



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 19 April 2000

Mercredi 19 avril 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 April 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 avril 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HUBERT DELANEY

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): On Friday, April 7, my wife and I had the pleasure of attending a dinner and roast in honour of Hubert Delaney. The community of Avonmore paid tribute to Hubert for the number of years he has made contributions to our community.

Hubert was a businessman in north Stormont for close to half a century, but still found the time and energy to volunteer. Hubert himself has said, "Volunteering is the most fulfilling hobby you can undertake." He has always lived up to that statement and tirelessly worked in his drive to help others. His numerous and diverse accomplishments all serve to illustrate his deep commitment to volunteerism.

Many communities have benefited from Hubert's spirit of volunteerism. He has worked for the Canadian Cancer Society, driving and transporting patients to Ottawa for treatment. He has also been chair of the North Stormont Heart and Stroke Association. He has participated in the Avonmore Community Athletic Association and was on the executive of the Roxborough Agricultural Society.

Hubert has been a devoted member of Our Lady of Angels parish since 1954 and is a fourth-degree member of the Knights of Columbus. In 1996, his commitment to his faith paid off and he was awarded an Order of Merit from the Roman Catholic diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall.

Hubert and his wife have definitely made a difference in our community of Avonmore and surrounding area. He's a true example of old-fashioned values and should serve as an inspiration to us all.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): The residents of Northumberland county have once again proven they are number one in reducing waste. The proof is in the pudding, since Northumberland county received the silver award Monday evening at the Recycling Council of Ontario's Waste Minimization Awards. This is the fifth year in a row that Northumberland county has

received an award from the recycling council. I'm proud to note that Hope township, in west Northumberland, was also honoured at this event when they received the gold award for waste reduction.

Both the county and Hope township received these awards because they diverted a significant percentage of municipal waste from landfill sites. In 1999, only 14,000 tonnes of residential waste was buried in local landfill sites, down from 17,000 in 1998.

The county of Northumberland uses a wet-dry recycling system. Wet wastes are transported to landfill, and dry products are sent to a material recovery facility. This has contributed to a larger percentage of waste being recycled, with therefore less impact on our environment.

It is indeed fitting that they were honoured in the week of Earth Day. This Saturday, Earth Day, is a good time for everyone to follow in the footsteps of Northumberland by making a greater commitment to reducing residential waste.

I commend the residents of Northumberland county for making an outstanding effort to reduce waste, and I hope other communities will take inspiration from our eco example.

OSTEOPOROSIS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Here is another example of how the Ministry of Health fools around with the lives of women suffering from osteoporosis. The ministry's own guidelines identify a number of osteoporosis medications as great therapy. For example, the guidelines identify Evista as a first-line osteoporosis treatment option and a primary prevention option, yet it is not available on the formulary.

There is growing concern among doctors and patients that this significant issue is not being addressed by these bureaucrats. Recent investments in this area, such as the provincial hip registry for \$2 million, while laudable, seem to place dollars at the wrong end. Preventing hip and wrist fractures is far more cost-effective than treating them or tracking them after the fact. In 1996, Ontario spent \$394 million on osteoporosis fractures, 98% of these dollars going to acute and long-term care. Given that these therapies, such as Evista, cost only \$570 per patient per year, an investment in prevention of fractures rather than costly treatment of fractures makes sense both from a human and cost factor.

We are today calling on the Minister of Health to take action, provide our women with access to Evista in order

to lessen their pain and at the same time save taxpayers' money now.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): With the flourish of accusations being hurled by the opposition and the press that the Harris government is destroying our education system, I am pleased to acknowledge the significant decisions made by the two school boards in York region.

The York Catholic District School Board and the York Region District School Board committed \$151 million and \$350 million respectively to build or expand schools within York region. The boards' decisions reflect a fundamental shift in the way the new capital funding model allows boards the autonomy to plan for growth.

This year, not only are new school facilities slated throughout York region but additions to existing schools as well. Thornhill schools have directly benefited with additions to St Joseph the Worker Catholic Elementary School, St Rene Goupil, Glen Shields Public School and Thornlea secondary. These large, new and aggressive capital projects are the result of this government's changes to the capital funding model facilitating faster school construction periods. The new spaces will reflect our commitment to fewer students being taught in portables and will help to ensure an enhanced learning environment for students in our thriving region.

Both boards consistently emphasize the needs of the students as a priority in all their decisions. With this flexibility in capital allocation, they are able to focus on the needs of the students as the fundamental focus.

INDIAN ARRIVAL AND HERITAGE MONTH

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Wednesday, April 26, is the launch of Indian Arrival and Heritage Month 2000. This celebration is to commemorate the arrival to the Americas of the peoples and heritage of the Indian subcontinent.

Indian Arrival and Heritage is a month-long celebration in May where groups throughout Canada, the United States and the Caribbean mark the day in history. May 5, 1838, is the date when peoples from the Indian subcontinent left their homelands for foreign shores.

Ontario's history is woven by stories, experiences, legacies and traditions of peoples from all around the world. The Indian community has grown to over three million in the Americas, with approximately 500,000 in Canada. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Indo-Canadian community all the best in their celebrations.

I invite all the members of the Legislative Assembly to participate in the launching of these celebrations on April 26 in the rotunda at Toronto city hall. Again, I want to take the opportunity to wish the Indo-Canadian community all the best in their celebrations.

1340

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Spring is here and summer is just around the corner. Unfortunately, so is smog. Smog kills at least 1,800 people in Ontario each year. It causes more than one quarter of all summer hospital admissions for breathing problems and substantial increases in respiratory emergencies for infants.

It hit home personally last winter when my little grandson, James, had a terrible asthma attack which hospitalized him for a week. I can't tell you how worried his mother, father and I are, looking toward more smog this summer.

Those health effects pose a burden on the health care system through increased emergency room visits and increased hospital admissions. Regrettably, this scenario will likely be a repeat of previous years.

We can, however, take concrete steps to avert this health and environmental disaster. Yesterday, my colleague Shelley Martel asked the Minister of the Environment to ensure that the conversion of Lakeview generating station from coal to natural gas be made a condition of sale. The minister spoke platitudes about the environment but did not answer her question about Lakeview.

This generating station is the single largest polluter in the GTA. According to Jack Gibbons of the Ontario Clean Air Alliance, Lakeview operating at 80% capacity creates a smog equivalent to roughly one million cars. I would ask the minister to get on this and make the announcement today.

DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBRIDGE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I proudly stand in the House today to announce the decision by Toyota manufacturing to build the first Lexus vehicle outside of Japan at the Toyota motor manufacturing plant located in my riding of Cambridge.

This is a major achievement for the employees at the Cambridge plant. The Lexus line is the crown jewel of the Toyota family of families. Toyota will begin building the Lexus RX 300 sports utility vehicle to meet the demand as the biggest-selling vehicle in the Lexus line-up. This \$650-million investment is expected to create 300 new jobs over and above the 2,700 jobs at present.

Toyota has chosen its Cambridge plant to produce this world-class luxury model, proving business is booming in Cambridge and that Ontario is the best place to invest.

The Toyota Cambridge plant has already been recognized with the prestigious Harbour award for efficiency and a number of J.D. Power awards for quality. I congratulate each and every individual at the Cambridge plant for their commitment to excellence and quality. Ontario is justifiably proud of your achievements. Ontario companies are taking on the world and winning.

PASSOVER

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): Tonight, members of the Jewish faith from around the world will begin the celebration of Passover. Passover is the Jewish holiday that celebrates and memorializes the freedom of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and always begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan.

The traditional Passover Seder, or ceremonial meal, not only symbolizes the feast of freedom from slavery; it also represents a reminder of gratitude for maintaining faith in one's belief.

The youngest person at the Seder table traditionally asks four questions, which gives a complete overview of the story of Passover. There is also a reference to four children representing different methods of reading the Passover story to people with different types of personal attributes. One child is wise, another is slow, still another is wicked, and the final one is silent. The reciting of the story of Passover to match the different attributes of various people is also a reflection of the flexibility inherent in freedom, as opposed to the rigidity of slavery.

Passover is also celebrated by the eating of matzoh, also known as the bread of affliction. This symbolizes the unleavened bread that the Israelites made in haste as they fled the tyranny of Egypt. Although these events took place over 3,000 years ago, as told in the biblical Book of Exodus, the lessons learned are as relevant today as they were then.

We extend a hearty Hag Samaech to all members of the Jewish community as they celebrate at this Passover festival season.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND ELECTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise today to offer my congratulations to another common sense team. As you all know, the Conservatives of Prince Edward Island, under the leadership of Premier Pat Binns, won the election on Monday.

Premier Binns and the Conservatives of PEI have presided over almost four years of record growth and prosperity in their province. The Premier and his team campaigned on their record of education reform and their plan for more changes to improve schooling for the province's children. They have also invested in health care, strengthening the province's most vital public service.

The Conservatives of PEI offered their people a tax cut so that they too could spend, save and invest more of their own money—clearly a page out of our successful plan.

Premier Binns asked the people of PEI for another mandate to keep moving their province forward with his blueprint for renewal. The people clearly responded to the message. For the first time since 1912, back-to-back Conservative majority governments have been elected in PEI.

On behalf of my colleagues in our Ontario PC caucus, I extend my congratulations to Premier Binns and his

caucus for their Prince Edward Island victory, and I wish them well in the months and years ahead. Clearly, the people of PEI have spoken. More importantly, they have done the right thing.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg leave to inform the House that today the Clerk received the sixth report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we get to introduction of bills, in the west members' gallery is the former member for Hamilton Mountain, Trevor Pettit, who was a member of the last Legislature. Would the members join in welcoming Mr Pettit.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think all members of the House would want to know that both sides of the public galleries today are graced by school groups from my riding, Rosedale Junior public school and St Josephs College school.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REPLICA FIREARMS REGULATION
AND PROTECTION ACT, 2000LOI DE 2000 SUR LA
RÉGLEMENTATION ET LA PROTECTION
À L'ÉGARD DES RÉPLIQUES
D'ARMES À FEU

Mr Bryant moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to protect the public by regulating the sale of replicas of firearms / Projet de loi 67, Loi visant à protéger le public en réglementant la vente des répliques d'armes à feu.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the member have a short statement?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This bill prohibits the sale or purchase of a replica firearm unless the purchaser is at least 18 years old and provides certain documentation, the seller has received confirmation that the purchaser has not been found guilty of a criminal offence, and there are no criminal charges pending against the purchaser. The bill requires the seller of such

replicas to maintain a record of each sale for a period of five years.

The Speaker: I thank the member. Introduction of bills?

Mr Bryant: Point of order, Mr Speaker: Given the importance of this bill, and given that the Premier has already expressed his support—the Premier has had the bill for 24 hours—I seek unanimous consent to give second and third reading to this bill right now.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week we learned that you broke your promise on providing timely cancer care in Ontario. This week we'd like to ask you about the promise you made a year and a half ago that no Toronto woman would ever have to endure a three-hour ambulance ride to deliver her baby in another hospital. Minister, could you please tell us, how is that promise going?

1350

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to go back to the cancer care issue and just let you know, because there was no broken promise, as you very well know, that our government has undertaken steps on an ongoing basis to ensure that the needs of cancer patients in this province are addressed. In fact, this morning I launched a \$3.8-million genetic screening program to detect the risk of hereditary breast, ovarian and colon cancer. I can tell you that this will have a tremendous impact in the saving of lives among the women and the men of this province, who will have the opportunity to have the genetic testing if they have a history of this in their families.

We are moving forward. We are the only province in Canada to set up this program and an advisory—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the Minister of Health's time is up. Supplementary.

Mrs Papatello: I'd like you to answer this question. I'm going to tell you about Rachel Ross. Rachel Ross is one of 12 mothers from Toronto—she's from Caledon East—flown to the Ottawa General Hospital in the last 12 months to deliver babies. Rachel was the first-time mother of twins. She went into labour after 26 weeks of pregnancy on March 17. That was last month. First, she went to Brampton Memorial. She was told there were no neonatal beds available in Toronto or Hamilton. She had to make a choice: Ottawa or Windsor. She chose Ottawa because she has some family there. Then she was told she would have to go by land ambulance, but the doctor wouldn't allow the five-hour drive there. After several delays she was airlifted by helicopter and told that an

obstetrician and paediatrician had to go with her. There was no doctor on that helicopter ride to Ottawa. Her husband wasn't allowed to fly with her; he had to buy his own airline ticket.

Could you please explain how today in Ontario you could possibly let this happen to expectant mothers?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member knows, we have been expanding the system in the province to ensure that these deliveries can be delivered as close to home as possible. We have put the program forward to you where we are expanding the capacity within the system, and that is ongoing and that is happening. Any decisions that are made concerning these issues are clinical decisions that are made by physicians who are in the best position to know what is going to be the most appropriate level of care that is going to be required for patients they're dealing with.

Mrs Papatello: Minister, here's what you said on December 17, 1998: You vowed no other women would be turned away and sent to another city. That was your promise. In this case, the doctor said the twins were ready to be moved back to Toronto in a week. They spent two weeks at the Ottawa General because there were no neonatal beds available in the largest city in the nation. As the mom, she was out of the hospital after four days. She stayed two weeks in Ottawa. She was given a one-way ticket to Ottawa and had to find her own way home when it was time to come home.

Minister, please explain to Rachel Ross and every other expectant mother in this province how you could allow this to happen in the province today after the promises you made a year and a half ago.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member might be pleased to know that unfortunately this was a problem that existed under your government and under the NDP. For more than 10 years in the province we have not had enough NICU beds—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order. Member for Windsor West, come to order. You can't ask a question and then yell at the minister when she's trying to answer it.

I will say this: When I have to stand up, it gives the cabinet ministers a lot of time to answer, notes get sent in. It's in your interest to let them answer the question, because quite frankly, if we need to stand here, we will do that. You can't ask a question and then yell at the minister when she's trying to reply.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I say to the member for Windsor West, this is your last warning. We can't continue to go on. You've got the question asked and you cannot shout at the minister after you've asked the question. This is your last warning.

Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I began to say, although the previous two governments chose not to address the issue, our government acknowledged that there was a need to increase access to neonatal intensive care services.

Presently, in the city of Toronto, neonatal intensive care beds are available at three hospitals. We are working to expand the capacity at these hospitals: Women's College, Mount Sinai and the Hospital for Sick Children.

