any quarrel with the fact that he needed a little bit of help from his neighbour, because I was his neighbour at that moment.

I've got to tell you, I felt very privileged about the fact that I'm middle class enough and my income is more than sufficient that I didn't have to worry about giving this guy a toonie, that it in no way was going to upset or interrupt the quality of life I enjoy, that it wasn't going to mean any difference in terms of my weekly budgeting. I was privileged. I've been very fortunate. The people in this chamber have been very fortunate. They make incomes that are in the top percentiles of our society. My God, why don't those of us who are prosperous in this society understand that we've been privileged? We haven't necessarily been harder working—oh, I know the arguments—because let me tell you, there are a whole lot of hard-working people who are still also very poor. It isn't because we're any smarter. Let me tell you, there are a whole lot of smart people, smarter people than the people in this chamber, who are still very poor. It's as much about good fortune and good luck in this society, in this economy, as it is about anything else.

I say to myself that I'm blessed, I'm privileged, because for me to give this gentleman a toonie didn't require me to think twice about whether my financial straits for the week or the month were going to be upset by it. The fact that I could do that meant that I'm one of the very fortunate people in this economy and in this society.

As much as that gentleman is there by ill fortune and ill luck, not through sloth, not through laziness, not through lack of ambition, and certainly not through choice—who in their right mind would ever suggest that anybody chooses to be poor? Who in their right mind would ever propose that being poor is a matter of choice?

People don't choose to be poor. People are forced into poverty. How readily and how quickly? Well, just last Thursday Rosario Marchese and I were at West Lodge, two high-rise apartment buildings in Parkdale. These buildings, we're told, are owned by the Wynn family. They consist of two high-rises, built in the mid-1960s—you can tell by the architecture; it's that Bucharest-East German architecture—and they consist of, I'm told, 360 units per building, so 720 units. Rosario Marchese and I were invited by John Clarke and OCAP to join with them and meet some of the tenants. OCAP of course is the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. Mr Martiniuk knows

John Clarke and OCAP. He was feted by them but a couple of weeks ago during his committee hearings on this Bill 8. You see, I have stayed on topic so far.

Rosario Marchese and I went to West Lodge, just west of Lansdowne, the Dufferin and Queen area. We entered the buildings—they're the sort of buildings we're all familiar with, as I say, those 1960s poured concrete buildings that in their day were perfectly fine buildings—and we started visiting tenants. We visited tenant after tenant after tenant and we saw the rent increase notices. We saw the rent increase notices which raised anywhere from 30% to 40% and 50% every single unit—from single rooms, would-be bachelorette units, where you assume that one person is going to live but where two and three people were living, through to single-bedroom and multi-bedroom units.

As if the rent increases weren't in themselves an adequate assault on those tenants, a complete cross-section of our society—students, adult students, new Canadians, long-time Canadians, young people, young families, senior citizens, retirees, persons with disabilities on this government's crummy ODSP program—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** Talk to the recipients, sir, like we did. There were people working at low-wage jobs, some of them two and three jobs; people working and going to school as adults with little kids in their families and in their apartments, their homes, with these rent increases of 30% to 50%. Then we examined the apartments.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** We saw the rent increase notices, sir. Bear with me. You might find this narration interesting. I invite you to either of those two high-rise locations to view it for yourself.

**1950**

The first unit we went to, we talked to the male partner in the household. There were two little kids peeking out from behind his legs, one little boy, one little girl. He was telling us that for in excess of two months—and we saw the appliances, the fridges and stoves. They are as old as the building, well beyond their life on anybody's terms. But here, with two little kids and two adults—and this fellow happened to be an adult student upgrading himself, but working and upgrading himself, working at a minimum-wage job and trying to improve his education so maybe he had a little bit better chance at caring for his family and making sure his kids were able to do better than he did.

His mistake was that four weeks ago he advised the landlord that the stove had stopped working but for one burner. The oven didn't work and three of the four burners didn't work. I don't have to tell you, when you've got two little kids at home—and you don't order out when you're living on a minimum-wage income where you work part-time because you're going to school. You don't order out, nor do you dine out. His family was reduced to one burner on the stove, but the mistake, you see, was to report the malfunctioning stove to the superintendent of the building.

The second mistake was, after a two-week-hiatus wait, to say: "Look, we need the stove. We've got to cook at home." The reaction to that was one of these rent increase notices, which meant that the rent wasn't paid because it constituted in this instance, overnight, almost a \$300 increase in rent, which meant an eviction notice. Let me tell you, this man and his family—this man, his partner, and his two little kids—within a matter of days will be yet four more homeless people—two homeless kids—on the streets of Toronto. They've been unable to find other accommodations, because there simply aren't any out there that fit into the budget that he has for rent. Never mind in the west end of Toronto—in any part of the city of Toronto.

That's where homeless people come from. That gentleman and his family are but days away from not only being homeless—look, this was a proud man. I'd be loath to tell you that he'll be a panhandler tomorrow, because his pride is so strong, but he's also a loving and caring man, and I know, after speaking with him for the length of time I did, that if he was forced to beg to make sure his children were fed, he would.

I'm just trying to illustrate where homeless people and where panhandlers come from. They don't come from a group of people who decide that as an avocation, as a lifestyle, they're going to pursue panhandling or that as a lifestyle they're going to live in an alleyway or a doorway bunched up in rags.

*Interjections.*

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Order. If you have a conversation you'd like to carry on at that decibel level, I'd like you to do it outside the House.

**Mr Kormos:** We visited another apartment and met a young woman with a little two-month-old baby. I recall it because I asked her, "How old is the baby?" She was holding the baby, a beautiful baby, as all babies are. So here's a woman with a two-month-old baby, and she took us to her washroom, the bathtub and toilet, and pointed up at the ceiling—plaster ready, literally, to fall; the water seeping through; the outline of the toilet bowl from the bathroom above. You see, it wasn't sanitary water that was dripping; it was toilet waste. After over two years of complaining—here's a woman, and I was in her apartment, and notwithstanding the condition of her apartment, she maintained it in what was, trust me, compared to the housekeeping standards that I maintain in my own home, an impeccable standard.

Here's a woman with a two-month-old who lives with waste water seeping through the floor of the bathroom above, through her ceiling and down into her bathroom. When she sits there or whatever family member sits on their toilet bowl, they look up to see the dripping waste water from the toilet above. After two years of complaining to the superintendent, the response is a huge multi-hundred-dollar rent increase. Not a single effort to repair that bathroom ceiling.

I can tell you what it is. I know what it is. It's as likely as not the o-ring from the toilet above, the wax ring that goes in the toilet. In itself it's a \$2 item. You undo the

two nuts on the side of the toilet bowl, you disconnect the water, you lift the toilet bowl, you pull out the old wax ring, put the new wax ring down, you put the toilet back down, seat it down, put the two nuts on—don't overtighten or you'll crack the bowl. OK? My friends, what I'm trying to illustrate to you is that it wasn't an expensive or demanding repair request of the landlord that would have stopped the waste water from dripping down from the bathroom above. She has lived in those circumstances for two years, and in response to her efforts to persist at getting repairs that I tell you are her right, the response is a rent increase which she simply can't afford to pay.

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** Can she move?

**Mr Kormos:** I'm going to get to alternative accommodations in just a minute.

We visited another apartment where the young woman in the home had been seriously shocked, electrocuted, not to death, by using the electric stove.

**Mr Marchese:** A year ago.

**Mr Kormos:** The stove hasn't been used for a year. She's made the complaint to the landlord. You're talking about 220 volts in a kitchen. You're talking about somebody possibly dying because a slumlord, the owner of those properties on West Lodge—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** As a matter of fact, I'm told the name is the Wynn family.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kormos:** My friends on the government side don't seem to take this very seriously. I find that regrettable. I find it incredibly regrettable. What I'm trying to relate to them, as a result of the modest effort that Rosario Marchese and I made, is where the homeless come from and where panhandlers might well come from. This woman is going to be forced out of her apartment with her two-month-old. She too has no place to go, and accommodations which meet her budget are not available to her.

We went to another apartment and talked to a mature woman who's crippled with arthritis. She's disabled. Her arthritis is so all-consuming that she can barely move around her apartment, never mind tell her to go get a job. She took us to her kitchen. She lived in a bachelorette, one room. She opened the kitchen cupboards—a small kitchenette in the bachelorette—and there not only was the plaster missing in a two-foot-wide hole, but the lathe behind it was missing. We saw the copper piping and the conduit for the electricity and the tracks of the hoards of cockroaches and the dead cockroaches that were on those little sticky cockroach traps on her kitchen counter, where the cockroaches invade on a daily and nightly basis.

**2000**

**Mr Marchese:** Eight years it's been there, since she moved in.

**Mr Kormos:** Eight years.

I'm telling you again, not a big job. It means putting in some wire lathe and doing two layers of plaster. But what is dramatic here is that she too was responded to with a rent increase notice this year, under this government, in excess of 33%. There will be some relief for her because she's going to have to move. She can't afford a 33% rent increase. At this point in her life, having spent too many mornings cleaning up mouse droppings and chasing the mice through the kitchen and cleaning up the cockroaches that are stuck to those cockroach traps, the sticky ones, she's now almost inclined to think that maybe even homelessness might contain with it some relief from that kind of pestilence.

You see, I asked not only the people whose apartments we were in but other tenants and people in the neighbourhood. Rosario and I walked up there from Queen Street. I said, "My God, this landlord surely isn't going to be able to rent these vacant apartments out with these new high rents in those conditions." The response was, "You bet your boots he will," because the demand for accommodations is so high that people will pay those new, incredibly high rents even for apartments in those deplorable, unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

There are 720 units, well in excess of 1,000 people, every one of them capable of being a homeless person within a matter of weeks, every one of them capable of being forced out on to the street with their hand out to beg, relying on the charity of strangers and whatever ingenuity they can devise along with that panhandling to encourage a loonie or toonie out of passersby. I don't begrudge a panhandler his or her loonie or toonie. I wouldn't dare suggest that somehow they deserve to be poor and I deserve to be affluent, nor would I dare suggest that somehow they must be less capable than I am or less motivated than I am, or any of us.

I raised West Lodge because I think it speaks to those West Lodge high-rises owned by a slumlord whose sole motive is profits. Again, I understand profits. Some day, like I said the other night, I'd like to make some doing something. I understand profits, but the bottom line has surely got to be more than just about bigger and bigger profits. We can't rely on the corporate world to somehow abandon or lose its drive to create profits. That's why it's the responsibility of community, through levels of government like municipal government and provincial government and federal government, to take some responsibility for ensuring that the families like the families we visited on West Lodge have decent, affordable housing, because the private sector doesn't provide it. It doesn't provide affordable housing for these folks, nor does it for a minute provide decent housing.

I go back to the gentleman outside the ATM. I was very moved by that gentleman. I was moved by the incredible amount of goodwill and good spirits that he had. Here's a guy who, if he has a home—and go to some of the rooming houses where our poorest neighbours, if they have accommodations, are required to live. Go to some of those rooming houses: the filth, the stink of vomit and urine, the stale, putrid odour of septic

plumbing that's leaking, the small, cramped, unvented rooms, the windows that are sealed shut because they've been painted shut, the rooms without fire escapes—and people die in those rooms. We've witnessed that in Toronto well within the course of very recent history, haven't we?

Here's a government that slashed welfare rates by almost 22%. It forced many of those people living in those hovels, in those rooms, in those tenements to supplement their incomes, slashed by 22%, to go out on the streets, to call upon the charity of neighbours to augment the funds they had. You see, when you live in one of those rooms, you don't have cable television and you don't have a telephone. They don't fit into your budget. You don't go out to eat unless you go to a soup kitchen, you don't go to the grocery store unless you go to the food bank, and if you do cook at home it's on a little electric hot plate that's forbidden in most apartments, and for good reason, but necessary for these people.

What's the matter with us as a community, as a society? This is the most prosperous, the most affluent, the wealthiest place in the world right here, the province of Ontario. I don't dispute it. We've seen the ratio of CEO and corporate director incomes. The relationship between corporate boss incomes to their workers' incomes, a relationship of 10 and 20 to 1, in some 10 or 15 years grows to 200 and 300 to 1. We see corporations like the banks making huge, unprecedented profits and responding to those profits by announcing more job losses.

My family background is Catholic. I was over at St Kevin's Church in Welland a couple of weeks ago, where they had the annual service accompanied by a gathering of Out of the Cold volunteers which is a mostly inter-denominational group. Father Wagner, who is a brilliant and lovely man, is the parish priest at St Kevin's. I was proud to be at the mass. I would have been there, being a Catholic—my family is nominally Catholic—but I was proud to be at the mass and proud of what Father Wagner had to say.

There was a gentleman there, Joe Gunn, who is a policy analyst for the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops. Joe gave the homily at this mass. Part of his homily, which I found very moving, was his speech to this Out of the Cold group. It was a potluck dinner, and I'm grateful to them because once again this year I didn't bring my share of the food and I relied upon their generosity.

Joe Gunn talked about confession and about how in the Catholic tradition one confesses one's own sins. But he pointed out that maybe it's necessary for us also to confess our collective sins as a society. He questioned the people there. He said: "How many of us confess the sin of a government that cut welfare rates by 21.8%? How many of us acknowledge and confess the sin of a government that attacks the poorest people in this, the most affluent, the most prosperous, the wealthiest jurisdiction in the world? How many of us acknowledge that we are but a privileged elite in this society to be among the income level that we are?"

Like those people who were annoyed by squeegee kids or panhandlers, I'm annoyed too. I'm annoyed by this bill. I'm annoyed by a government that would put in its target the weakest and the poorest and the most vulnerable people in our community and in our society. I'm annoyed by a growing lack of community, a breakdown, an erosion of community that would permit us to stop caring about our sister or our brother.

It's an old tradition; it's what community is about. It's a tradition that's prevalent in every religious faith that I am aware of, but certainly it's a tradition, if you're not one of the faithful, in civilized society that we ensure that those of us who have been blessed with more share some of what we've been given. We've been given it. I know the old line: "You work for it, you earn it. There but for fortune...." Those of us who have been blessed with more have an obligation to ensure that those who haven't get to share in some of the affluence that we treat with little appreciation.

**Mr Marchese:** Nonchalance.

**Mr Kormos:** Nonchalance.

I'm not voting for this bill. I didn't support it on first reading. I opposed it on second reading like the other opposition members did. I understand there's agreement for consent to a directed divided vote tomorrow afternoon. We'll be voting against it tomorrow.

I'm not proud of a government that would tell the poorest of the poor that that government is going to deal with poverty by obscuring the symptoms of that poverty, by sweeping the streets clean of the panhandlers who are manifestations of that poverty.

I want to leave time for my colleague Rosario Marchese, who has a strong interest in this matter and who has been handing me notes now for a considerable period of time reminding me to leave him some time. I'm pleased to share time with Rosario Marchese.