There was \$10 million annually set aside to fund 18 new bassinets at these hospitals; 14 are already up and running, with the others to come on board shortly. There was an additional \$4.1 million put aside for equipment purchases, training and minor renovations. We are fast-tracking 14 additional beds at the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health's time is up.

GAMING FACILITIES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question, I was going to say for the Deputy Premier, but it's for the heir apparent, the Chair of Management Board. Your government is very good, I must say to the Chair of Management Board, at orchestrating press conferences. You have them at the SkyDome, where the Premier is putting the boots to the people on welfare. You have them in the tops of these big towers of business whenever you want to announce something. But you forgot to have a big press conference when you were announcing a huge expansion of gambling in Ontario. In fact, you had to look in the Ontario Gazette. I don't think this is on many coffee tables in Ontario or required reading—maybe at the Albany Club.

Minister, why is it you did not make any huge announcement about a very significant regulatory change made to convert racetracks in Ontario to full-blown casinos complete with all the bells and whistles that go with casinos in this province?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): It's quite simple. The reason is that there's no change to our policy. We've merged, for operational efficiencies, the Ontario Casino Corp with the Ontario Lottery Corp. We also have had to bring into line the regulations around that change so that it's legal.

If we hadn't brought in clarification to our existing policy that no means no unless you have a council resolution and a referendum for an expansion to gaming, the Liberals in their newsletter, the Toronto Star, would have been screaming that we had allowed for an expansion of gaming at racetracks, because now the Ontario Lottery Corp, which racetracks were under, is merged with the Ontario Casino Corp.

What we've done in the regulations is make it quite clear that there's no expansion unless you have a council resolution and a referendum. That's closing the door, not expanding it unregulated or unchecked without the support of the local community.

Mr Bradley: In fact, your plan all along, Mr Minister—you know this as well as I do—when you got the boots put to the 44 casinos by municipalities across Ontario who held referendums and said, "No, we don't want these new Mike Harris gambling halls," when the boots were put to that, you beat a retreat. But I think a lot

of people in this province knew that you were going to try to slip new casinos in the back door by having established gambling places, called racetracks, and then putting a full casino in there.

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Now, let me get to a referendum. I'm glad the Minister of Education mentioned a referendum, because they had one in Toronto which said they didn't want the slot machines. What happened? You imposed 1,700 slot machines at the Woodbine Racetrack. How can anybody believe you when you talk about a referendum having any influence at all on your policy when you imposed 1,700 slot machines in the Woodbine Racetrack against the will of the people in the area expressed in a municipal referendum?

Hon Mr Hodgson: This initiative is in response to making sure that if gaming takes in place in Ontario, it is done in a regulated and responsible manner. We cancelled the three-day casinos, which the Liberal Party thought were fine but the police had concerns about; the charities had concerns about how you regulate and supervise and make sure that minors don't have access to gaming in this province.

The issue of slot machines in racetracks was asked for by the horse industry of Ontario. It went before this House's committee in 1996. From that all-party committee, there's a quote on October 22, 1996, by one Jim Bradley agreeing that racetracks are established gaming facilities, that a racetrack is a controlled environment in terms of gaming activities. You were in support of it then. Now you're trying to let on that this is some new initiative.

1400

Mr Bradley: I tell the minister, he can bring in all the baffle-gab he wants. Everybody in this province knows that your real plan—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member take his seat. Order. Government members, come to order so the question can be asked. We ask the opposition to be quiet for the answers. We also ask the government benches to be quiet when the members are asking the question. It's only fair on both sides.

Mr Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I tell the minister that's a huge leap of faith saying that somebody wants casinos in all of these racetracks in Ontario, and that's exactly where you're heading. You can make all the denials you want. Your real policy is to bleed as much money as possible—hundreds of millions of dollars—from desperate, vulnerable and often addicted people in this province so that you can fill your coffers so you don't have to tax the people who go to the Albany Club, the richest people in this province. That's what this is really about.

I ask you now, how can people have faith in any referendum you're going to have when the Minister of Municipal Affairs is the one who dictates or approves what's going to be in any referendum in this province? Obviously you're going to rig the question so you get the

answer you want, so you'll get all of the revenues bled from people who are desperate, bled from people who are vulnerable and addicted in the province. Shame on you and your government.

Hon Mr Hodgson: That's a nice speech. It's unfortunate that the facts are different, but I understand you're not interested in the facts.

The facts are that we closed the three-day roving casinos that you thought were quite acceptable, which the police had problems with in terms of controlling and regulating; charities had problems with them. We brought in gaming facilities which are regulated and well-established. Not only was Jim Bradley in 1996 in favour of this initiative at the racetracks, but in August 1998 in Niagara Falls one Dalton McGuinty said, "I don't have a concern with slot machines going into existing horse racing institutions."

The reason why is that it's common sense. They've had gaming at these facilities forever. They're not allowed to expand as charity casinos unless they have a referendum, like any other community in Ontario. That has been our policy. We've closed the door on that being brought in quietly by bringing in a regulation governing the merger of the Ontario Lottery Corp with the Ontario Casino Corp.

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. On Monday I asked the minister about a little boy in the city of Dryden. His name is Cody Saunders. He's four years old. He has very serious dysentery-like symptoms. He now weighs less than his two-year-old brother. His mother tried to get him an appointment with a doctor on March 17—no appointment for two months. She took him to the emergency room—no doctor. A week later she took him to the emergency room—no doctor. This family has finally had to take this four-year-old boy out of the province of Ontario. They had to take him four hours down the highway to Winnipeg just to get an appointment with a doctor.

While you negotiate with the Ontario Medical Association, while you have the authority and the capacity now to ensure that the doctor is in for all the patients in the province and that nurse practitioners and nurses are in, what are you doing and what have you done in situations like poor little Cody's?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Our government has recognized that there is a need to ensure that we have the appropriate distribution and supply of physicians in the province of Ontario. As you know, we originally asked Dr McKendry to take all of the information available, and he has reported. As a result of his report, we have expanded the number of foreign-trained doctors into Ontario. We are making available spaces within our program here for people who want to return from the United States. We

have expanded the number of nurse practitioners. In fact, it was our government in 1998 that made it possible for legislative changes to take place, and we are presently funding approximately 226 nurse practitioners, although I know there are more practising in the province.

We recognize that people need—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

Mr Hampton: Minister, your government has been in charge now for five years, and for five years the situation has gotten worse and worse and worse. I could take you to the city of Kenora, where the same situation prevails, or I could take you to literally dozens of communities across this province. The fact of the matter is, you're negotiating with the doctors, with the Ontario Medical Association right now. For five years, you and your Premier have said that you believe in primary health care reform; you believe in a system where doctors would have a roster of patients, where they would be available full-time; where nurse practitioners would be available; where nurses would be available. But for five years, nothing has happened, and this little boy has to go outside the province just to see a physician.

You are negotiating with the OMA right now. What is going to come out of the Ontario Medical Association negotiations that's going to help this little boy and literally hundreds of thousands of patients across this province? Are you going to do anything, or simply blame governments of the past?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would remind the leader of the third party that it was unfortunately his government that cut medical school enrolment by 10%. We, of course, have been moving forward. I am pleased to report that the number of specialists in Ontario has increased since 1995 by 450. We have recruited 115 specialists for designated underserviced areas in northern Ontario. According to CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, the total number of active physicians in Ontario has increased by over 260 since 1997. So certainly there are increased numbers of physicians in the province, there are more in northern Ontario, and there continues to be more that we need to do.

We have moved forward. We did introduce the primary care pilots. We started with four and we have now expanded to seven. We want to continue to evaluate and make those available to all people.

The Speaker: I'm afraid the Minister of Health's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Let me get back to real people in real communities. Two doctors have left Dryden in the last year, two more are leaving this year. If you go down the highway to Kenora, a similar situation: More physicians are leaving.

Minister, this comes back to the choices you have to make as Minister of Health. We've seen how you've mismanaged the system. You cut \$800 million from hospitals. You discover you made a mistake so you put \$600 million back in. You boast about laying off nurses—the Premier calls them Hula Hoop workers—

then you discover you can't run the health system without them, so you start rehiring nurses.

Right now you've got two choices: You can continue to go down the road that you're on, which leads you to a Ralph Klein style of privatized health care, or you can have a serious set of negotiations with the doctors and begin to change in a serious way the delivery of primary health, the access to nurses, nurse practitioners and doctors. It's in your hands right now. Are you going to keep on mismanaging the system until we have more of these or are you going to take the doctors on and change the system?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has undertaken the modernization and the strengthening of this health system. I have said on many occasions that we were the first government to do so and the last province in all of Canada.

I would just remind the leader of the third party that in the last full year of your government there were 345 doctors who left Ontario. In 1997, that rate had been reduced by a third. It was your government that reduced entrants to medical schools by 10% and reduced post-graduate training positions by 10%. It was your government that saw the greatest decline in nursing supply: It went down 8.9% from 1993 to 1995. We are having to deal with the consequences of your actions, and that's why we're moving forward to ensure there are appropriate physicians everywhere in the province and that we hire 12,000 additional nurses.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services. I understand the minister made a visit to Penetanguishene.

From the beginning, your government has not been completely open with the people of Ontario about your megajails. Initially you said nothing about deals you were hatching with Corrections Corp of America, a notorious outfit in terms of the violence and escapes in their prisons. Your predecessor, Mr Runciman, announced that the government was scrapping privatization plans. He agreed there were just too many unanswered questions. Your government promised communities that prisons would remain public.

Last week my colleague put forward a private member's bill to do just that. You refused to support it. Your government has talked out of both sides of its mouth. Last night the people of Penetanguishene sent you a message loud and clear. They joined the majority of Ontarians saying nobody should profit from crime: not the person who commits the crime nor corporations that try to profit. Are you going to live up to your promises or are you going to sell the people of Penetanguishene out? Which is it?

1410

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I'll tell the leader of the third party what we're going to do. We're going to make sure we have a

correctional system in this province that is delivering results; we're going to ensure that there's a correctional system in this province that the taxpayers of this province can afford to fund; we're going to ensure that the correctional system in this province has standards and levels of accountability—all of which you refused to do when you were in government, sir.

Mr Hampton: I want to talk about these tough standards. This is a government that can't even manage to go out there and inspect the nursing homes on a regular basis, and now you're going to go out there and tell people that you're going to hold accountable corporations that have a notorious record in the United States? Look at the record of some of these companies: 93% of the prison escapes in the United States since 1995 have happened from the jails of the corporations you're talking to. And now Corrections Corp of America and Wackenhut, two of the companies you've been talking to, are going belly-up in the United States. They can't make the bottom line, never mind assure communities of standards.

Minister, will you listen to the people and what they're trying to tell you? No one should profit from crime—not the person who commits the crime and not these notorious outfits like Wackenhut and Corrections Corp of US which have a terrible record there. What's it going to be? Are you going to let these people profit from crime? Are you going to sell the people of Penetanguishene out? Are you—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister.

Hon Mr Sampson: To the leader of the third party, I am quite aware of the fact that you have had some difficulty with numbers as a government. We had five years where you had big difficulties with numbers, and it cost the taxpayers of the province \$50 million.

Let me tell you the challenge here. One day you're standing on your feet saying these corporations are making large profits, and today you're standing on your feet saying they're bankrupt. You can't have it both ways. That's clearly your method of accounting. But I can tell you that what we will have in this province is a correctional system that is producing results and is indeed warranting the word "corrections" in its title.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sampson: You want to talk about escapes? I'm happy to talk about escapes. The escape record from the Ontario correctional system when you were in government was twice as high as it is now. That's the record, that's the fact, and we're going to have fewer escapes.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services as well. Last night at a public meeting that I attended in Penetanguishene you were asked a very direct question by the deputy mayor. The question was: If a private company is selected to operate the correctional facilities, will that company pay taxes like any other business? Your answer was, and I quote, "Yes." According to the deputy mayor, the difference to Penetanguishene would be approximately \$160,000 in lost taxes per year if the company doesn't pay taxes.

Minister, it has come to my attention that Project Turnaround in Oro-Medonte township, run by Encourage Youth Corp, a private company, does not pay taxes like any other business. In fact, they only pay, in lieu of taxes, a fee of \$75 per bed, for a total of \$2,400 per year.

Given this obviously inconsistent tax policy that you're proposing, will you now commit that all private companies which are invited to run the correctional facilities will indeed pay their fair share of taxes like any other business in Ontario and not get a free ride at the expense of our already cash-strapped municipalities?

Hon Mr Sampson: I would say to the member opposite that we believe all corporations and law-abiding citizens in this province should bear their fair share of the tax burden. There might be some dispute between you and I as to what that is. I know on your side of the House you think that should be two or three or four times what it currently is, because that's your view of life.

I stand on the statement I made last night that if private corporations are running correctional facilities, they should pay their fair share of taxes, as any private citizen should pay. But you might want to phone the Corrections Canada folks and ask them whether they're doing that for their federal jurisdiction jails in this province. You might want to make that phone call.

Mr Levac: First of all, they're not privately run, and second of all, you're not committing for your boot camp, which is not paying taxes, so let's do that switch for me, please.

I also want to help you clarify another point from last night's meeting. Last night, in front of hundreds of people who attended the meeting, a meeting that the people of Penetanguishene and Midland were waiting four long months for, Sharon Dionne of CAPS asked if you would follow the lead of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and I might add that the Chair of Management Board indicated they're really interested in casino choice—but not here. Would you agree to Simcoe North having a choice of for-profit, American-style correctional facilities in their own back yard or publicly run facilities which are accountable to the public? They want to make the decision and not have American lobbyists or the backroom boys make the decision for them. Minister, one more chance for you to answer the people of Penetanguishene: Will you let the people of Penetanguishene, in a binding referendum, decide the issue of having a for-profit, private facility or a public facility in their own backyard, yes or no?

Hon Mr Sampson: I spent some time last night explaining to the people who were attending, including the member opposite, that it's not our intention to duplicate here in Ontario the correctional mistakes that US operators have made. We will have a made-in-Ontario solution, as we have a made-in-Ontario solution for Camp Turnaround, which is having tremendous success in changing the lives of young offenders in this province, lowering recidivism rates and doing that at a fair cost. I should say to the honourable member opposite—I hear the heckles from the Liberals across the floor—we know

what you believe in in corrections. To understand what the Liberal view of corrections is, all we have to do is look at your federal cousins—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, continue please.

Hon Mr Sampson: We clearly understand where the Liberals are on corrections policy. Your federal Liberal colleagues, north of the border, who are running the federal corrections system believe we should be letting criminals out of jail. They believe that—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Summer is going to be on us very soon and there are thousands of high school, college and university students who are going to be out looking for work. When you and I were in university, things were a lot different than they are today. We were out looking for summer jobs to help pay for our tuition or just to have a lot of money to spend in the summertime. But these students aren't looking for that. These students are looking not just for some income over the summer, but for some career experience for their futures. Many of these young adults have been calling my constituency office over the last few weeks wondering what we as a government would do to help them find work. What can we do?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I think it's very timely. The members of this House should know that the summer jobs program 2000 was launched about three weeks ago in Etobicoke. At that point in time, we certainly told everyone what our challenge was, and that's 57,000 summer jobs. We're hoping to achieve this target. It's reasonable and we have a lot of response from the public. Actually, it's twice as many jobs as we had in 1995 for summer students, so people are very excited about this. We're spending about \$50.8 million on this summer jobs program, almost triple what the federal government will be spending this summer. I want to say, though, that in Ontario we will be helping 57,000 young people find these summer jobs, and that's twice as many as 1995 for—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid your time is up. Supplementary.

1420

Mr Wettlaufer: What you have said, then, is that this government is prepared to make a very serious investment in our young people. That's good news, but I think what you've also said is that if we had a fair labour market development agreement from the feds, we could do a whole lot more. In effect, I think you also said there are another five ministries, a total of six ministries, participating in the Ontario summer jobs program and that there are a variety of options for young people

seeking summer employment. Many students who want to work are looking for a place to start.

Can you tell us how students, and employers, for that matter, can access the resources you have mentioned?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response, I think most of you should write this down because you all have students. It's 1-888-JOBGROW. That is the number you should be calling, or assisting your young people in calling. What does this do? It actually helps young people match up with employers, or vice versa, the employers match up with the young people. We will have wage subsidies, as we've had in the past, and our programs range anywhere from those programs with student exchanges across Canada, the Rangers program and many, many more.

I think the young people are already accessing the Internet far beyond what any of us did at that time. They're seeking support and information from their guidance counsellors, and it depends on—

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Your time is up.

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): A question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: You'll know that Liberals believe there should be equal access to justice for all Ontarians. The Harris government has a much different view, and it's obvious. Minister, this is the December-January issue of the Multi Unit Report. It's a publication for landlords of rental buildings. The article called Tribunal Tribulations speaks volumes about applications at the tribunal: how many were processed for landlords and how many were processed for tenants. In reference to the extremely low number of tenant complaints processed, Carol Kiley, the manager of program development of the tribunal, one of your most senior bureaucrats, said, "We don't schedule tenant applications with the same kind of urgency."

This double standard is appalling. Your senior manager, your senior official of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, is saying we'll move landlords to the front of the line but tenants must start at the back. Can you explain why this is your standard operating procedure at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I want to say for the record that I would be happy to follow up on the honourable member's specific concerns, but I can say generally that that is not the operating procedure of the tribunal. In fact, the operating procedure of this tribunal has been very effective at reducing backlogs and reducing the waiting time, which specifically benefits tenants more than landlords. The reason for that is that tenants have more to lose. They don't have the resources perhaps some landlords do. Although that's not necessarily the case, by and large it is the case. By reducing the backlogs and being more efficient in delivery of the service to the public, which is obviously what this is all about, we have been of great benefit to tenants, because they don't have to wait as long

and don't have to tie up as much of their resources. Based on the annual report, which is just about to be released, because I signed off on it a couple of days ago, I think the honourable member will hopefully agree with me that we have a more efficient system and a better system—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Caplan: Obviously the minister needs to be grounded in reality. Here are the statistics his own manager gave: As of the end of November last year, almost half of the almost 7,700 tenant applications had not yet been resolved. So much for helping tenants, Minister, and these are not minor matters, by the way. We're talking about harassment, rent reduction applications for disrepair and bad faith actions by landlords. These are very serious matters. Not to schedule them with the same kind of urgency is unacceptable. I'm sure you've read these comments. This appears in a publication. It is a direct quote.

By the way, Minister, this is the next bi-monthly publication. There is no retraction, no letter to the editor. You have obviously given your stamp of approval to this type of discrimination. So give Ontarians a direct answer. Tell us what steps you are going to take today to put an end to this unfair and discriminatory practice.

Hon Mr Clement: As the honourable member probably knows, we're dealing with a quasi-judicial tribunal. There are rules of conduct for all quasi-judicial tribunals. Indeed, the purpose of having things done in a quasi-judicial manner is to make sure there is fairness across the board, that you can't play favourites and you can't favour, institutionally, tenants over landlords or landlords over tenants. That is the whole purpose of a quasi-judicial tribunal.

I would be shocked if they were operating in any way other than being fair and impartial. If the honourable member has any evidence, I'd like to see it and would certainly analyze it. But it would shock me to the core to think there is any sort of institutional unfairness. In fact, the system is working so well now, in terms of dealing with complaints as they come in, that I think that institutionally helps tenants in a way that was not understood or seen or experienced when the honourable member's government was in power a few short years ago. I'm satisfied, but if the honourable member has a particular complaint, I'd like to hear it.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Throughout most of the province the economy is absolutely booming. Unemployment rates in places like Toronto and Ottawa, and even Oshawa, have dropped significantly. In my own area of the province, the unemployment rate has dropped by some 2.8%. Although these numbers sound great, the real situation is that unemployment in my riding is still at 7.1%. The economic

boom has not impacted our community to the same extent as the rest of the province.

Does your ministry have a plan to help rural communities take advantage of the economic boom—communities like Port Hope, Cobourg, Colborne, Brighton, Quinte West, Campbellford, Warkworth, Hastings, Grafton, Baltimore and Bewdley, just to name a few?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): It is true that we have come a long way, but there's still much more to be done. I'd like to inform all my colleagues in the Legislature that my ministry has taken action. I have instructed my people to organize a tour to visit available industrial buildings and sites along the 401 corridor, from Port Hope to Belleville. The tour is going to include the top people in my investment and business development division, as well as local economic development officers. These are the people whose job it is to sell Ontario as a good place to invest. Knowing more about the products we have available will allow my ministry to better market this part of the province to site locators and prospective investors. You have to know what you have to sell if you want to make a sale.

Mr Galt: On behalf of my constituents, Minister, thank you very much for what you are planning for my riding.

As you know, I am chair of the rural economic renewal task force, and consequently economic development is certainly very important to me. I have travelled across the province and have noticed that communities in eastern Ontario have many things in common. One of those things is the high unemployment rate.

Minister, you just explained to the House what you're going to do in my riding for communities like Gores Landing, Trent River, Codrington, Gosport, Harwood and Welcome, but what are you going to do for the other communities east of mine along the St Lawrence River?

Hon Mr Palladini: These are the same concerns that have been raised in my discussions with the members for Prince Edward-Hastings, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and Leeds-Grenville. This is why my ministry is planning to tour up the St Lawrence to visit even more sites. My team of investment and business development consultants will work to help the communities along the St Lawrence to reach out to prospective investors. Through this program, and other ministry initiatives, as well as our government's open-for-business attitude, it is my hope that all communities across Ontario can share in the positive economic climate that has helped create over 700,000 jobs. We will continue to work with our partners so that Ontario will continue to prosper.

1430

CHILD CARE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): To the Minister of Community and Social Services: I was shocked to learn this week that you are planning to

siphon money away from licensed child care in order to fund unlicensed recreation programs for school-aged children. You can't honestly believe you can get away with this: allowing cash-starved municipalities to take money away from licensed child care centres so that you can repackage it as creating extra recreation opportunities for school-aged children. We're all for better recreation opportunities for youth, and they should be funded, but lifeguard duty is not a substitute for quality day care.

Minister, will you promise the parents of Ontario that you will not rob the child care banks to pay for recreation programs?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): For many Ontario families child care is an important resource that helps parents balance the challenges of work and family. This government has shown a tremendous amount of dedication to providing child care choices to Ontario parents. In fact, this year the Ontario government will spend well in excess of \$700 million supporting parents with their child care needs. I'd remind the member opposite that that is more than any other government in Ontario's history.

We are also committed to providing more choice and more flexibility for parents. Some parents and some child care delivery agents, democratically elected municipal councils around the province, have indicated that extending child care subsidies to children enrolled in recreation programs would enhance both choice and flexibility. As is the case when municipalities make requests—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Ms Churley: The choice you're giving many parents is no choice at all. If they can't get good, regulated child care space, then it is no choice for them. I am shocked that you did not deny this today. I know you like to stand up and claim you do more for child care than ever before, but the fact is that it's a smokescreen for what is really happening here. What you're trying to do is squeeze more money out of the child care system and claim that you're doing more for children. But let me tell you, that act wears thin very quickly.

Minister, I am going to ask you again—this is your opportunity to give a very clear answer that you won't do this—will you promise today, will you stand up and tell the people of Ontario that not one cent will be taken out of the existing pool of regulated child care centres with qualified early childhood education staff?

Hon Mr Baird: The member won't be surprised whatsoever to discover that I don't share her conclusions with respect to child care. The member opposite stands in her place and talks about choice. In fact, the record of the New Democratic government says exactly the opposite: that it was all non-profit providers, all institution-based child care. Ninety per cent of parents in the province of Ontario opt for community-based, non-institutional child care in their communities. A number of municipalities and parents have come forward looking for some alternatives. When a municipality or one of our delivery

agents comes forward, we're certainly prepared to consider any suggestions, as I am prepared to consider the member opposite's conclusions.

Many parents now consider recreation programs—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You're aware that the county of Essex completed a significant restructuring and that the number of municipalities went from 22 to seven and the number of councillors went from 44 to 14. This was done under restructuring guidelines approved by the minister who preceded you. It was a made-at-home solution by elected representatives in the county. Now the city of Windsor wants a chunk of the county, and the county has made I think a very substantial offer to the city. The county views this as a boundary issue and in fact back in December, some four months ago, sent you a proposal to that effect. There have been recent public meetings in LaSalle, in Tecumseh and in Lakeshore and residents are saying overwhelmingly, "We don't want to be a part of Windsor."

Minister, my question is this: In the absence of a local agreement, and I really don't think there can be one, are you prepared to tell the residents of Essex county that you will accept the county's proposal?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. This has been a very controversial issue in the county, in places like LaSalle, Tecumseh and so on. I can thank the 1,500 residents who have taken time to write to me from LaSalle. I've enjoyed reading all of those letters and responding to each one individually, so I have a fairly good idea where LaSalle is coming from. They don't, in fact, have to write me any more. I've got a pretty good idea of the sense of the way things are.

The issue before us, obviously, is to try to weigh the different points of view. I can tell you that our great preference is towards a local solution. Each time that this Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and my predecessors have written to local county and city officials, we've said, "Try to come to a local solution." So I still have aspirations that we can reach that goal.

Mr Crozier: It's spring and the time for skating is over, except for perhaps the playoffs, and it's time that you got your oars in the water and started to pull.

There won't be a local solution. This has gone on for months. You said in fact that you wouldn't let it go past last December. It's clearly a boundary dispute. You said if there was a log-jam, you would clear it up. Well, Minister, there's a log-jam, so that's why I want you to get that boat in the water and clear it up.

County residents have said, overwhelmingly, "We don't want to be part of the city of Windsor." Municipal elections are just a short time away. There will be residents who don't know what municipality they're going to be voting in if you don't make up your mind.

Will you accept the county's boundary adjustment proposal and advise the city of Windsor that it's a fair deal, a fair proposal and it should be implemented?

Hon Mr Clement: I appreciate the member's input into this emotional and complex issue. I take it as a given, since he is asking the question with the concurrence of his House leader, that the member for Windsor West and the member for Windsor-St Clair agree with him on that position? One is shaking his head. That's a good sign. I want to make sure that the honourable members are not talking from both sides of their mouth when it comes to this issue, because there perhaps is a Windsor point of view and there perhaps is a county point of view, and I wouldn't want the honourable members to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Member for Essex, come to order. Member from Essex, this is my last warning. We cannot have a situation where you shout across, particularly when the Speaker is standing. It's your last warning, and I will have to name the member.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. We don't need any groans from the government benches, thank you very much. Start the clock.

Hon Mr Clement: I give the honourable member every assurance—and I do not want this to become a personal issue between he and I; this is an important issue for the community—that I will take his views into account. I will take the views of the member for Windsor West into account and the views of the member for Windsor-St Clair into account.

The Speaker: I think time is up. I may have lost track.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. As you know, the mining industry is a significant contributor to Ontario's wealth, and the strength of the mining sector is particularly important to the economic viability of the northern regions of Ontario, where so many communities have been built on the prosperity of this industry.

Minister, what initiatives has your ministry taken to facilitate the growth of the mineral sector in Ontario?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for his continued ongoing interest in mining and northern development issues. In fact, that's a principle of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, to make sure Ontario remains one of the safest and most attractive places in the world in which to invest. In fact, my parliamentary assistant, Jerry Ouellette, is on the road doing draft legislation and geoscience legislation to renew that interest in mining investment in the communities.

In addition, we've allocated \$19 million for our airborne and regional mineral surveys through Operation

Treasure Hunt, investing in modern technology to make sure that information is available to the world 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in addition to streamlining the Mining Act by eliminating red tape.

I'd like to remind the members as well that this evening the OMA, the Ontario Mining Association, is hosting a Meet the Miners reception in the legislative dining room from 5:30 to 7:30. I encourage all members to attend.

1440

Mr Spina: Thank you, Minister. I look forward to that reception.

As you know, I was born and raised in Sault Ste Marie and I've travelled extensively across northern Ontario. I know a lot of people in the north.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Have you been to Manitouwadge?

Mr Spina: I've been to Manitouwadge.

Northern Ontario has not experienced the same positive Harris government economic boom to the extent that we have in the south. Minister, can you tell me what you're doing to help the mining communities in northern Ontario re-establish their positive economic potential?

Hon Mr Hudak: The member's statement is appropriate. While the province is once again a world leader in economic growth and job creation, it's important for the government to ensure that all regions of Ontario have the same opportunity to benefit from that kind of growth in jobs and in the economy. While the unemployment rate is heading down in northern Ontario, there is still more work to be done. That's why it's important to stay on this path of lowering taxes, cutting red tape and working towards balancing our books.