The problem is, this debate can't go on beyond 9:30. Not all the members of this Legislature who want to and, quite frankly, who should be speaking to this bill are going to be allowed to, because time allocation has ruled them out. There are 103 members of this Legislature. In a democratic Parliament, any one or all of those 103 members should and would have a right to speak to legislation put before that Parliament. Their constituents deserve it and democracy deserves it. This government has no regard, however, for those constituents or for democracy. That's apparent in its process and in its substance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland):** It's certainly a pleasure to be able to speak on Bill 8 on the third reading. I'm told I have eight minutes and 22 seconds, and that's exactly how long we'll take.

This bill is about safety, the relative impression of safety. That's not possible as we see some of the problems on our streets with aggressive panhandling, squeegee kids and sharp objects being distributed and left in the open, along with condoms.

When we talk about safety, it is indeed a relative thing. It's sort of that perception and it is indeed impor-

tant that that perception be corrected. That's one of the things this bill will certainly do. There's a range, from being very safe to being terribly unsafe, and it's that perception we need to correct.

In this day and age, we have coming into our living rooms literally a hundred channels of information. We're bombarded by bad news. Whether it be tragedies on TV or radio, or whether it be in the newspapers, we're getting it on a regular basis—horror stories from literally every corner of this universe. Sometimes it gives us a feeling that we're absolutely prisoners in our own homes. That's certainly the case for my mother, who I'm sure is watching this evening. She often feels that way in her apartment. She's concerned when she sees various things on TV and wonders about what is really happening out there in that big nasty world.

The ones who are particularly vulnerable are women, particularly senior women who are concerned. Often these are the people who are targeted by our panhandlers because they believe they are indeed a soft touch and easily frightened away. This really reinforces the need for this particular bill. Just picture an elderly lady driving up to a stop sign, being approached by a squeegee kid with no shirt on, all kinds of tattoos, earrings, spiked hair, and then, as the member for Guelph-Wellington was commenting, taking a hold of the aerial and shaking it on her car while she's stopped. Just imagine a lady who's 70, 80 years old driving up and being approached in this way.

It's time we gave back to people the right to go out at night and feel comfortable. That happens right in one of my communities, Cobourg, where they stage "Take back the night." It's a candlelight march that occurs every year. "Take back the night" is how it's referred to and I think it's very appropriate that that should happen, particularly as we look at the recent anniversary of the Montreal massacre. It certainly brings home the concern that women have. Women should have the comfort of going out at night and feeling safe on the streets and not have the kind of threat that seems to be out there at this point in time. Men take that for granted at any time.

You know, I really wonder why the opposition isn't jumping up and down and screaming about this gender imbalance. You would think they would be. I've heard the member for Broadview-Greenwood stand up and say she feels very comfortable with the squeegee kids. I really don't understand, because that is not consistent with her other comments.

Whose rights are we protecting here? As I listen to the opposition's concern, they talk about the rights of the squeegee kids. I wonder, what are the rights of the average citizen? Shouldn't the average citizen have the right to go out on our streets and feel safe? Shouldn't they have the right to go out at night and feel safe? These are the citizens, I might add, who are paying the taxes. They're the ones who are observing the laws. They're the ones who wish to go about their business unmolested.

2020

*Interjections.*

**Mr Galt:** I love the support I'm getting here.

Are the squeegee kids paying taxes? I don't think so, and that's not right and that's not fair. I think there needs to be something done about it.

Our reputation is at stake, particularly for cities like Toronto that are known outside of Canada as reasonably safe cities. If we don't keep cities like Toronto appearing safe, tourists are not going to come here. I've had experience in Indonesia and Bangladesh, also hearing about the kind of aggressive panhandlers they have in the Philippines and that certainly keeps tourists out of those countries. We must guard this perception of safety as much as we possibly can.

It's important when we talk about a city like Toronto being safe, certainly there are thousands of communities throughout Ontario that are indeed safe, and there are many ways that you can go about doing that kind of thing. First, you have to do good and then you can talk about it and give that image. That's an old adage that we have in public relations, certainly do the good first and then be seen doing it.

That's the kind of perception we're trying to accomplish here and we have done that in a Safe Haven program that the Cobourg and District Chamber of Commerce has been helping to look after. This certainly increases the perception of safety on our streets, that the world is really not a dangerous place to be living in. It provides a network of main street businesses that offer passersby a safe haven in times of distress. This is battling the perception you get from mass media. It's an opportunity for our small business owners to give something back to the community, to provide a value-added service and to build a strong relationship with the local police.

This indeed is a very simple program with participating businesses providing signs, such as I have here this evening. If you don't mind, I'll hold it just for a second there. It's a sign with two hands, one reaching out to the other. We supply a brochure and also a list of emergency telephone numbers. This helps someone who may be feeling that they're in danger, lost or exhausted or feeling ill, that they can enter a safe haven, an establishment, for assistance. The shop owner in this particular program would then provide a seat and a place for people to make phone calls, to call the appropriate authorities or possibly the person's family.

This has been funded through Partners Against Crime, a grant from the Solicitor General, and we're also looking at expansion. The police are very interested in it in Port Hope and in Quinte West. We're also using it in Presqu'île, and it's interesting to note that my colleague Cam Jackson is also using a pilot program in Burlington.

These programs, and this particular one that we've initiated in Cobourg from my office, are an example of taking back control on our streets and having a truly safe community. Government has an obligation to support programs such as this and provide the legislative tools communities need to enforce community standards.

This safe streets bill is another example of the Harris government's commitment to building safe communities. It is indeed a piece of legislation that I heartily endorse.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** It's interesting to listen to those comments about you reaching out to help, but what you're doing is you're lashing out to hurt. The policies of this government are a joke. Your priorities are a joke. There are so many things that we need to be dealing with in this province, but no, we've got to deal with squeegee kids and panhandlers. You shouldn't be focusing in on squeegee kids and panhandlers; you should be dealing with things like persons with disabilities, children and the homelessness that exists in this province. It's disgraceful the approach you're taking to try and take back the streets.

I truly wish that you would deal with the real issues, the issues that affect the lives of people in this province. Here we go again, ramming through legislation. That seems to be one of your goals and priorities as a government, not to call back the House as quickly as we could have after the election. We come back in late October and you try and ram through legislation. You put forth the omnibus bills and you take away the democratic right of the opposition to have good input.

You talk about the consultation that took place. Nine people have had an opportunity to comment on this legislation, but again in your short-sightedness—there's more to this province than Toronto. Why didn't you take the consultations out across the province and get input from across the province? But you didn't do that. You held the consultations in Toronto only and didn't give anybody else an opportunity to come in and speak to this. This issue that you're trying to fight here, the squeegee kids and the panhandlers, is not something that's unique to Toronto. These situations take place all across this province, but you don't reach out to try and get input.

Your cutbacks to programs and to welfare have hurt many, many people in this province. You've hurt the young, you've hurt the old, you've hurt the disabled, but you don't care, because you have one priority in your mind and that's tax cuts to help the wealthy few of this province.

Talking about those tax cuts, the member from Kitchener Centre asked me what I'd do with my tax cuts. I'll tell you what I do with my tax cuts. As I roam around this city of Toronto and explore this city, I drop my toonie in. There's part of my tax cut. When I leave this city to try and drive home and go back to St Thomas, I welcome the person coming to clean my window, because the roads are a disgrace in this province. There's so much dirt and grime, everything's kicked up off the road. I gladly put my toonie out to that person and have my window cleaned.