In addition, as the member indicates, there are some special initiatives in northern Ontario, including over \$240 million into the northern Ontario heritage fund to date, helping to create about 7,000 new jobs in northern Ontario, and about \$650 million into the northern Ontario highways program, a record investment in northern Ontario highways, to spur growth, to spur job creation and to help those communities that the member is concerned about.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance responsible for the SuperBuild fund and has to do with the Highway 407 deal. I realize that the government believes this is a terrific example of private-public sector partnership; in fact, it's your flagship. We in the Liberal Party disagree. We think it was a blatant cash grab. We think that the 407 toll users have been sold down the road. It is a rip-off for them. The road cost \$1.5 billion to build and you sold it for \$3.1 billion, exclusively because you sold the toll road users down the road.

I want to read to you a part of what the owner says about the tolls, and I want you to answer why you allowed this to happen. The toll users said that provided

they meet certain peak-hour traffic flows, tolls may be raised without limit. Why would you sign an agreement that would allow the owner to raise tolls without limit?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, with respect to toll roads, no individual has to use a toll road. There are plenty of other avenues that people can take—pardon the pun—like Highway 401 across the top of the city of Toronto. A toll road is there for the convenience of people who are willing to pay to use it.

I know that the Liberal Party has difficulty operating within the free marketplace out there in terms of economic things. He might have a point if this were the only route that people could take to get from point A to point B across the top of the city of Toronto.

I use the 407 and I'm happy to use it at the current toll, an increased toll or any toll—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Who pays for it?

Hon Mr Eves: I pay for it.

Mr Phillips: For those of us who know the congestion that takes place around the 407, the answer is a bit like: "If they can't afford the 407, let them eat fumes. Let them go on the 401 and smell the fumes, be in those traffic jams."

I just say to you this: Your secret deal has another provision in it, in addition to the "without limit" on toll road increases. Another part of the secret deal says that if somebody doesn't pay the exorbitant tolls, if for some reason they have not paid those exorbitant tolls, here's what the owner says they can do: They simply notify Mike Harris and the government, and the government will deny the renewal of an Ontario licence plate for the vehicle in question. There's no choice; they will deny it. So I ask you again, on the second part of this secret deal: Why did you agree to this deal to sell the 407 to this user, allow them to raise tolls without limit and then—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up. Minister.

Hon Mr Eves: I'm sure the Minister of Transportation can provide the details for this.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Clearly, when you're talking about an electronic toll road such as we have on the 407, which is the world's first, it is impossible to deny access to the road physically, because you do not have toll booths. So one of the integral parts which was agreed to and planned by the NDP government at the time was that plate denial would be an integral part of the process to ensure that the road was only travelled by those people who paid their bills.

COURT SYSTEM

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Attorney General. Every day children in Ontario are called upon to tell their story in a courtroom full of people. We know that this can be a very intimidating experience for children. I wonder if the minister could share with this House what the government is doing to protect children who testify in court.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. Protecting children was a priority for this government when elected in 1995 and it remains a priority today. Regrettably, every day children are called upon to testify in cases in the courts in Ontario, many involving domestic violence or child abuse. This can obviously be an overwhelming experience for children, especially when they are victims.

We are committed to accommodating young victims and witnesses and making their experience in court as easy as possible. For that reason, we've vastly expanded child-friendly courts here. There are facilities and services and court workers who support children when they're obliged to give evidence in court either as victims or as witnesses. There are smaller, less intimidating courtrooms. There's a separate room with closed-circuit audiovisual equipment to allow children to testify from outside—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Attorney General's time is up. Supplementary.

Ms Mushinski: It's clear that child-friendly courts enhance the justice process. I wonder if you could tell this House what you have done to make child-friendly courts more available in more Ontario communities.

Hon Mr Flaherty: We have created 15 new child-friendly courts in Ontario, so we now have a total of 16 operating in 13 different locations. This is part of the unprecedented building program that we've done, a \$266-million court investment around the province. The first facility opened in the old city hall. New facilities have been opened in London, Newmarket, North Bay, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, Simcoe and in the former cities of Etobicoke and Scarborough. In addition, child-friendly courts are part of the major new courthouse improvements in Welland, Windsor, Hamilton and Brampton. This is all about giving security to little people, to children, when they're obliged to be in court and hopefully lowering their anxiety levels.

WATER EXTRACTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): To the Minister of the Environment: I have here water-taking permit applications from the OMYA company in Perth, Ontario. They want 2.5 million litres of water every day for a series of wells and 4.5 million litres from the Tay River every day for 10 years. The company already has your permission to take close to one million litres of water every day. If these permits are permitted, they will be allowed seven million litres of water every day. That's seven times more water than the entire residential and industrial use of the whole of Perth, a community of 6,000 people.

We all know that we're facing low water levels and drought across Ontario. Tell us that you're not really going to consider granting a permit to allow one company to take over seven million litres of water every day for at least 10 years.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I thank the member opposite for the question. What I want to say to her today is that we are indeed committed to protecting Ontario's water supplies and ensuring that those supplies are sustainable into the 21st century. It was this government, the Mike Harris government, that showed international leadership on the issue of water-taking. We brought into force the water-taking and transfer regulation to prohibit the transfer of water out of Ontario's major basin, and it's something that we take very seriously.

VISITOR

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if you could help me in welcoming the Loyola Community Learning Centre and adult education program from the Kingston area. These people are in the west members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order, but we welcome our friends from your area.

1450

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as the care is available in our communities."

This is signed by another 132 concerned residents who add their names to the thousands of others who have signed earlier petitions.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have over 1,200 signatures on a petition entitled "Say No to Hamilton-Wentworth, Say Yes to Haldimand County."

"We, the undersigned, are petitioning against the possible forced amalgamation with Hamilton-Wentworth. The undersigned would like to form the new Haldimand county, which would include Caledonia, Cayuga, Dunnville, Hagersville, Walpole, all surrounding small hamlets and farm country, former boundaries of Haldimand county, and half of the industrial park."

Because I support the new Haldimand county, I add my name to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have a petition which I'm pleased to present, signed by several people from the Chalk River area and gathered, I take it, by the parishioners at St Anthony's Roman Catholic Church in Chalk River, which reads in part:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

I'm happy to present that petition on behalf of my constituents from the Chalk River area.

LORD'S PRAYER

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is the most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom and to do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I have a petition to present to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas Mike Harris promised an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the 1995 election and renewed that commitment in 1997 but has yet to make good on that promise; and

"Whereas the Harris government has not committed to holding open consultations with the various stakeholders and individuals on the ODA; and

"Whereas the minister responsible for persons with disabilities will not commit to the 11 principles outlined by the Ontarians With Disabilities Act Committee; and

"Whereas a vast majority of Ontario citizens believe there should be an ODA to remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act that would remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities" in this province.

I agree with this petition and have affixed my signature hereto.

WETLAND

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): This will probably be the last time I submit this petition from Stan and Libby Racansky, Marshall Vetzal and others from the riding of Durham. The issue is specific to the riding of Durham; in fact, it's a planning issue.

The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on July 28, 1999, a decision was made by the Ontario Municipal Board which will allow Courtice Heights development OMB file S960058 in Clarington to be built upon part of Black-Farewell, a provincially significant wetland, the largest wetland complex in the GTA; and

"Whereas a large portion of this land included in the development plan of subdivision for Courtice Heights is not the property of the developer but is in fact owned by the residents of Hancock Road and Nash Road in Courtice; and

"Whereas information from MNR regarding this wetland was not made available to the OMB by the municipal planning department at the hearing, and the existence of this information was denied by the municipal solicitor and the developer at the hearing; and

"Whereas the absence of the MNR information caused the OMB to believe the property in question was woodlot, not provincially significant wetland; and

"Whereas, as a consequence, the OMB allowed this development to be built without the setbacks and buffers recommended by MNR for wetlands; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should reverse the decision of the OMB referred to above and permit the petitioners to present the relevant information

at a properly constituted review proceeding that was denied to us by the OMB in January 2000 without considering the consequences;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect provincial interests since MNR, per the Honourable John Snobelen, Minister, is committed to protect this wetland."

It's very important. Thank you very much for allowing me to read it.

ABANDONED MINES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): This petition reads:

"Whereas the abandoned Ross mine property at Holtyre poses a potential health hazard from PCB contamination to our town's water supply; and

"Whereas there exists a potential health hazard from soil contamination; and

"Whereas there exists a potential health hazard from blowing tailings material from the said abandoned mine site;

"We the undersigned residents of Holtyre and all of Black River-Matheson demand that the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines undertake the following steps immediately:

"A comprehensive joint program of air, water and soil monitoring to determine the extent of the contamination and the health risks that they pose to the population;

"That joint steps be taken immediately to rectify and clean up the abandoned Ross mine site to rectify and eliminate any health hazards that do exist; and

"That the results of such testing be made public to the affected population."

I affix my name to this.

ABORTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The cards and letters keep flowing in. I have another petition here from some of my constituents. Pat Wilson from the Catholic Women's League and the parish in my riding submitted this.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas we have recently learned that our tax money is being used to pay the rent on the Morgentaler abortuary; and

"Whereas by the end of this lease this amount will be \$5 million;

"Whereas we strongly object to this use of our tax dollars;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to immediately cease these payments."

I am pleased to receive and submit this petition.

ILLEGAL TIMBER CUTTING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Mr Speaker, I have a petition here that will be of great

concern to you and to the people of Ontario. It reads like this:

"Whereas timber cutters are trespassing on private and crown land, cutting, removing and selling trees, leaving a financial, environmental, aesthetic and emotional devastation in their wake; and

"Whereas the OPP have no authority to stop a cutter from cutting in the event of a boundary dispute, but may only inform the cutter that a complaint has been lodged; and

"Whereas the mills accept all timber from their contractors whether it is stolen or not; and

"Whereas the practice of the crown attorney's office to relegate these obvious theft issues to civil court places an unreasonable and prohibitive financial burden on the landowner-victim; and

"Whereas the offending cutters are protected by their numbered companies, lease their equipment and declare bankruptcy rather than pay fines and restitution, and immediately register a new numbered company, the landowner-victim must then pay:

"(1) All court costs and legal fees incurred by the offender as well as their own legal fees;

"(2) The cost of the survey;

"(3) The cost of hiring and posting bond for a bailiff, an appraiser, a salesman and bond for each piece of property and for equipment seized from the convicted cutter at the rate of at least \$2,000 for each of the above-listed;

"(4) The cost of cleanup and reforestation; and

"Whereas traditionally settlements to landowners-victims have amounted to the price of stumpage fees for the stripped area, while the cutter profits from the full price of the timber from the mill; and

"Whereas, because the offending cutter must work quickly to avoid detection, he/she leaves the land devastated, with little or no thought to environmental areas of concern, eg, wetlands, reforestation;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness to landowners-victims in the overwhelming support of illegal cutting of private and crown lands.

"We advocate:

"(1) That the cases be tried as grand theft in a criminal court;

"(2) That in the event of a boundary dispute the party who is to benefit financially (ie, the cutter) be responsible for the cost of a survey by a registered surveyor and not a forester;

"(3) Final judgments should not only include fines, all costs incurred for pursuit of justice and stumpage fees, but the full price of the timber, the cost of cleaning up the clear-cut area and the cost of reforestation and maintenance of the cut area, thus making theft of timber from private and crown lands potentially non-profitable;

"(4) Contracts of convicted cutters should be subject to suspension or termination, just as drunk drivers lose licences."

I fully agree with this, and I sign my name to this petition.

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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Mr Speaker, I'm pleased to bring to your attention that Shannon Tufts from my riding will be taking this petition to the Clerk's table.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Please, feel free. She deserves it; she's doing a great job.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens);

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances in work;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

I continue to add my name to those of these petitioners.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have petitions entitled "Bring back Haldimand and Norfolk Counties." They've been gathered by good friends and neighbours of mine: John Gordy, Ken Bausfield and Big Red Dedrick.

"Whereas we, the undersigned, do not want a region-wide, single-tier supercity;

"Whereas we support the two county model representing two single-tier cities (one each for Haldimand and Norfolk);

"Whereas we believe this model will give us a government that is closer to the voters, providing the greatest degree of 'accountability' by our elected representatives; greatly reduce the number of politicians; greatly reduce taxes through the elimination of multiple administrations,

services that are repeated six and seven times; and produce further cost savings through adjusted service delivery methods; and

"Whereas the tax revenue of the Nanticoke Industrial Centre is to be divided equitably (based on population) between each of the two counties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to bring back Norfolk and Haldimand counties."

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm happy to introduce Legislative Page Alison Brohman, who is representing Kitchener-Waterloo and member Wayne Wettlaufer. She'll be carrying the petition to the table for me.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer, also called Our Father, has been used to open the proceedings of municipal chambers and the Ontario Legislative Assembly since the beginning of Upper Canada in the 18th century; and

"Whereas such use of the Lord's Prayer is part of Ontario's long-standing heritage and a tradition that continues to play a significant role in contemporary Ontario life; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is a most meaningful expression of the religious convictions of many Ontario citizens;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Parliament of Ontario maintain the use of the Lord's Prayer in its proceedings, in accordance with its long-standing established custom, and do all in its power to maintain use of this prayer in municipal chambers in Ontario."

I'm pleased to support and sign my name to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR

LA RESPONSABILITÉ PARENTALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 18, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 55, An Act to make parents responsible for wrongful acts intentionally committed by their children / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à rendre les pères et mères responsables des actes fautifs commis intentionnellement par leurs enfants.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to welcome the people of Ontario to this political forum. We're on live, and I'm happy to have this 20 minutes. It's a rare thing that we New Democrats get to have the time to speak in the debate, but when we do have that opportunity I enjoy it. It's one of the few pleasures we have in this place.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): You do a fine job too.

Mr Marchese: Thank you.

We're speaking to Bill 55, the Parental Responsibility Act. I had an opportunity yesterday to respond to some of the Tories as they spoke on this issue. I had an opportunity as well to listen to several lawyers speak to this. I have to tell you that I was a bit concerned about their legal opinions. I wouldn't hire some of these lawyers if they happen to be expelled from office in the next election. You've got to find out who these lawyers are, and my advice to you is to go to somebody else, because when I heard their legal opinions on this bill I got seriously concerned. Their comments had nothing to do with the substance of this bill. It's just a caution to the good public of Ontario.