You say, though, that with this legislation you're out to try and support those people who are affected by panhandlers and squeegee people. I can tell you, any of the panhandlers I've talked to in this city or the squeegee people I've talked to in this city have never intimidated

me. If I don't want my window cleaned because it has been cleaned the block previously, I just go like this and I wave at them and they leave me alone. They're not out to intimidate. Trying to bring in certain people in this province, older people, that they're intimidating them—these individuals are not out to intimidate. They're out because of the cuts and the damage that you've done. That's why they're out on the streets.

This is your answer to poverty in this province: Ban it. Ban poverty. Out of sight and out of mind, that's what you hope, but you're not succeeding in your goals, because the poverty isn't going to go away. This piece of legislation that's in front of us tonight isn't going to take away the problems that you all on that side of the House have created in this province.

Go talk to somebody who's out panhandling or squeegeeing, find out who they are. They're people who have been affected by your cuts. They're people who are on disabilities, who do not make enough money from what they're receiving from you. They have to do something to supplement their incomes. Go talk to them.

2030

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think disabled people in this province are squeegee kids. I heard it. It's in the record. That's shameful, Steve. You should know better.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Peters:** I'm not trying to impugn a person with disabilities and I will retract that if, in the member's mind—but you're hurting people with disabilities, you're hurting people who are on welfare. You're not helping them; you're hurting them. I think it's terrible what you're doing.

**Mr O'Toole:** We should listen.

**Mr Peters:** Yes, I think you should listen more. I think you should look at some of the things you're doing.

In the city of London every year the Shinerama organization raises money from the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College for cystic fibrosis. Those students, those men and women, go out into the streets and solicit money. You're going to do away with that. School children who have been forced to sell chocolate bars because of the cuts they've been faced with, who walk up and down the streets—

*Interjections.*

**Mr Peters:** It's against the law. That's what this law says. It's against the law. The buskers, musicians—

**Mr O'Toole:** Who's writing your speeches?

**Mr Peters:** Who's writing my speeches? I'm writing my speeches, with my little notes.

The buskers, individuals who go out and try and make a living, are going to be against the law in this province.

I want to quote a couple of individuals, and I will read from somebody else's script here. This is a quote from today's London Free Press, an article by Julie Carl:

"A revolving door on a jail is a pricey solution to a complex problem of street people, both in financial costs and its enormous human costs.

"The government," that's you men and ladies on the opposite side, "must do better than this."

"It likely would if it put its efforts into solving the problems," instead of using the problems to show us how tough it really is.

Andrew Bolter, a gentleman who operates an organization called Life\*Spin in the city of London:

"Using the criminal justice system and the police to deal with what amounts to a social, economic and, ultimately, a political problem is absurd. We can hire more police. We can fill our jails. But until we realize the existence of homelessness and abject poverty in a country with such wealth and resources is a collective failure for which we are all responsible, nothing will really change. We should be banning short-sighted governments and not those ... policies," that those governments create.

**Mr Martiniuk:** They didn't elect you.

**Mr Peters:** Yes, I got elected and I'm proud to be here to make sure we keep the government on its toes. As much as you try to stifle the opposition, we're not going to go away. We're going to continue to fight for the people of this province and a lot of people you really don't care about. You don't. You can just see your attitudes over there right now, the heckling that takes place. You think it's all a joke, but it's people's lives you're dealing with. You're not concerned about people's lives.

**Mr Clark:** In your opinion.

**Mr Peters:** I appreciate my opinion. I appreciate the opinion that I represent people in this province who actually care about people. It's obviously something that you don't care about, listening to the comments coming from the other side of the House.

Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity and I certainly will be voting against this legislation. I ask that you take a look inside, or come out of this building and go out and walk the streets of Toronto, walk the streets of London, walk the streets of communities across this province and see the damage that your policies have inflicted on so many people in this province.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Marchese:** I want to say that I admire the sincerity of the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Marchese:** Elgin-Middlesex-London. He didn't have a prepared speech. It wasn't the usual text that you see from the Tories. Have you noticed, Speaker, because you're one of theirs? They always have a script. It's always prepared. They dare not go out of the text. Have you observed that, Speaker, from that neutral chair of yours? I have.

The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London spoke from the heart. That's what we need in this place, not people who speak from prepared texts, whose lines have been written by either ministry people and/or their staff, but making sure that they're in line with the government, particularly the Premier and the bureaucracy within that office. I don't respect that. I respect more what the member previous to me said. And of course I respect very

much the stories that my good friend from Niagara Centre told, because those are real stories, in spite of some of the laughter from some of the members that I observed on this side as my friend from Niagara Centre was telling those stories. They thought it was amusing.

**Mr Kormos:** Who can laugh at desperation?

**Mr Marchese:** Apparently some of them can laugh at the human misery of others, but perhaps they didn't believe you. I'm not quite certain. But you and I were there. We told the same story because we saw the same story of human misery, of your so-called Tenant Protection Act which does the contrary. It victimizes the very people you pretend you're protecting in the act. That's what we saw. But I don't want to linger too long on that because I only have eight minutes of time. Given that you have limited our time to speak, we can only say what we can.

In that time I want to say that I find Bill 8 repugnant. The reason why I say that Bill 8 is repugnant is because all of this is politically motivated. You're not speaking to Torontonians, because they know this is not an issue for us. I live in the riding that you people talk about. When the member for Northumberland talks about community safety and that the seniors are all clamouring for safety and they're so frightened—and the Attorney General was quoted as talking about extortion; he referred to this activity as extortion—and other people talk about women in the streets screaming with fear about these poor squeegee kids in the street, working for a living, we're talking 200 kids. The member for Northumberland says, "We are very concerned about community safety and we want to keep our streets safe for the seniors," from presumably these Tories who come from the 905 and beyond. I live in the riding wherein you find the squeegee kids and the panhandlers. My riding is called Trinity-Spadina. My boundaries are: west, Dovercourt; east, University Avenue, to the lake. All this activity you people speak of happens in my riding.

If this fear, so much imagined by you but seeming to be real to you, were in fact a reality, I would be able to confirm it or deny it. I'm telling you that the fear you people project onto your supporters, the 905 and beyond, isn't a real one. It's an imagined fear. It's a politicized fear. The kids at the Lakeshore, whom I see frequently, are not a fear to anyone that I have ever observed.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Marchese:** Please come, drive through my riding, because these are the people you say are frightening some of you. The squeegee kids on the blocks of Queen Street, Queen and Bathurst, where they clean the windows—I'm not sure you people go through that area. I don't know. I don't know by whom you people get your windows cleaned and/or where, but it isn't in my riding. But this is the bill that purports to deal with these so-called subhumans who scare the hell out of you.

It's a politicized fear. When I hear some of your members—and I will not name him. He was on the same program with me, but I don't want to name him, because it's embarrassing. He talked about social decay. Speaker,

I know you're as concerned as I am about this. I can tell. Social decay: 200 squeegee kids cleaning windows is social deprivation and we are reaching the depths of amorality or social decay. It makes me laugh, because it's so tragically stupid and funny that I don't know how to deal with this.

That you would waste my time in this Legislature to deal with this issue when we have real issues of crime is the real crime perpetrated on me and the people of Ontario watching this program. You talk about safety. When we deal with issues of violence against women, that's a crime. When I tell you that you people have control of it—unlike the gun control legislation; that is a different issue and it's at the federal level—you people have control to put money into the school system to prevent crime and to prevent violence against women, perpetrated usually by men, usually by close partners, against women. Put the money, Mr O'Toole, into that kind of prevention of violence. That, in my view, is serious crime, not a poor squeegee kid cleaning your window as a serious threat to your safety and/or that it could be considered extortion by your Attorney General. Please, in the context of real problems, you people waste my time and that of the people watching to deal with this?

2040

Chair of Management Board, you have to understand how repugnant I feel the introduction of such a bill to be. I know there are other ways we could be spending our time. We should be talking, by the way, about your millennium book. Member for Niagara Centre, have you seen that book? The Minister of Municipal Affairs was saying—I was there—"We spend seven days a week, 24 hours a day dreaming about how we can cut waste." I said to myself, what do the taxpayers think of this \$2.5 million to be spent on this millennium book?

**Mr Clark:** So let's not encourage kids, eh?

**Mr Marchese:** Certainly, to celebrate the richness and the wealth the kids have to offer through some pictorials they have drawn. But if you people are cutting left and right, if you people don't have the money to spend to deal with issues of violence against women but you have \$2.5 million to spend on a book that does nothing for anyone, I tell you, the taxpayers ought to be outraged, and they are. I tell you, they are outraged in London. On a radio program we did, I could feel the anger; it was palpable. One woman said it is a disgrace for you fine Tories to be wasting her money on such things. This is a taxpayer from London.

I have no enjoyment in being able to speak about a bill that I believe should not be before us, because I think you people should be dealing with real crime. When you talk about seniors, talk about the fact that perhaps you need a few more cops on the road, on the block, in the community, for community safety, to protect them. You will recall, as our leader pointed out, that in 1994 we had over 1,000 more police on the beat than you do presently. So you talk the big line about safety in your communities. Mr Newman shakes his head incredulously because he doesn't know or doesn't want to or doesn't understand.

You have 1,000 fewer cops now on the street than we did when we were in power, and you are the tough ones, the tough law-and-order types.

This is an egregious waste of my time, to deal with 200 squeegee kids trying to earn a living, as my friend from Niagara Centre said. These people are too fat with money to worry about these young people—

**Mr Kormos:** They're too corrupted by power.

**Mr Marchese:** —and corrupted by power, indeed, to worry about 200 young people trying to earn a living cleaning my windows and cleaning their car windows.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate.

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me the time.

I'm going to read some quotes here. "A lot of people are fed up with some of these punks." I'm not saying that; this is coming from the member opposite, Mike Colle, in the Toronto Star, June 21, 1996.

**Mr O'Toole:** Repeat that. I didn't get it.

**Mr Gill:** He said, "A lot of people are fed up with some of these punks."

**Mr Mario Sergio (York West):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I can appreciate that the member is fairly new in the House, but I would like to see every member addressed by the riding they represent. The member who has been mentioned represents the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. I would appreciate that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member will refer to the members by their riding name.

**Mr Gill:** This is a quote from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He also said, "I'm surprised and disappointed that Mr McGuinty seems indifferent to the experience of his own caucus colleagues." That's for the record.

The member for Trinity-Spadina—I travel through that riding pretty well every evening. I get my gas at one of the local gas stations and a lot of times when I go to clean my windows—I love to do my own work—there are no squeegees, no tools to do that. I ask the gas station attendant, "How come there are no service tools provided?" "Because we keep losing them every night, so we don't provide that any more."

The thing is, for the last 12 years we've had the pleasure of a Liberal government and an NDP government—

**Interjection:** That was no pleasure.

**Mr Gill:** Of course that was no pleasure, like the member here says. Then we had our government.

I'm a new member, as the House knows, and as I went door to door calling on people to vote for me, and as my opponents went door to door, all of us had these beautiful programs with us. I had a copy of my Blueprint, which I always keep handy right here, my Liberal counterpart had the 20/20, and I'm not sure what the NDP had, but they had something. All of them had some glowing descriptions of the programs they were going to carry out.

I was so pleased with the work that some of these members on this side of the House had done in the last five years, pleased that when I went door to door with



our Blueprint, they said: "This is great. There is so much credibility in this document. There is so much credibility in the government, that they are there to listen. They are there to do the programs that the public needs."

We make laws that the people of Ontario have asked us to make. When I went door to door I asked many people if they come to Toronto often. Some of the ladies said they would like to, but they don't come here any more because it has become too dangerous. Thirty-one years ago, when I was 17 years old, when I came to Canada, I used to live near Dufferin and King, near the CNE. My sister was 14. At that time you could walk the streets, you could go anywhere you liked at 3 am, 4 am, without any problem. Coming back to the House the other day, I'm driving near Bay and King and this squeegee person comes over and is going to clean the window. A block before, somebody else had done it, so I tell him, by signing, like one of the other members opposite said, "No, I don't need it." He went ahead anyway, which is fine.

I drive an old Voyageur van and on the dash I usually have some change so I looked at it, took some change out and handed it to this person. I have been taught by my parents to respect money no matter how small a denomination that money is in, and I'm trying to instill that in my children as well. This squeegee person looked at this money, let it all fall down on the pavement and said something to me like, "Maybe you need it more than I do." That hurt me because that is against the values I've been taught, and I was offended. He also said some other things which I cannot repeat in this House.

#### 2050

At the same time, like the members opposite said, there are problems. I come from a riding, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, where business is booming because of the initiatives that our government has taken, and friends of mine in business cannot get enough workers. I can assure you there are plenty of jobs around. The unemployment rate is less than 6%, the lowest possible. The economy of Ontario is fuelling, is really progressing better than the G7 countries.

The other day I had a cable show, which I do every three or four weeks. Peel Regional Police Chief Catney was there and we spoke about some of the initiatives, some of the programs that the Peel police have implemented. One of them is a community policing initiative. What they have done in Peel is they've gone to storefronts, they've gone to the plazas where people, the general public, can walk into a police station and discuss some of these safety issues that we're discussing in this House. They can share their concerns about the difficulty that some of our mothers, our sisters, our friends, our spouses are facing. These days nobody has the confidence to walk the streets of Toronto late at night. We want to ensure that we bring back that safety where people can feel confident they can enjoy this great city of ours. They should not be intimidated.

I'm going to make this speech a little more formal.

This bill we're discussing protects the public's ability to use the streets. "Take back the night," like the member from Northumberland said. It creates new provincial offences. The Safe Streets Act would ban squeegeeing. It would ban panhandling and other types of aggressive solicitation. It would also ban solicitation in situations where people cannot easily walk away, such as at automated teller machines. It would ban disposal of dangerous objects. In today's day and age when diseases are rampant, some of these diseases that cannot be controlled, we do not want to expose the public, we do not want to expose our families when they're enjoying the parks, when they're walking on the streets, to hypodermic syringes, condoms. Shame.

This bill also gives police the power to arrest and the courts the ability to impose sentences, including jail for repeat offenders.

We are responding to the requests that something has to be done about the behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of Ontario's streets. Communities ask that something be done, as no current provincial legislation specifically addresses squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling and other types of solicitation. The government has responded by introducing the Safe Streets Act. The bill would give police powers to arrest for these offences and give the courts sentencing options including jail time.

Some members might say that there are municipal bylaws to handle this kind of situation. While those municipal bylaws result in offenders receiving tickets, they do not allow for arrest or imprisonment. The province was asked to provide tougher means of dealing with this problem. The province has responded by introducing legislation that will give police and the courts tools to help ensure the safe use of the streets.

Municipalities, business people, drivers and police from communities across the province have voiced their concerns about the safe use of the streets. We were asked to take action and that is what we are doing. We listened and we introduced legislation to respond to the concerns of the people.