This is the law-and-order political party. They proudly say, "We introduced the Safe Streets Act." This is the act that gets squeegee kids off the streets. This is the Safe Streets Act that gets these young men and women off the streets because, the Tories argue, the old ladies were just wailing away with fear, and presumably the old men were just wailing away with fear, because these squeegee kids were coming to clean their windows without permission. Good God, the fright they experienced could conceivably cause some serious health failure, heart failure. So they introduced this Safe Streets Act and, boy, is this ever a good law-and-order government. They say this and present this argument with pride. They boast about how great they are when it comes to law and order, and they cite that as one of their achievements.

We will get a code of conduct from this government very soon to replace, by the way, a code of behaviour. What we have had in place since 1994, because the New Democrats instituted that, is a code of behaviour that is fairly universal in Ontario. Of course, all boards have a code of behaviour. But what is this government going to propose? A code of conduct. That's going to be really tough. The code of behaviour, as you know, is just not tough enough. So we Tories are going to introduce a code of conduct. Why? Because we are the party of law and order. We're going to make sure those kiddies in those schools, those tough kids, are going to be disciplined under the code of conduct, unlike the code of behaviour that is just not up to the law-and-order job.

They cite these great examples of how tough this party really is on issues of law and order. I've cited too the Safe Streets Act, the one that protects the wailing old men and women from the squeegee kids, and the new code of conduct that's going to really get tough on the kids, and the other one—Speaker, you would know this because you were there when they introduced this—the Victims' Bill of Rights. Of course, you were a strong supporter of that, I know, and so were these members, strong supporters of victims. So what did they do? They passed a code that purports to give rights to victims, and what have we discovered as a result of such a bill that has the word "rights" in its title? That it doesn't have many rights. The victims don't have any rights. I will cite some

examples, quotations from two victims who sought redress from a bill that purports to give rights and what they say about it.

1510

First of all, I want to say what Justice Gerald Day had to say about this particular right:

"I conclude that the Legislature did not intend for the Victims' Bill of rights to provide rights to the victims of crime. The act is a statement of principle and social policy beguilingly clothed in the language of legislation. It does not establish any statutory rights for the victims of crime."

But the victims of crime believed that they had rights enshrined in that bill. They believed you. They believed them too. Why would you include a word such as "rights" in a bill if it doesn't bring rights to the victims? Why would you do that, except to deceive them?

Why would you, of all people, introduce such a bill that purports to give rights to victims, those who have already suffered much, who will in the course of seeking remedy find they don't have any? Why would you further victimize the victim through a bill that deceives them?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): You'd better watch the word "deceive."

Mr Marchese: No, no. Judge Gerald Day says there are no rights.

So you've got a big problemo on your hands, right? It's a big one. You don't think you have a big problemo on your hands? The public could be led down this amphibian path and you say you've got no problems with that? God bless you, because if you can deceive the public so effectively, you guys are good, you guys are really good.

Here's what some of the victims said.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, please, quiet down. Here's what some of the victims said.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Why?

Mr Marchese: You've got to hear this, because these are the victims that you purport to help.

Mr Hastings: There's no such thing as a victim, except in your mind.

Mr Marchese: No such thing as a victim except in my mind. There's a philosopher here. We're going to hear from him soon.

This is what one of the victims seeking redress had to say about this Victims' Bill of Rights.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: John, please, listen.

"This decision only confirms that this bill of rights has no meaning for me or for other victims of crime," says Karen Vanscoy, one of the crime victims who had launched a case against the Ontario government. Further, "The reality is that we are no better off than had this legislation never been passed."

Mr Hastings: So we shouldn't be here.

Mr Marchese: John, I know that you guys are the party for victims, but please be careful how you speak,

because they're not going to be very happy to hear your comments—hopefully on the record.

I continue, "In fact, we are worse off because this legislation"—Speaker, you're the only one listening, because these people don't listen—"sets up an expectation that we are protected from being revictimized by the criminal justice system when the reality is that we are not. It's almost like another whack"—not my word; her word—"in the face."

This was your jewel, remember? This was your "tough on crime." This was your bill that was going to protect the victims. This was your bill that was going to give them rights. Here is one victim who says, "We have no rights." It gives us the illusion of a right and it makes it worse. Again, I read the words spoken by a victim here. I speak to the Ontario public; I don't speak to the 10 or so Tory MPPs on the other side who are not listening, because they don't want to listen to the truth about what Judge Day said and what one of the victims said. They don't want to listen to that.

Interjection: No.

Mr Marchese: They don't.

Interjection: You're right.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Speak to the bill.

Mr Marchese: "Speak to the bill," says the former minister. I am, but you've got to listen.

They've now introduced another bill called the Parental Responsibility Act. What does another professor have to say about this particular bill? This is Professor Larry Wilson.

Speaker, you'll notice the former minister is not listening, right? She just asked me to speak to the bill. I was giving the preamble and now I'm going to speak directly to it.

This is what he said: "Under the current law in Ontario, a negligent parent can be liable for both personal injury and property damage caused by children." Make note of the fact that he says "liable for personal injury," which this bill does not hold people liable for. Liability can include both intentional and unintentional acts of children and there is no cap of \$6,000.

Under the existing law, people can go after parents for intentional and unintentional acts and there is no cap. This is under the present law—of course, they don't speak to this—and it provides much greater access to compensation for injured parties than the proposed legislation.

Then he says, "Specifically, section 68 of the current Family Law Act, the parent is required to show that they have exercised reasonable supervision and control over the child." Then he concludes, "What then does this proposed legislation offer in terms of advancing or even altering the current state the law of Ontario?" He says, "Nothing."

What we have is a law currently in place that is stronger than a proposed law that we're debating. The guise is that this is really going to deal with children, of course, who are doing misdemeanours of sorts, are

causing some property damage and they say, "We're going to get to that damage and that violation through this bill." But we already have section 68 that deals with it, and the current law is stronger than the present one that is being proposed.

What do we have here? What we have is a government that is deliberately very political. They're playing placebo politics with the public. They are repackaging a law that's weaker than the present one and making it appear that it's stronger and that it will solve the problems that the current law is not solving.

This is a problem for me. I have an intense dislike for a government that is intensely political in its messaging, and this is what this government is doing on a regular basis. The worst part of all this is that they know what they're doing. When we argue that this bill does not advance or alter the current state of law and when we New Democrats argue that there's no evidence to suggest that these laws are effective in reducing delinquency, and when we argue that this bill will have no positive impact on anything or anyone, the government members don't give a damn about that—

1520

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Kindly watch the language in situations like that. I know it gets heated up, but it's probably better not to use that word.

Mr Marchese: —because it's not about evidence. This has nothing to do with evidence. This has to do with politics. That's the problem I have with this. If they were to be influenced by evidence, this bill would not be introduced today, because it doesn't do anything new. It's presented for the sole purpose of giving the public the impression that they're doing something that's tough, and the current law is already doing that.

They're doing something worse, as well, with this bill. They're making parents accountable for their children's delinquency. We generally say we need to hold young people accountable. This bill puts the onus on the parents, and that takes away the responsibility we thought we needed to put on the child, which says, "You will be responsible for your acts, and there will be punishment to follow as a result." We're shifting attention away from the individual young person's delinquency and transferring that responsibility to a parent. It's wrong, manifestly wrong.

What is wrong, further, about this bill is the cuts that have been sustained by the public in general that would deal with issues of crime and would deal with prevention, and they do nothing about it. I'll read some for the record, because I think it's important for you and the others to hear.

"We have the dire situation of children's mental health services in Ontario that has to be addressed. In Windsor-Essex, there are 1,000 children on a waiting list for mental health care. The minister's recent announcement of whatever dollars was announced, does nothing to affect the waiting list. The rate of re-referral is a shocking 37% among these children."

"In Halton, teenagers wait six to 18 months to see a psychiatrist."

"In 1998, the Ontario child advocate estimated that 80% of youth in young offender facilities have mental health problems."

"In 1995, the Harris Conservatives eliminated funding for 64 community youth support programs serving young people between 15 and 20 years of age, all to pay for a tax cut for the wealthy. To help for the tax cuts for the richest Ontarians, the Harris Conservatives eliminated funding for adult and family counselling in 118 programs."

"There were almost 30,000 more poor families in Ontario after one year of the Harris Conservative government. Families are the fastest growing group of homeless in the province. Sometimes an older young person just has to leave to give the rest of the family a break from feeding and housing him or her."

Yesterday, I talked about the fact that we are giving less to special education under this government, with a good economy, than ever before. We have a good economy, you will remember. We're supposed to have more money than ever before. Where is this money going? These are the questions the public are asking. Where is this wealth that we have amassed in the last five years going, when we have sustained such huge cuts that would deal with the issues of delinquency and the issues of crime prevention?

We used to have 1,400 more policemen in 1994 under the New Democrats, in a recession, than we do now in a good economy. Where is this money going? We could use a few bucks to start early education programs for our students, so they could be identified, if there is a problem, at age three, four or five. Yet we're not spending in the early childhood school years, as M. Mustard recommended to this minister and to this Premier. We're not spending the money we presume to have in this great economy. Where is the money going?

Part of it is going to fight the federal government on the health care issue, three million wasted dollars that could be used to support some of the programs I have outlined that have been cut. Yet they want to go and attack the federal government.

And you, Speaker, were the one—I don't have the quote with me today, but I'll quote you some other time, where you say: "Stop the whining, Mr Rae, stop whining. You've got the wheel; you drive this government." Surely you would remember that. Your quote is even better; I've got to bring it back. You used to say to Bob Rae in a recession, "Stop whining." Yet this was the time, under Mulroney and then M. Chrétien, that serious cutbacks to this province started, in the billions when we needed the support, in a recession, and you used to say to Rae, "Don't whine about the federal government and their cuts to Ontario." Yet your friends are saying this today, whining like little, whimpering children, "Where's our money for our health?" You've cut two billion bucks; you've done that in a good economy.

Speaker, I'd love to see you there, quoting you on that. And I will quote you, because your quote was a good one. Your government is playing politics with this issue.

That's what I detest the most. You're doing so very little to deal with delinquency. You're not dealing with the causes, and the things I read to you, in terms of the cuts, are not helping to deal with the causes of potential crime in our streets. It's placebo politics: making people feel good and giving them the sense you are doing something when in reality you are doing absolutely zip for crime prevention. It's the most detestable bill I have seen, in addition to a few others I have mentioned.

The Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's always a pleasure to sit and listen quietly, as we read through our correspondence, to the member from Trinity-Spadina. He's also very entertaining and theatrical, so I pass those comments respectfully. But I'm really more interested in listening to the next speaker, the member from Mississauga South, the Honourable Margaret Marland, who is the minister responsible for children. I assure you that we will hear the commitment and passion she brings to her portfolio.

I think the important thing on Bill 55—by the way, the member for Trinity-Spadina in large part failed to address the significance of this small but important piece of legislation. I think in the purpose clause it's important, if I just put that on the record, that we're confident it is a step in the right direction. To say it fails to do anything obviously speaks to the four years of their government.

The bill permits an action for damage to be brought in Small Claims Court against the parent of a child who does damages or destroys property. The parent is liable in the action unless he or she satisfies the court that he or she was exercising reasonable supervision at the relevant time and made arrangements or efforts to prevent or discourage the child from engaging in the kind of activity that results in loss or damage, or that the child's activity was not intentional. I think the important thing here is intent, and that's always the issue, and also intent on the part of the adult. But I think far too much of the debate has been focussed on the negative side. I think we should look at it on the positive side. By and large, 98% of the children in my riding, or even 99%, are leaders and models of exemplary behaviour, and this really addresses those children who need the leadership.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the member for Trinity-Spadina, who really missed the whole point of great kids making great communities.

The Speaker: Questions or comments? The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm delighted to make a few comments on this item. I come from a part of the world where there are many responsible parents, and I've had the occasion to speak with some of them about this bill and their thoughts on legislating responsibility in this area. What has come back to me from the very wise people in my riding, who are good parents themselves, is that when a youngster makes a mistake or an error in judgment, it is usually the practice to have the youngster

account in some way or make good for the wrong he or she might have committed. Usually when that happens, it's not to penalize somebody else for what they've done but to hold them accountable for what they've done wrong. A really reasonable suggestion that came to me from a parent, that I thought would be worth considering and I offer it to the government, is that for young people today, one of the most important things is their driver's licence. Why not consider legislation that would say to young offenders, "If you cause damage to another, you will have to make good for that, either you or, if your parents choose to do that or a rich grandparent or whatever. That would be within your family to decide. But until you have made compensation, you will not get a driver's licence."

1530

We know that drivers' licences are very precious to young people today, and I would suggest that it would be a significant deterrent for young offenders if they knew that by committing a senseless and irresponsible act, they would not be able to get their driver's licence until such time as they had made compensation. A great idea from parents in my riding.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): This is such a waste of time, debating this bill in the House. As the member for Trinity-Spadina pointed out, this is nothing more than hot air from a government that talks tough on crime but really does nothing to tackle the causes of crime or to enhance victims' rights. This has been pointed out before: If the government really wanted to help victims of crime, it would do away with the Small Claims Court fee in cases where there's already been a conviction.

It's been pointed out time and time again that the government is just once again picking up on a hot-button issue and going with it. But when you look at the politics behind it, I find it frankly really disturbing when there are so many issues that we should be debating here. All we're doing is standing in this House and debating something that is even weaker than the existing law. That's what I find so completely disturbing about this.

If the government, for instance, really wanted to help victims of crime, it would pass a meaningful Victims' Bill of Rights, as the Premier promised after the government's so-called Victims' Bill of Rights was found to be nothing more than an empty shell, which is what this bill is all about. Why are we wasting our time on it? The people of Ontario should know and understand that the law exists, and in fact the existing law is stronger than what we're debating here today.

There's not a person in this House who would diminish the impact of crime on families. I'm certainly not meaning to do that. I'm merely pointing out once again that this is a load of hot air in trying to convince the people of Ontario that you're actually doing something for victims of crime when you're not. You do nothing more than take a section of the Family Law Act and you add a few bells and whistles and give it a new name. That's what's going on here, and I congratulate my colleague from Trinity-Spadina for pointing that out.

I wish the government members would listen. I think we should be debating more important things in this House—not to say that the issue isn't important. It's very important. But we should be debating something that is really going to make a difference to the lives of victims of crime. This is not going to do that. It merely sets people up for a fall, and that's what I find so disturbing about that. It's nothing more than propaganda. It's trying to convince people that the government is actually doing something for victims of crime when it isn't.

This bill should be withdrawn and tomorrow I would ask for the government to bring in a real Victims' Bill of Rights. That is something we could be proud to stand up and debate. But, oh no, we're debating this, which means nothing.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Trinity-Spadina. I have a great deal of respect for the gentleman. He speaks with a great deal of passion in the House, and he offers some very clear statements in terms of his own personal principles and beliefs. I don't necessarily agree with everything the member has offered the House.

When he starts to speak about mental health and he drones on about some of the alleged cuts to mental health, I think it would also behoove the member to point out to the community that we have reinvested \$150 million in community care for mental health, that we now boast 51 assorted community treatment teams in Ontario. We have crisis response teams. We have teams specifically for teens and children. We are working very hard on all ends of it, as the member knows, to improve the mental health system. So I think it's a little bit unfair at times to try to deflect attention away from one bill and look at something else. In fairness, we're trying to be very comprehensive. We're doing our best to improve all of the systems.

In terms of this particular bill, the Parental Responsibility Act, in all fairness, what we're proposing to do is put more onus on the perpetrator. The reality is that the victim now has an opportunity—

Interjections.

Mr Clark: Once again the banter starts. Victims have certain rights that they should be able to utilize, and we're trying to make sure that they have and they are afforded every right under the law. I think that's fair. I'm happy to listen to suggestions from the other side, but to just say we should dismiss it and not debate the bill any more and withdraw it doesn't work. We have to fix the system. That's our job. That's what we're here for, and I'm happy to debate it on those points.

The Speaker: Responses?

Mr Marchese: Again, the abuse of power is fascinating, because government members can say all sorts of inanities and get away with it.

The member for Durham dismisses my comments as theatrical, of course. He doesn't speak to the substance of my comments because he wasn't listening. Then he said some stupidity such as, "We should be focusing on the 95% of the children who are really good." What has that

got to do with this bill? Then why aren't we talking about those 95% then, if this bill is almost irrelevant? I don't get it.

Then he says that this bill permits action to be taken against those who commit damage. He wasn't listening, nor was the member for Stoney Creek listening, when I said that Professor Larry Wilson says the present law provides much greater access to compensation for injured parties than the proposed legislation. Liability can include intentional and unintentional acts. Under the current law in Ontario, a negligent parent can be liable for personal injury and property damage. It includes onus as well.

What are you talking about, member for Stoney Creek? You've got to read a little bit. You guys have to read. Don't shake your head. You don't know what you're talking about; that's the point I'm making. You guys don't know what you are talking about, including your lawyers on the other side.

So I say to you that if you want to deal with the causes of crime, you've got to get to it in some other way. This bill doesn't do it. This bill is deliberately political. This government is inexhaustibly political. There is nothing in here except placebo politics to make it appear like they're doing something, whereas in reality they are doing absolutely nothing. That's the fact.

I am urging the people of Ontario to follow us with this and attack this government over this bill. I am expecting them to do that.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Hon Mrs Marland: I am very happy to have this opportunity because there isn't anyone more important in our province than our children. We are talking about the actions of our children and we are talking about the responsibility of their parents.

I think we should lay out right up front that this isn't a debate about who are good parents and who are poor parents, because I think those of us in this House who are blessed with parenthood would be the first to admit there are times when we have been strong, successful parents and there are times when we don't meet that standard. Parenting is something that certainly we all had to learn. It's a truly false assumption that we're automatically parents or that we're automatically good parents.

1540

When we think back to how we were with our first children, I'm the first to admit that in our family, when I had our first daughter, I was 23 and I thought I was a bright, intelligent new mother. But I realize that I didn't know the best things to do with that new baby, and that's where it all begins. That is something, fortunately, that our government has now recognized: That is where parenting begins. It begins the moment that baby is born. Fortunately for us in our government, we decided that we would seek the best possible advice, so we appointed the Early Years Study group—the Early Years reference group, actually, was co-chaired by the world-renowned Dr Fraser Mustard. In fact, my colleague and friend the member for Trinity-Spadina made a reference to Dr Mustard.

Dr Mustard co-chaired this study with the honourable Margaret McCain. Dr Mustard has made a lifelong study in all aspects of research in how children develop. The Honourable Margaret McCain has been a lifelong dedicated child advocate. In fact, when she was Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, she committed her whole term in office to children and families who were victims of violence. She wanted to make a difference. She and her husband, Wallace, as you will know, Mr Speaker, moved to Ontario and the Honourable Margaret McCain has continued that commitment to children. Certainly with a great deal of strength, compassion and understanding she, with Dr Fraser Mustard, spent a whole year looking at the subject of how children develop, all without any remuneration. They weren't consultants that the government hired. They were two individuals who believed and knew the priority of the importance of this study.

We also appointed a 10-member reference group to assist them with their work. As we now know from the earlier study—incidentally, it will be one year tomorrow, April 20, that that study was presented to the government. In that report, over and over again it tells us the importance of parenting. If there was ever any doubt about how children learn and what the impact of that exposure in the early years results in, anyone reading the Early Years Study will now appreciate the fact that the young child's mind is almost fully developed at age 3 and certainly is fully developed by age 6.

Those of us who have been parents probably wonder how we ever managed to get through those years with relatively few mistakes. Knowing what we know now and the fact that our government has embraced the recommendations of the Early Years Study, I am very proud that our government hasn't had yet another report or another study done, as many governments have done in the past. Dr Fraser Mustard is the first to say that he has done studies for a lot of governments. This is the first time that one of his studies is being fully implemented by the government.

I would like to share with you that we are unique in Ontario. I discovered from attending a World Bank conference last week in Washington—Investing in our Children was the name of the conference. There were people there from all over the world. In fact, the minority of people were from the North American continent. There were people from the South American continent, Africa, Australia, Asia, Europe, the Scandinavian countries and of course Britain.

I was very thrilled and honoured to have been invited by the Royal Bank to be a part of that conference. I chaired the opening session, at which Dr Fraser Mustard was one of four speakers. By the time we had completed the two days of that meeting, the one thing we all agreed on was that there is nothing more important than the early years and the responsibility of parenting.

Today we are discussing the Parental Responsibility Act. What our government says in this act is that if the parents aren't responsible for our children, then who is?

We say in this act that everyone has a right to live in a safe community and not be burdened by expense due to vandalism and other forms of crime against property.

Isn't it interesting, when you can go to a world conference of over 300 delegates and find that around the world they too agree that the early years are the priority? It is also amazing to find out that in some of the poorest countries in the world—which haven't had the opportunities we have in a province like Ontario to have research collected and compiled, to have studies done—with limited funds and limited resources they make children the priority and they make parents responsible for those children and how those children develop because it's the parents with whom the children live. It's not the neighbour, it's not the business, it's not the corporation; it's the parent or the caregiver, the person who is responsible for that child in their home.

One thing the member for Trinity-Spadina said was, "Where is all the money going?" I wish my friend the member for Trinity-Spadina were in the House, because he and I have been colleagues here for the same length of time. Although in partisan politics, philosophically we often disagree, there are areas where Mr Marchese and I have agreed. I think it's a fair question when he says, "Where is all the money going?" In accepting the recommendations of the Early Years Study, our government has truly made a pioneering commitment to the children of this province. We have for the first time decided that although resources have always been invested in elementary and secondary school years, and in fact post-secondary school years, we believe it is important to make that upfront investment. What I learned in Washington is that all the other countries of the world agree that if we had it to do over again, the heaviest investment would be in those early years.

Those children who do not experience positive parenting and nurturing and all the motivation that comes from good parenting, when you look back over case histories of children who end up committing crimes against property and individuals, when you look back at how those children grew up, for the most part—not always, but for the most part—are children who didn't have a fair start in life. They didn't have the best start. They didn't have a parent or a caregiver or a family member who nurtured them, who read to them, who did the simplest things that don't cost money. They're the ones, because we now know through neuroscience that the wiring of the brain is done, as I mentioned a few moments ago, and is pretty well complete by age three.

When Dr Mustard and other people who have done this kind of neuroscience research tell us that there's more than a nutritional reason for a mother to nurse a baby—and the reason is that when a mother or a caregiver or a father or another family member holds that child, that child is developing five or six of their sensory pathways. It's how those sensory pathways develop that defines the future health, behaviour, success and well-being of that child through elementary school, secondary school and into their future life. If we do it right in those

early years, the question of a Parental Responsibility Act will diminish because the crimes by the children who are mistreated and do not experience that kind of nurturing, stimulation and love will be reduced.

1550

There was some reference made to children's mental health. I had the pleasure of announcing the expansion of children's mental health funding. Actually, we have made a \$20-million commitment and before the end of this year there will be another \$5 million. We promised \$10 million last year and we were only able to get half of that out the door, but it hasn't gone. We are committed to the people who provide programs in the children's mental health area in this province to get the balance of \$25 million, which is the whole \$30 million that we promised for last year and this year, recognizing that this year just started April 1 in our financial year.

As part of the Early Years study, we also have committed \$30 million to a challenge fund. This is a fund that is going to help communities around the province develop early child development and parenting programs.

The most refreshing thing, I believe, about our response to the Early Years Study is that we're not making the decisions down here in the ivory towers of Queen's Park about what communities need. Mr Speaker, you will appreciate this, being from Sault Ste Marie, a northern community. You know that the conditions in your home riding are very different from the conditions in my riding of Mississauga South, downtown Toronto, Windsor, Napanee and some of the other communities across the province. You know that to have Queen's Park design a program to fit all needs, regardless of geographic distances, climate, size of population and all the other aspects of demographics, just doesn't work.

So when we made the pledge to the children and families of this province, which we have done both in the throne speech and in the budget, we said: "It will be a locally designed program, but we will help you. If your community wants this kind of programming for those preschool years, those zero to school-aged children, if you tell us what you see as a program that would work in your community and you get the community to buy into providing that program through partnerships with business, the voluntary sector, the school boards and any of the other partners, individual donors, people who are philanthropic and help causes, if you can define what program in your community is needed and show that the community wants it, we will partner with you with this \$30 million and match what you can raise locally in that community."

What a marvellous opportunity and what a wonderful answer to meeting the needs of Ontario's children and families in their local communities, in a program that's not a cookie-cutter approach designed by Queen's Park.

Also, my friend the member for Trinity-Spadina touched on tax cuts taking money away from children. It's very interesting when this argument is presented, because we are different from the two previous governments. We do not believe that throwing money at a problem is the solution. We do not believe you can

solve all the ills of the families in Ontario by allowing them to stay on government support programs and just writing a cheque and saying: "Go away for a month. Come back next month; we'll write you another cheque."

This government believes that children should be allowed to live in a family the same as the family next door or down the street or down the hall in their apartment building, a family where those children see their parents get up in the morning, get showered, get dressed and get ready to go to work, and come home with a paycheque—not a cheque that comes from the government without them having to leave their homes. We believe children should have role models in their homes as part of their families. You know what? The children go off to school feeling normal and with pride in their hearts because their parents are working.

If you look at the number, it's now 701,000 net new jobs that our government has introduced to these families in Ontario. If we look at the number who are off welfare, it's actually over 200,000 children whose families are now off welfare. Frankly, we're very proud of the opportunity that those families now have to work, and those children live in a family where there is normality and not a dependency that is different from the other children with whom they go to school.

I would just say in closing, because I've been travelling this province a great deal, that there's a great deal to be proud of in this province. The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington got up this afternoon and made a constructive suggestion about the legislation that's before us. Near to her, in Belleville, is a marvellous program called Abigail's. It's the dream of Dr Goldsman that every child could be as lucky as his granddaughter. He has established a program that is, without a single government dollar, providing all kinds of experiences for those parents and children, and it's staffed full-time by three volunteers for the whole week. And it works. That's the gift of volunteers to the children of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Comments or questions?

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Je suis heureuse d'avoir la chance aujourd'hui de donner mon opinion sur le projet de loi 55 sur la responsabilité parentale.

I am concerned that this is yet another bill, another piece of legislation, that will have little effect. This bill adds nothing for victims, and in fact may actually hinder victims' ability to sue parents of wayward youths. We need to ensure that those parents who try their best to control the wayward youth are not being saddled with having to pay compensation. How much control does a parent have over a child when the child is 16? Certainly not the influence they enjoyed when that child was six or 10.

I too believe, along with the member for Mississauga South, that the children of Ontario are our wealth, our future, and that we have to do everything in our power to ensure them a safe and rich environment in which to grow as citizens of Ontario.

C'est bien simple. La solution est de parler de prévention. Quelle meilleure façon que de mettre en oeuvre les recommandations du rapport Mustard sur la petite enfance ?

Let's give every child in this province the right to junior kindergarten, et donnons toutes les chances possibles à nos jeunes enfants de s'épanouir dans leurs premières années, et par le fait même de diminuer le taux de délinquance et de criminalité lorsqu'il arrivera l'âge de l'adolescence.

1600

Mr Marchese: I have nothing nasty to say about the member for Mississauga South. I like her. It's always a problem when you like someone, because you really want to go after them sometimes. She's a good person. Besides, several of my children live in her riding. I'm worried.

I want to be kind. I just want to ask a few questions. What experts have they listened to with respect to this bill? What evidence is there that this will reduce delinquency? Please, show me one. Make reference to one expert that you might have come across, maybe in your readings at night, just one. I would be happy if you did that, because, you see, this is the type of topic that really requires some bringing forth of evidence. Sadly, you haven't.

The other problem is, does this bill alter the existing law in any positive or negative way? Does it alter it? I submit, based on the opinion of Professor Wilson, that it doesn't. Another expert.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, maybe you could talk to Preston Manning. He's got some good views on this matter.

I submit to you that this bill doesn't do anything for better parenting. One of the members made reference to the fact that the onus is on the perpetrator. You didn't mean that, because in this case the responsibility would be on the parent and you didn't really mean that.

How does this bill deal with the causes of crime? It doesn't. These are questions that need to be addressed. I submit to you that this is political malfeasance. It's placebo politics making people feel good. It does nothing to deal with crime. The present law deals with that. I urge people if they disagree with them to let them know and to let me know as well.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was certainly very touched by the presentation, the 20-minute speech made by the member for Mississauga South, minister responsible for children. I believe it's one of the better speeches that I have heard in this House. It was delivered with compassion and with real concern for the children of this province. She expressed concern about investment in the early years. This is becoming clearer all the time, this tremendous importance of investment in our children in their early years. It's just great to have a person of this calibre leading that ministry.

Applause.

Mr Galt: They're clapping for you, member for Mississauga South, not for me, of course.

You also talked about the holding of a child. There's all kinds of evidence that that does develop the sensory pathways that are so important for them to understand the love and that kind of experience. You talked passionately about children's mental health and the funding that has come forward from our government, part of the increase in the health care spending of this province.