The member opposite from Trinity-Spadina was saying that talking about safety is wasting time. Even one person getting hurt, getting intimidated is one person too many. It's not a waste of anybody's time when you talk about safety on the streets.

Both of these governments, the Liberals and the NDP, have been soft on crime. Even now they're wishy-washy even though their own members have mentioned that they're concerned, that they're being intimidated, that they're being harassed.

We also talked to Chief Catney about the success they've had with the bicycle patrol, the involvement in the communities where people feel safe and that they can now go out and take back the streets. That is the initiative we are bringing about to make sure these communities feel safe.

Mr Speaker, I should have mentioned earlier that I am going to be sharing my time if you so allow, part of my rotation, with the members from Thornhill and Durham.

In the Blueprint, as I said earlier, we committed to giving police the power to crack down on squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling. This is behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of the streets. We reiterated our commitment in the speech from the throne and on November 2 we introduced the Safe Streets Act, 1999, which we are debating today, and no, it's not a waste of anybody's time to talk about safety on the streets.

Under the Safe Streets Act, the Highway Traffic Act would be amended to ban persons from going into the roads to offer commercial services to the drivers. As you would have heard, in the summertime one of the squeegee persons was hurt pretty badly. He could have lost his life. He went under a truck, which is a totally unsafe way of plying his trade. That is the kind of behaviour we're trying to make illegal.

This bill would make it illegal to panhandle in situations where people cannot easily move away, such as bank machines. At the same time, somebody said, "Are we going to illegalize the selling of chocolates or the selling of cookies door to door?" I guess the members have not read the act properly. Even in question period, and I'm a new member and I don't mind saying that I'm a new member, a lot of times the members opposite ask a question and never wait to hear the answer.

I remember, Mr Speaker, that you were trying to control their rowdiness today, so I'm surprised they've even read the bill. They keep debating and wasting the House's time but I don't think they've really comprehended it.

#### 2100

We don't come up with these bills. We are being asked by the people of Ontario, the police association, the business people, the mayors, and we lead by example. There is, as you know, a lot of talk going on, discussions between the council and the government, as to size of the city council. We lead by example. When I met some of the legislators from around the world this year and I talked to them about the reduced size of this House, from 130 members to 103, they were very pleased. We said we believe in fewer politicians, we believe in less red tape and we believe in more efficient government. I think it's only fair that we ask the same from the government, from the people who govern the city of Toronto.

As I mentioned a few days earlier, the size of the number of councillors is almost the same as the size of the government—one less. Therefore, we are leading by example, and that is the kind of bill and the kind of law we want to bring out so people feel safe in this great city of ours.

We are trying to bring the Olympics to this great city. We want to make sure that people feel safe. It's a world-class city. Let's show that it is. So I'm hoping that everybody in this House, including the members opposite, believes in the safety of the individual, believes in property safety. I'm asking everyone to please own up to it, be responsible to your constituents and pass this bill quickly so that people can benefit from it.

**Mrs McLeod:** I'm pleased to participate in the debate on a bill called the Safe Streets Act. I was very pleased to hear our critic, the member for St Paul's, when he spoke earlier this evening, say that the issue of squeegee kids, which is really what the safe streets bill is all about, was not an issue he heard raised very often during the campaign. In fact, I think he said there wasn't a single door that he knocked on in his riding of St Paul's where people said, "This is one of our big concerns." I was pleased to hear that because our critic, the member for St Paul's, represents a Toronto area riding and I thought that if squeegee kids was a big issue, one of our Toronto members was undoubtedly going to hear about it.

It was not an issue that I heard about while I was campaigning in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, but I thought maybe that was because I'm not from the city of Toronto. We don't have squeegee kids, so this wasn't the biggest issue on the minds of constituents of Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I was pleased to hear the member for St Paul's say this wasn't a big issue in St Paul's either. The fact is that this bill, with its emphasis on getting squeegee kids off the streets, is before the House as the highest-priority item of this government in the House to date. At least until the sledgehammer bill on municipal amalgamations was brought forward this week, this was the highest priority for this government: getting squeegee kids off the streets.

Why is it there? It's there because the government recognizes a hot-button issue when they see one. Was the hot-button issue dealing with squeegee kids? No, it wasn't. The hot-button issue for the government was, "We are going to make our streets and our communities safer so people can walk without fear." Who would disagree with that as a goal? Who would disagree that that's important to the constituents of virtually every riding, perhaps particularly in large urban centres like Toronto?

The government took this goal, took this hot-button issue, campaigned on it, made it a priority for their campaign, made it a priority in their throne speech, and what does all of their action on public safety, on making our streets safer, on ensuring people can walk in our communities without fear come down to? It comes down to a bill that basically takes squeegee kids off the streets.

This is a government that never asked itself, "What happens to them after you've taken them off the streets?" It's like the number of people who have been taken off the welfare rolls. The government likes to talk about all the people who aren't on the welfare rolls. It doesn't talk about how many are on the three-month hiatus where they've been cut off any kind of support at all. It doesn't talk about the number of people who are no longer on welfare because they're students in school, sole-support parents who now have to support themselves and their children by taking out loans which they will someday have to repay.

The government doesn't like to talk about, "Where have the people gone?" It's not going to talk about, "Where will the squeegee kids go?" It just wants to be able to say: "We've taken action to keep our streets safe."

We've taken the squeegee kids off the streets." As far as this government is concerned, they can disappear into oblivion. They don't have to account for them any more because they can say they've done it.

This was not a big priority for people in Thunder Bay-Atikokan, where I did my campaigning last June. I know what was a priority for the people in my riding; I know what is still a priority for the people of my riding today. It's health care; it's hospital restructuring. What's the other piece of legislation that we're debating in the House this week? Bill 23, the bill in which this government extends the powers it gave itself some four years ago to go in and close, merge, amalgamate hospitals, and to do it not through a community consensus, but to do it by coming in and imposing the directions of government on a community.

You know—I think we all know—if you come from one of the 22 communities which had a visitation from the hospital restructuring commission, the kind of chaos that has been visited on those communities by the work of hospital restructuring. That's the kind of approach this government takes. So the other bill we're debating in the House this week is Bill 23, which extends the minister's and the government's powers to continue to take that kind of hammer to communities.

What are some of the other priorities in health care? We raised in the Legislature today the reality of what's happening in emergency rooms in hospitals here in Toronto and in communities in many, particularly urban, areas of the province. Yesterday in Toronto, there were 10 hospitals that were not taking any patients no matter how critically ill they were. Another 15 hospital would take only the most seriously ill patients.

Today the Minister of Finance assured us that nine hospitals were having their emergency rooms open—nine hospitals. That's progress for this government, progress of the kind that the Minister of Health referred to when we raised the issue last week about cancer care waiting lists.

We raised the concern about the fact that, according to the auditor, only 30% of cancer patients are receiving treatment within a recommended timeframe. The minister said, in order to assure the Ontario public that they had the matter well in hand: "Don't worry, we're making progress. Now 35% of people are receiving cancer treatment in a timely way. We have a goal to make sure that half the people who have cancer can get treatment in a timely way." Cancer care is a priority for people in my community.

The members opposite may want to ignore the concerns that real constituents in their ridings have—

**Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sorry, I just wondered when the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan would be addressing Bill 8 rather than Bill 23.

**The Deputy Speaker:** That is a point of order. I was listening to her earlier and she was certainly on the topic of the bill that we're debating.