I was particularly touched when she talked about my hometown, Napanee, which I'm sure the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington could reflect on as well. That's where I spent a lot of my early years. It was so thoughtful of her to mention the hometown where I went to high school.

She also commented that the solution is not throwing money at it. Certainly we had a lost decade where they believed in tossing out some money, increasing the deficit, increasing the debt and it would get better. What a disastrous period of time that was. She also talked about travelling the province and the good things that she found in this province. As I mentioned in the beginning, it was one of the better speeches that I have heard in this House, if not maybe the best speech.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It is obvious that the minister cares about her own children and her family. You had the most wonderful Christmas card of all the Christmas cards that the members sent out, Minister.

But you talk about pride in this province. How can you as a government be proud of the reports that came out this week that talk about the increasing level of poverty among children, cities all around this province where poverty is increasing among children.

You talk about children's mental health. Minister, you've got members in the city of London. I urge you to contact the CPRI in London and find out what is happening in London with mental health. There's a serious crisis in the children's mental health community in the city of London right now. We really need you to address that.

You talk about instilling pride in this province in doing things. The turmoil that you've caused within the education system—you should be leading by example. How does the turmoil that has been caused teach children what is right?

She talks about the investments that are being made in the community. But here we go again: communities having to go out and fundraise. With the downloading that your government has caused, there are so many fundraising programs going on right now. A program in London is having a difficult time meeting its campaign goals because there's so much competition out there for the fundraising dollars today that you say the only way it's going to happen is through partnerships.

The legislation is in place. The law is already in place in this province. The victims of crime in this province already have those rights. It's just a game. It's a smoke-and-mirrors piece of legislation that is just trying to give the impression that you're doing something, and in my opinion you're not. You need to be going further,

Minister, at working on developing and investing in our young children.

The Acting Speaker: Response.

Hon Mrs Marland: Just in case you think we're the only people who believe in this legislation, I would like to quote the executive director of the Mississauga Crime Prevention Association, who said, "Youth property crimes are an ongoing worry for residents and businesses in our community." His name is Fred Chorley. He goes on to say, "We are pleased that the government is taking action to help victims of this type of crime get compensated for their loss."

You know, if we truly believe in safe communities, we have to believe in protecting the victims. In fact, the more parental responsibility that we can achieve, we will not only have the reduction in crime but we will have a better life for those children and youth who are committing those crimes. The sad thing, I say to the member for Ottawa-Vanier, is in fact a lot of these children aren't 16 and 17; they often are 10, 11 and 12, the age at which you said they probably could take better direction. That's the sad thing, that the children are getting younger and younger. That's why the importance of what we are doing for the early years can never be understated.

I say to the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London that I have visited those facilities in London. I have visited 17 different children's mental health centres in this province. I have met with 127 different groups of program providers. And you know what? They sat at round tables with me, 12, 14 people at a time, and told me they had never, with any government, ever had the opportunity to sit down directly and give advice to a minister. I listened, we benefited and the children of Ontario will benefit from their advice.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

This is another cutely named bill, and we've seen a whole series of them. It's smoke and mirrors. It sounds great, it certainly is popular in the media and it sounds as if the government is going to improve parental responsibility. But even they acknowledge that the vast majority of parents in Ontario are responsible.

We've had a series of cutely named bills. We passed the Safe Streets Act. I've noticed the streets haven't got any safer since we passed it, and in fact the media says that there's more violent crime taking place and the crimes are of a more severe nature. I have noticed there are fewer charities doing fundraising since we made the streets safer.

I'm sure some day this government will introduce the Sun Will Rise in the Morning and Set in the Evening Act and will take credit for that. We don't have to have quality in the bills as long as they have really, really cute names.

1610

As has been said by others, and probably better said, this is not new legislation. This is fluff. Everything that it

purports to create is already in place. But it follows this government's assumption that they have to give detailed instructions to everyone in Ontario on how to do the right thing because the people in Ontario apparently don't know, and that's a fraud.

My father had a saying that I had to think about for a while the first time he said it to me, and that is, "The problem with being a liar is not that others won't believe you, but that you can't believe others." I would think that with this particular bill, the inference is that people can't be trusted to do the right thing. There's an inference in there that we have to provide the instructions to them.

The bill specifically focuses on young people. It's very, very easy to bash young people, particularly the ones who are too young to vote, but I think the best thing we can do for young people is to encourage them. Young people may not believe what we say, and I quite understand that, but they believe what we do and they follow the role model example that we set for them because they know what we do truly conveys what we believe.

When I was in grade 6, there was an occasion when our teacher left the classroom and a fight broke out among virtually everyone in the class involving throwing textbooks. Unfortunately, one of them went out through a window. When the teacher returned, the broken window was obvious. The teacher said, "Would those who were involved in this please stand up." Knowing I was involved in it, I stood up. I realized I was the only one standing in the entire classroom. I felt a little bit like the leader of the Alliance party in Quebec there for a minute. I was rather annoyed about that, and I ended up paying entirely for a window. My first reaction was: "I'll never do that again. I will never stand up and admit guilt." But then I thought about that and I thought, "Well, I'm going to get up tomorrow morning with a clear conscience. I did the right thing. I can live with myself and I can look at myself in the mirror and say: 'I don't have to worry about it. I took the blame for it and I paid for the window.'"

Why did I do that? Why did I stand up? Because of the model of my mother and my father, because of the model that the community had provided for me. I stood up and I took the responsibility because it was the right thing to do.

Let's think about some of the examples that this government is providing for the youth in Ontario. We're telling our youth in the schools that they need to take care of their fellow citizens. The first thing that struck me when I came to Toronto and walked down Yonge Street was people sleeping on heating grates and in doorways. That's the example we set for our young people to follow: It's OK for people to sleep on heating grates.

We tell students at school and young people that they can't swear or they'll be suspended. We've seen some media reports lately that indicate it's all right for elected officials to swear if they're at a sportsmen's show.

We tell our young people that they need to treat others with respect, and then we think about what this government says about teachers, about doctors and about

people who are receiving welfare. We've made it OK to bad-mouth people who are receiving welfare. That's the example we've set for them.

We've said it's a hard world that we live in. We tell them that we have to work hard and we have to work every day. Let's look at how long this Legislature sat in the last year and let's look at the attendance records. That's the example. Young people really notice what we do.

We talk about equality for our young people. What did we do last December? We passed legislation that sets one pension law for MPPs and another one for everybody else.

So it really doesn't matter what we do in legislation; we need to do the right thing by example.

I am curious as to what would be the situation if the children of this province could sue for the damages being done to them, the children whose parents have lost their home, the children who have to rely on the food bank and can't eat, for the children who don't have an educational system—the developmentally handicapped who don't have a program in school. This government made school board trustees liable for their action. I think it would be a good idea if we made the Legislature responsible for its actions. What we need is not a Parental Responsibility Act; we need a government responsibility act.

Let's talk about some of these children who are doing damage. It's easy to portray them as being from out-of-control families. Forty per cent of the people in our penal system are there because of fetal alcohol syndrome. Interestingly, 98% of these young people we have with FAS have been adopted into a family. These are families that are struggling to keep their children out of jail. These are not irresponsible parents. These are parents who have taken on children to raise them and to do the right thing. The government doesn't share the same responsibility when we look at the funding for special education. But these are parents who are truly trying to do the right thing with children, and I can relate, having walked the path, that the goal is to keep them out of jail. When they do damage, these parents cry and are in an anguish. For children with ADD, funding has been cut. Again, these are children that parents are striving to do the right thing with.

With these children, we know, and the government has acknowledged, that the vast majority of parents will pay for the damage done. Interestingly, I talked to a school board—because what better location for children to do damage than in school?—and said, "How much vandalism damage do you have?" They said, "Between \$100,000 and \$125,000 worth a year, and that's with about 23,000 students." I said, "Do you recover the money from the children who do the damage?" They said, "Most of the damage is done by adults in the evening." The damage done by children is about \$25,000, and many of these children are in the developmentally handicapped program, who may accidentally do damage.

They've got a wonderful initiative, I thought. Instead of going after the parents, because in some cases going

after the parents would mean: Do they miss the rent payment that month? Do they go without food that month? What do they give up in order to fund that? For those young children who commit the damage, the school said: "We provide an opportunity for them to work it off. We work out the damage, and they stay after school or at noon hour and work the damage off." Small Claims Court wouldn't allow that, but I think that's a wonderful approach to teach responsibility to the children.

But this government runs this province by formula. Everybody's the same, so we'll have a little formula on how they behave. If this happens, that happens. There's a reaction. Everything has to fit a nice, neat model. People in Ontario are always referred to by the government as taxpayers, and they may be. But they're citizens, and they need to be treated as citizens and not just sources of revenue. If they're not putting in enough revenue, then there's almost an inference that they're not real citizens. Real citizens pay taxes, real citizens contribute to the economy and real citizens aren't allowed to have a bad year or to lose a job. That's nonsense. We need to spend our time on far better things than bashing kids.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): That is certainly a tough act to follow, and I know that my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings speaks from the heart. He's a gentleman who, together with his wife, over the years has fostered 40 to 50 children, and they certainly know what it's like to deal with children who may have had problems or difficult situations in their lives. He is difficult to follow in that regard.

But I would like to get back to something the minister said earlier—and it's very nice to see a minister in the House actually speak on a bill without reference to a set speech or set notes. Normally we get a minister who reads from some prepared text and is usually out of here within five minutes after. I realize they have many other things to do, and I don't doubt for a moment the minister's interest in children. She seems to be a very caring individual. But unfortunately, she has a ministry without any resources. There are no resources and no staff in her ministry. She can consult with different groups all over the province and probably comes up with some good ideas, but she has absolutely no means to implement them.

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I would like her to tell me, and I challenge her to do so in the responses we will get from the members shortly, where anywhere in this bill it implements any aspects of the Early Years study by Dr Fraser Mustard. We all know, and Dr Mustard and other experts all over the world have told us repeatedly over the last number of years, that a child's most important years are the formative years, the first four or five years. Let her indicate to me where in that Early Years study it suggests that a bill like this should be passed. I know it's not there and she knows it's not there. She speaks very nice words about what we should be doing for children, but certainly this act doesn't do any of that at all.

If she really wanted to be proactive, why don't they make the Better Beginnings, Better Futures program more universal across the province of Ontario? I've got an excellent program in the Kingston area, but it's limited to a specific geographic area and parents cannot understand why that is so. Why don't we expand that program? We all know it is working. We also know it's much better to spend the money and our resources at that age for those kinds of programs than later on for youngsters when they are aged 13, 16 or 19, whatever age they may be within their teenage years, when they may be getting into trouble that is actually costing society to a much greater extent.

As a matter of fact, Dr Mustard in one of his studies clearly indicated that for every dollar that is spent on a youngster in his formative years, we save \$7 in social costs later on. If that is so universally accepted—and it took this government up until the last month of the last session to actually agree to that in April of last year, to actually accept the recommendations of Dr Mustard—if we're all agreed on that, why aren't we spending our resources, rather than on a meaningless piece of legislation here?

You know and I know this is all about optics. That's all it is. The most meaningful provision in this act, subsection 10(2) which actually lays the responsibility on parents for their children's conduct, has been in the Family Law Act since 1986.

Let me just read to you what the Family Law Act says in section 68, "In an action against a parent for damage to property or for personal injury ... the onus of establishing that the parent exercised reasonable supervision and control over the child rests with the parent." Now let me read the operative section of this act, "In an action against a parent for damage to property or for personal injury ... the onus of establishing that the parent exercised reasonable supervision and control over the child rests with the parent."

It's exactly the same language. It has existed for the last 15 years. Anyone could have taken the kind of action you are now stating in this legislation again. So it's all about optics. It's all about trying to create the public impression out there that we are getting tough with parents so they can be held responsible for their children's actions. The squeegee law was all about that and this law is all about that.

Why don't we start to deal with some of the real issues out there? A number of them have been mentioned here today. What about the poverty report that came out last weekend? It's a shame on each and every one of us that in a society as rich as Ontario's and Canada's society the difference between the haves and have-nots is just continuing to escalate, and no government—I blame the federal government in this regard as well—is doing anything meaningful about that situation. Why don't we join together and work together, all three levels of government together, opposition and government in all the legislatures, and try to tackle the poverty problem that exists in this country?

It's a shame and it's getting worse. I can see the day coming, five, 10 or 15 years from now, when we will have our own gated communities here as they have in so many places in the States, so that the well-off can keep out those people who are just eking out a living or there is no living for them at all.

Why don't we do something about the housing situation? Again I blame the federal government as much as the provincial government. Absolutely nothing is happening as far as any social or non-profit or low-income housing is concerned in this province. Over the last 10 to 15 years there hasn't been a new unit built. The problem isn't going away and we have to start addressing those problems. It isn't a question of one level of government blaming another level of government. That isn't going to stop the problem.

We talked about safe communities earlier and protecting victims. Of course victims have to be protected, but the best protection for victims is programs that make sure we don't get criminals walking our streets. Whether they're young or old, where in this act does it talk about how we try to make better parents out of parents who, I guess according to this act, somehow have failed our system? Nowhere.

As a matter of fact, it talks about the kind of things a court may take into consideration in determining whether or not there has been reasonable supervision over a child by a parent. It talks about "the age of the child," "the prior conduct of the child," "the potential danger of the activity" the child may have been involved in, "the physical or mental capacity of the child," "any psychological or other medical disorders of the child," whether the child was "under the direct supervision of the parent" at the time "the child engaged in the activity," "whether the parent has sought to improve his or her parenting skills by attending parenting courses or otherwise."

There are so many different criteria set out in this bill that, quite frankly, it is totally meaningless. You know it because it's been there for the last 15 years. You've just marketed or packaged it in a new package to make the people think out there that this Harris government is tough on crime. That's all it's about.

Applause.

Mr Gerretsen: So they totally agree with me that it's all about optics, to have the people somehow think that they're tough on crime when there's really nothing going on.

I would like you to applaud joint efforts to do something about our housing situation here. It was absolutely shameful for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to address the development industry over the weekend. He was basically chiding them for not building low-income housing, and he had the nerve to say: "I am now calling upon the industry to put their money where their mouth is. We've removed the impediments and we've got to see activity in this sector. It's time to fish or cut bait." That's the same government that had the nerve to say in this House that the rent control legislation they passed in the last session was actually better, when he

clearly has stated to the developers in this article, "We've removed rent control barriers."