**Mrs McLeod:** Thank you very much. I take it you're recognizing that my challenge to the government is making the safe streets bill, which is really a bill about getting squeegee kids off the streets, the highest priority for this Legislature during this legislative session. I was pointing out something the members may prefer to ignore, the kinds of issues which are a priority for my constituents and, I believe, are priorities for the constituents of most of the members here. It isn't squeegee kids. It's not the issue that the government has made its priority for this legislative session.

Another priority for my constituents is the issue of physician shortages. This government promised to do something about that, just as they promised to do something to make our streets safer—just so the members opposite feel I've made some appropriate allusion to the bill in front of us. What have we seen? We haven't even got the report yet of the fact-finder who was sent out in the summertime to find out if there really was a shortage of physicians. That wasn't a high enough priority for the government to bring it back before this Legislature, even though it's now just two weeks until we recess for Christmas. What was a priority was to bring the Safe Streets Act to push the political hot button to be able to tell people: "We did what we said we would do. We got the squeegee kids off the street."

They brought this bill in early, so we've had fair bit of debate on it. We even had public hearings. We had a day's public hearings on the Safe Streets Act. I was at the committee when we had the hearings. Given the fact that we've got an omnibus sledgehammer bill on municipal amalgamation that was brought in I think just this week, and the government would like it passed by Christmas—shades of Bill 26, brought in two weeks before Christmas and they wanted it passed before the Christmas recess—I wonder whether or not we're going to have public hearings on that omnibus bill on municipal amalgamation. The government's priority? The Safe Streets Act, brought in in lots of time to have what this government would consider adequate public hearings.

**2110**

I remember the days when we used to go out on the road for a couple of weeks, having public hearings on pieces of legislation which were considered to be important by the government, but now it's really something if the government will have a day of public hearings, which they did on the safe streets bill.

Let me tell you what people said in this one day of public hearings on the safe streets bill, on this issue of getting squeegee kids off the streets. Let me give you some of the quotes. I jotted down some of the quotes that were made by various presenters. Obviously with the time left to us I can't go into chapter and verse of what 13 presenters said about this bill, 10 of whom were in opposition to the bill. I wonder whether the concerns they raised will be given any consideration at all by the members of the government, because they certainly weren't given any consideration at all by the members of the committee that heard those same presentations.

I'm reaching the point where I wonder if there was any point in having public hearings. Is there still a point in giving people a voice even though the government is not going to look at the merits of its legislation and reflect upon the voices that were raised in opposition? When 10 of 13 presenters say that this is a bad bill, and the government merely brings it back into the House for third reading as they have done this evening, you do question whether this government is in any way serious about even having one day of public hearings. But we had them and we should, I guess, be grateful for that token opportunity for the poor in this province to have some voice.

Here is what we heard from people who presented. We heard them say "the Ontario government"—this Ontario government—"that is interested only in representing real people, whom they define as hardworking, tax-paying people." The Throne Speech made that abundantly clear. "This government has worked long and hard to create a fear of poor people." And that's exactly what they've done. If this government can't find a hot button that is going to work for them appropriately or fully enough, they press that button even harder. They stir the pot. That's what they've done with squeegee kids. If people aren't sufficiently alarmed about squeegee kids, if the member for St Paul's didn't hear about it on the campaign trail, we'll make sure people know how they should be afraid of squeegee kids. So they worked long and hard to create a fear of poor people.

We heard people say that this bill "would do nothing except to criminalize poverty." We heard people say that this bill was "not condemning the conduct but condemning the person." Because after all, how threatening is a squeegee kid, as our leader said, who comes armed with a squeegee and whose attack is against a windshield? Is that really the ultimate in urban violence that this government wants to address, somebody armed with a squeegee, attacking a windshield? No. Because this isn't about the conduct, this isn't about the threat that squeegee kids pose to individuals; this is about condemning a person, a person this government wants people to fear so that they will be able to take credit for having made our streets safe by sweeping squeegee kids off the streets.

We heard people say that this government ignores the causes of poverty, that they want to simply hide the reality of poverty. As we heard the National Anti-Poverty Organization say: "None of us believes that the presence of beggars in our community is a good thing. None of us wants to see 'aggressive panhandlers.'" But the solution of those who see these as being real people, who don't believe that real people are solely the hard-working, tax-paying persons this government wants to address, people who see squeegee kids and panhandlers and people who receive welfare as being real people, want to take a different approach to dealing with aggressive panhandling and squeegee kids.

Some of us would like to address the realities, such as the realities of children in poverty because the squeegee kids began life and continued their life in most cases as

children in poverty. Yet this Premier wants to deny the reports that show how poverty in Ontario is increasing: "No, no, wrong statistics, wrong report. Use the Fraser Institute report. That tells you what poverty in Canada for children is really all about."

This is a government that doesn't want to deal with homelessness. They'd rather attack the homeless than deal with homelessness. Seventy-six per cent of the squeegee kids, who are the focus of this bill, are homeless. They have no place to go. They may be able to go to a shelter. Some of them get into a shelter. Others have no place at all to go and they will not have any place to go after the safe streets bill receives its third reading.

This is a government that doesn't want to do anything about addressing the real needs of children who need support in school if they're going to be able to learn and be successful. I hope people understand that 85% of the squeegee kids that this bill is attacking do not have a high school education. I suppose this government will say: "That's their fault. This is a province that is well-to-do. We have schools. They could have gone to school. They could have completed their high school education. It's their fault." If you don't pull yourselves up by the bootstraps then you're to blame.

*Interjection.*

**Mrs McLeod:** I would invite people, including this member for Durham, who I think might actually understand what special-needs kids actually require if they're going to learn—he might understand that some of the squeegee kids have come out of abusive homes. Do you think abused kids are going to be able to learn in school without some additional support? I'd be prepared to bet that if you could do an assessment on squeegee kids, you would find out that a fair number of them have learning disabilities that aren't being addressed in our schools.

What's this government's response to the lack of educational supports so that kids with difficulties can learn? This government's response is to cut special education funding. They'll say, "Oh no, it's not true." Come to my riding, where education is also a priority, and you'll find that the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board is being funded for only 50% of the students, the young people, the children who need special education support. That's not by the board's definition. That's by the Ministry of Education's definition. Fifty per cent of the kids who have been approved for special education support get that support.

I'm going to run out of time to talk about all the issues that this government refuses to make a priority. I'm going to run out of time to talk about the fact that this bill doesn't do much for safety in our communities when, as we heard at the committee, there are actually fewer police on our streets to enforce the bill than there were before the Mike Harris Tories came into office.

There's not going to be time to address the fact that these kids are going to end up in jail because they don't have money to pay fines. What good does that do for society? If the government wants to deal only with dollars, what good does it do for efficiency? The govern-

ment won't address any of these issues. It just wants to push hot buttons, and it's done it again.

**Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill):** I want to begin by addressing some of the comments from the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, who asked why we are doing this. On page 31 of our Blueprint it says: "Aggressive panhandling: Whether you live in the city or are just visiting, you have the right to walk down the street or go to public places without being harassed or intimidated by aggressive panhandlers." Why are we doing it? It was in our Blueprint. Promises made, promises kept. What a novel idea.

I want to also address what this bill is and what it isn't. I had the pleasure of attending the justice and social policy committee and hearing some of the presenters. It's interesting that some of the members have selective hearing and they only pick out certain parts of what the presenters said.

I want to quote from one presenter, Margaret Knowles from Yonge Bloor Bay Association, who said that the legislation is not about the homeless and the poor. "It's got to do with activity that is threatening and intimidating" to people. She said, "Give us some relief." The residents in Yorkville are seniors and they are afraid. I believe that is St Paul's riding. The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan mentioned that the member for St Paul's didn't hear any concerns about the squeegees in the riding, so obviously someone wasn't listening.

I also want to talk a little bit about the comments that are made about the squeegee kids and saying that they are kids.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is this Margaret Knowles the manager of Holt Renfrew, the high-end company that sells products to rich people?

**The Deputy Speaker:** That's not a point of order.

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**Mrs Molinari:** Also, another presenter, Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman, talked about some statistics they had done. Of 331 squeegee people, the 101 females were 15 to 41 years old and the 230 males were from 16 to 60 years old. He also said they come from all over Canada, from Quebec, the US and Europe. They're from all over. They come to Toronto, to Ontario, to panhandle aggressively.

Bill 8 is An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation—aggressive solicitation. This is a person who engages in one or more of the following activities: "threatening the person solicited with physical harm"; "obstructing the path of the person solicited during the solicitation"—it lists six. I think the members opposite should read the bill and get further familiar with it. Another one is "continuing to solicit a person in a persistent manner after the person has responded negatively to the solicitation."

This is about safe streets. I want to comment on some of the issues that the member for Trinity-Spadina raised. He talked about speaking from the heart, and then he went on to say that this was a waste of time. Safety in our streets is not a waste of time, and that's from the heart.

So if he's talking from the heart, it amazes me how he can call this a waste of time.

The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London talked about concern about people's lives. That's what this is: We're concerned about people's lives. We're concerned about the safety of people in the streets being aggressively accosted by panhandlers. This is not about the poor. It's not about the homeless. It's about safety in the streets.

I've had people come to my constituency office and talk to me about their concerns about being safe. They're happy about this bill, that finally there's a government that is doing something to protect the innocent. That's what this bill will do.

The government spends millions of dollars every year on job training for youth and adults, on housing and housing support, and on services for people who are mentally ill. It disturbs me when I hear the opposition exploiting special needs and the disabled to promote their own political agenda. This is not about the disabled. This is about safety in our streets. I hope that the members opposite will recognize that.

**Mr O'Toole:** I just want to commend the previous speaker for doing such a fine job of addressing the issues and really bringing them into our own lives and our own living rooms. We could address some of the more specific things the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan said, but I think Tina has addressed them very well.

I do want to drive it into a little higher level of discussion, if I may have the attention of the other side. Our Attorney General and Solicitor General were in Vancouver the past week and they were challenging Anne McLellan and the federal government to look at the Young Offenders Act, the fundamentals of why we're trying to address this aggressiveness and swarming and the general accepted behaviour in students and young people today. That's the particular issue that I'm talking about here.

There needs to be leadership at the federal level and with the Young Offenders Act and the get-out-of-jail-free parole system. It's clear that the people who set the laws—of course, the provincial courts really just carry out to a large extent the laws. Our minister tried to appeal to the Liberal approach to justice and failed. In fact, they were denied access to appear before the legislative committee in Ottawa. They were denied access when Ontario—

**Interjection:** Arrogance.

**Mr O'Toole:** It's Liberal arrogance. It's demonstrated right there for you. What it says to me as a taxpayer here is that for too long—I won't use the dreaded phrase "the lost decade," because it's been overused, but I will use this reference: It's nice to portray yourself as being kind-hearted and compassionate, but I think it purely is not caring about society and showing the leadership that there are consequences, results or actions or decisions for your actions. So there are consequences for our actions in society.

We are doing a disservice to our young people, starting with the Young Offenders Act, that there aren't any consequences for your actions, whether it's deliberately intimidating an elderly person coming to Toronto in their car. If that ever infiltrated into my riding of Durham, and I think of the people in Tyrone and Inniskillin and Blackstock, to name but three—I always like that, because Sean Conway does that. It's a little bit of a footnote.

I think the bill is long overdue. Whether it has far-reaching implications for people is really a function of how well they're fitting into society. Clearly, it's not acceptable to be panhandling. That's not what we want for our children. We want them to recognize that learning and contributing to society should be rewarded. That isn't a future for anyone of any age.

The message that I'm trying to leave is, whatever type of spin the Liberals want to say, we want to reward structure and effort. We want our young people to realize that society—in the society that my generation grew up in, that wasn't even an issue. What's gone wrong? The lost decade—I think the young people in our streets have lost hope because they know that if they work they're going to be taxed to death by Paul Martin.

The CPP—I was reading an article today. The Canada Pension Plan now—this is the argument—is actually going to negatively affect young people working in the hospitality industry, the lowest-paid people. Their increases in CPP pensions, because of Paul Martin and the federal Liberal tax-grab-and-spend, are going to be paying about 63% more by the year 2002. These are the very lowest-income people. Yet if I look at our policy on tax, it is to cut taxes. In fact, the lowest-income group should have their taxes eliminated for families under 20, especially single families.

Start to make it clear to everyone that crime won't be tolerated. Now, it should demand kind of a humanistic approach here in the court systems and in whatever services are available to young people. Clearly, we all want to get them back on track, but first you've got to tell them: "You're doing something wrong. This doesn't work. That's not a proper way of life."

There may be other skills. Maybe the school system failed them. Maybe their family failed them. But we've got to rescue those people. We've been trying. We've been listening to Mel Lastman, to the chief of police. We've been listening to the complaints from small business people who have had their street corners littered, who are having their customers intimidated. We've heard it from all sectors and all age groups, whether it's young women coming to work or young men walking the streets. Where do you draw the line, Mr Speaker? I'm appealing to you to somehow help me.

The Liberals are soft on crime. They don't get it. Anne McLellan had to take over. Allan Rock had gone so far off the map, the radar screen, they had to put in Anne McLellan. I read her bio, not a very extensive bio, but

she seemed to have a pretty solid grasp. But I think it's gotten beyond her. The Liberal agenda is driving it now that there are no consequences for your actions in our criminal justice system. That's the message that's out today.

I've heard it said on the other side of the House that this is acceptable behaviour. That's their statement about our society and our streets. It's coming to your community soon, Steve from St. Thomas. If you think that's acceptable behaviour, stand up and tell the people of Ontario that you agree with it. That's what you've told them and that's what I'm putting on the record tonight. Because I listened and, clearly, you don't get the message.

Where do you draw the line? You draw the line by first cautioning them and then you've got to let them know that there are some other things that you could be doing that are more meaningful, and are more value-added in life.

The Attorney General says when he was in Vancouver they tried to get them to lower the age in the Young Offenders Act so that people would be held accountable for violent, repeat crimes—rape and those kind of activities. I believe the people of this country want those people held accountable. Now there isn't capital punishment, so when they're finally stopped, they will finally stop committing the crimes. I believe that this government and this plan is just part of a whole strategy of making people responsible for their actions in society, and their imposition into other people's lives by causing violence, whether it's break-ins or squeegee kids. Where do you draw the line? I believe it's a fundamental value system.

While saying this, I still believe there are people in need in society. We think the solution to this is to have a strong economy where there are jobs for them to go to, real jobs where they're contributing and they feel valued in society. I don't believe that it's complimenting any human being to say it's OK to be a squeegee kid. I think human beings are better than that. I'll hold out a challenge to them to have a healthy economy. They deserve an opportunity for a job, to participate in this economy.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm saving two seconds for anyone else.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Further debate?

Mr Martiniuk has moved third reading of Bill 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

**Mr Sergio:** Mr Speaker, I believe there is unanimous consent for a deferral on the vote.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there consent? Agreed? It is agreed.

It being 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

*The House adjourned at 2133.*

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