You can't have it both ways. Let's do something about the real problems. We're prepared to work with you. This kind of legislation simply doesn't do it.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure to start to participate in this debate this afternoon. I want to follow up on some comments that were made by my colleagues in the Liberal caucus.

The fact of the matter is—and it must be embarrassing for the Tories to have to face it—that they really are being exposed with respect to the bill. Bill 55 does not produce one, single, new, additional right for victims of crime than the rights that have already been in place since 1986 in this province when, under the Liberal and New Democrat accord, changes were made to the Family Law Act that then allowed victims' rights to be enhanced, allowed victims to sue for property damage and allowed victims to sue for personal damages. That worked because the parents as well in those cases had to prove that they weren't negligent. So we have here a government that is trying to gloss it up, package it up, put a new face on a law that has been on the books, in place, usable and enforceable in the court system in this province since 1986.

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It must be a little bit embarrassing for the Conservatives to know that through the course of the debate, but more so through the course of examination by many editorial boards, all kinds of media across this province and editorial boards are exposing this bill for the sham that it is. It is nothing more and nothing less than this government trying to convince the public that they are doing something about crime, when in fact they are doing nothing at all, and there are no more rights for victims than there have been since 1986.

Ms Mushinski: I listened with great interest to the comments made by the members for Prince Edward-Hastings and Kingston and the Islands. I have no doubt that they feel very compassionately about the needs of children in this province. However, I was somewhat bemused by particularly the comments of the member for Kingston and the Islands, who clearly has been around this place for a number of years, I believe at least 10—

Mr Gerretsen: I came the same time as you did.

Ms Mushinski: Oh, you came at the same time. It seems like 10. Perhaps I need to remind him of some of the substantial work that the great minister for children has undertaken. Clearly, children are a priority to this government, and she has established the importance of her ministry through a province-wide consultation on children's mental health. Of course, the Liberals never undertook to do that, any more than the NDP government later. Perhaps it's important to re-emphasize the focus that the minister has brought to bear on children's mental health services. She made an announcement very recently that has put an additional \$25 million dollars, new dollars, into children's mental health services, and

\$11 million for the children's treatment program. When the Healthy Babies program was first introduced in 1998, it was announced for \$10 million. It has actually been increased to \$67 million in every single community in Ontario.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I'd like to congratulate both the member for Prince Edward-Hastings and the member for Kingston and the Islands for their comments, because I think that they both made excellent comments. They both hit the nail on the head.

The member for Prince Edward-Hastings made a great suggestion: We should have a Harris government responsibility act. This government, unlike any I have ever seen, and I have watched governments over the years, blames everybody else and abdicates its responsibilities for everything. For health care, it's the doctors or the nurses or the federal government; for housing, it's the municipalities or the developers or the federal government; in education, it's the teachers or the boards of education. It's always somebody else. They cannot take responsibility for their own actions. What kind of message are they sending to the parents of Ontario, to the students of Ontario, to all of the citizens of Ontario, when the elected leadership in this province refuses to stand up and take responsibility for mismanagement, for incompetence and for a mean-spirited attitude? It is the height of arrogance and the height of gall, and it is amazing to hear government members one after the other take absolutely no responsibility and then say parents have to take responsibility.

Of course, as we know, the provision in this bill weakens what has been in place for 15 years. You can now only go to Small Claims Court for up to \$6,000. The Family Law Act was passed in 1986 by a Liberal government. I know it must be embarrassing to these members to know that it was a previous government which made that move to hold responsibility, and everyone agrees with the concept. Why would they want to repackage, why would they want to do it other than to grandstand and to try to take credit for somebody else's action? This government needs to be held responsible.

Hon Mrs Marland: It's very interesting to listen to my colleagues across the floor of the House. The member for Don Valley East certainly takes great pride in some of the things his government did when they were here. I had the privilege of being here at that time, and a lot of what they did he indeed would not take pride in: certainly taxing the people in this province with an enormous number of tax increases in a very short period of time, and then of course getting into bed with the NDP in terms of that wonderful accord which this province endured for five years. There was another member with the same last name in that Liberal government, and the history is there for the people of Ontario.

But I will say that it amazes me that anyone can be opposed to this legislation. You're right, there is legislation in place today, but today the legislation protects the person who commits the crime, because the onus is on the victim. The onus is on the victim to prove that so-and-so did this crime.

We're simply saying that if the parents had prior knowledge or in any way knew that the crime was committed by their child and they didn't take proper precautions or precautions that were available to them, then that parent is responsible. You know what? We're talking about a small number of parents, but we may be talking about the impact on a large number of children. I think you should be interested in the children and the victims of those crimes.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Parsons: I would like to thank the members for their comments. This is very much an artificial item. As has been said, it simply duplicates what's already in place. But I believe there is a need on the part of the government to create an agenda. Because they don't want to talk about regional disparity, they don't want to talk about health care, they don't want to talk about the cost of education in university, they don't want to talk about special education, they create an item that the media and the public can focus on that is absolutely meaningless. Let's drag out a 1986 piece of legislation and debate it again, because whether this bill passes or not makes no difference whatsoever. If it did not pass, we're exactly in the same situation as if it did pass. Think about that. Think about the time that we spend in here doing this.

But I genuinely believe that we can't fool all the people all the time, and this piece of legislation is intended to fool the people into thinking that something is going to happen, when in fact nothing is.

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: Yes. The advisers need to do their homework and now drag out some old, easy legislation to deal with.

Before my wife and I had children, we were very good at giving advice to couples with children on how they should raise them. We knew the answer to every possible problem and situation, and we shared with them how they should be raising their children. After we had our own, one of the routes that we had to work was to go back and explain to the people that we'd like to apologize because, having now walked down the same road as they had, we realized that we'd acquired the experience and the information that was far more meaningful and far more relevant.

The advisers to this government need to go around and apologize to the people of Ontario for wasting this Legislature's time on this meaningless bill when we should have been in here fighting for the citizens of Ontario, not fighting against them.

1640

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Just before I begin, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Northumberland, and the member for Durham, of course. I cannot forget the member for Durham.

I want to start by joining the member for Northumberland in congratulating the minister responsible for children, who takes her job very seriously. Further to

that, it was Premier Mike Harris who realized and saw the vision that in order to have safe communities, we need to work with children at a very young age, and through his leadership he appointed a minister responsible for children who has been doing a superb job in this province.

Safe communities are about being free from the fear of violence against a person, family or property, and that's what this legislation addresses. It also addresses respect for others and taking responsibility for one's actions. Homes are people's sanctuaries, and people's property should be safe and secure, places where people go about their busy days and produce lives without experiencing property damage; municipal parks and transit that are not damaged, cars that are not stolen or defaced; businesses that don't have graffiti scrawled on their store fronts. I think we have an obligation as a government to deliver on some of those.

When we add to this debate about responsibility, all we hear from the Liberals is that it won't work, that we shouldn't have responsibility in any way. Clearly they have no vision and no leadership when it comes to taking responsibility for one's actions.

Statistics in 1998 show that almost 20,000 cases of property crime were heard in youth court. The member from Niagara said, quite rightly, that probably half, if one estimates, of youth crime is dealt with through the youth courts and they are never back. He's very right about that; a high percentage are never back. But then there is the other enormously high percentage who refuse to take responsibility for their own actions and they continually commit crimes.

We hear the member from Kingston saying, "We should have more programs." What further programs can you have for people who refuse to take any responsibility for their own actions? But the member from Kingston did something that I thought was very courageous. He said that the federal Liberals are not taking action on many fronts, which certainly I believe was very courageous of him, because if we look at responsible government and what that requires, it's a partnership. That partnership should be—

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If the member is going to quote me, he should at least quote me correctly. I said that both levels of government have to deal with the serious issues that we're facing in this province.

The Acting Speaker: That's a point of clarification, not a point of order.

Mr Mazzilli: I find it disturbing that the member from Kingston continually interferes in debate when it comes to serious issues. The partnership of three levels of government is a partnership with the federal government, the provincial government and municipal governments. Certainly in Ontario we do not have that partnership. When we look at federal participation in the area of health care, where they've slashed the funding, they're not equal partners. They contribute about 11 cents for every dollar that we spend on our growing and aging

population. Again, this is where our Premier, who certainly works very hard to produce a strong and vibrant economy, has not only made up for the federal cuts but has increased the funding by a further amount. That is one area.

The other area where the federal government—the federal Liberals, I might add—comes very short is in law and order. Our Premier is very strong in this area. When it comes to law and order, let's look at what the federal Liberals have done: nothing with young offenders that's meaningful, so we know approximately half of the young offenders will never be back in the system. It is everybody's intention to help the half who will never be back in the system, because they will go on to lead productive lives and help our communities.

When you take the other percentage that refuse to take any kind of responsibility and continually go out and steal cars and you do nothing about them, you treat them as young offenders—they should not be. At that point, when they are 16 or 17 years old and they have stolen their 30th car, the federal Liberals treat them with kid gloves.

The federal Liberals are good at many things, I will say. One thing is creating grants. There is no better party to create grants than the Liberal Party: \$3 billion in a grant program, and paperwork that doesn't exist for it, would lead one to be suspicious, at least. This is an area where, I think at the federal level, people are not happy. I talk to people in my riding every day, to people who want an alternative, a real alternative, to people who are tired of their hard-earned tax dollars being spent, not only in the Prime Minister's riding but other select ridings.

The member for Prince Edward-Hastings talked about the Canadian Alliance. Many people are getting very excited about a Canadian Alliance because it brings people together from various parties who are disgusted with the federal Liberals. I might add that Tom Long is doing a great job in pursuing the leadership of that party and is touching real Ontarians and real Canadians throughout his travels.

We keep hearing: "Where is the money? Where are the programs?" Let me ask you, where was the money when the Liberal-minded were in government? There was no money: an almost \$12-billion deficit, a debt that was out of control. These are the same Liberal-minded people who are saying, "Where is the money?" There was no money. In order for there to be money, Mike Harris had to cut taxes, which he did. Through his leadership the economy grew, and now there is money: money to reinvest in health care, money to reinvest in education, money to reinvest in our infrastructure. Record amounts of money are being spent on our roads in this province.

That, quite simply, is it, but the question of where is the money goes far beyond what they say about programs. What about working families? They believe they can better spend the money than working families. In my riding there are very many young families that have children. When I ask those young families, "Would you rather spend the money on your children or would you

rather have government spend the money on programs?" they clearly tell me that they would rather have the money to invest in education programs for their children in the future, to buy household items for their children. But not the Liberals, that's not what they believe. They believe in taxing these young families and that they can better spend the money than these families can.

Clearly, we do not agree with any of their policies or any of their direction. The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has talked about a lot of issues, but an issue in his riding, and I know in rural Ontario, is about registering shotguns. Handguns have been registered in this province since the 1930s. That was going to continue. The federal Liberals came along—you talked about redundant and doing things that were already done; to get a long gun you needed a firearms acquisition certificate anyway—and they said: "Now we're going to start this process all over again. You have to register each individual firearm you have," while handguns were already being registered.

Now you're spending \$600 million or \$700 million. Ask the farmers in Elgin-Middlesex if they support registering their long guns. Ask them if they support that. Anyway, I can assure you, in his riding that will be a concern.

Governments have very difficult choices to make. That's what this is about. Do you take \$500 million or \$600 million and register long guns or do you spend it on front-line policing in Ontario? I believe, as many Ontarians believe, that you should invest in front-line policing in the province.

To sum it up, Ontarians want real decisions that benefit real people. They want taxes cut. They want safe communities and they want investment in health care. Thank you very much. I'll share my time.

1650

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Galt: Certainly, I enjoyed the presentation the member for London-Fanshawe made. The members in the opposition should pay a lot of attention to this gentleman because he was a police officer prior to his election in 1999 and he brings a lot of credibility to this debate. They'd be very wise to pay a lot of attention to some of the comments he was making because he was right dead on in what he was discussing.

This particular bill is going to make parents financially responsible, not to a ridiculous extreme—if they were to burn down a \$10-million building, not the whole amount—but up to \$6,000. I think that's very realistic; it's very practical.

Some 47% of those heard under the Young Offenders Act have created some property damage. It's been property crime they've carried out. As a result of this extensive property crime, there are a tremendous number of people in our society who are really afraid of being a victim of property crime. It's something our Crime Control Commission heard in some 70 town hall meetings across this province. Recently, they were in my riding. They've been into my riding a total of three times now. Consistently, they were getting a similar message.

It's everyday people who believe that parents should be responsible for their children. Most parents believe that they have a responsibility for their children. It was mentioned earlier that it's a small percentage who believe they shouldn't have to be. It was interesting what they repeatedly heard: "The root of youth crime is poor parenting. Parents need to take a more active role in controlling and shaping the behaviour of their children." This bill responds to that. That's something this government is doing. It's responding to the needs and the wants of the people of Ontario.

In the past, victims did not have the proper tools to recover what had been damaged of their property. This will make it one heck of a lot easier. It brings accountability: parents to be accountable and responsible for those children. It seems that it has to be money before people sit up and pay attention. Money does talk. Indirectly, this bill is going to have a tremendous effect because parents will get around the kitchen table, and they'll get around the dining room table when people are meeting and getting together for dinner or over a drink or whatever. Indirectly, it's going to have a tremendous effect on how parents look after their children.

Also, we hear so much about children going to court without their parents. Now parents will be required to come to court to indicate that the damage that was caused was not intentional, that they had reasonably supervised those children and that there was a reasonable effort to discourage harmful behaviour.

One of things we were committed to in 1995 was to bring law and order back to Ontario, and this is one step. There have been many others. There's the safe streets legislation that we brought in; the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act, having to do with drivers fleeing from the police; and Christopher's Law, the registry for sex offenders. We'll soon be bringing in a code of conduct for students in our schools.

I recently heard from a student taking politics at the University of Toronto. She was telling me that they were saying—and this is a rather socialist group of people who teach politics at the university—that Premier Harris is the first politician in Canadian history who has had a vision and carried it out. A lot of the Liberals would say Trudeau was that way. But that's not what they're saying in the political courses at the University of Toronto. They're saying, "Harris is the first politician in Canadian history to have a vision and carry it out." That's what is happening right here with this bill. This is one more step in making Ontario a safer place to live, to enjoy and to raise a family.

I know that people in my riding of Northumberland, in places like Cobourg, Brighton, Campbellford and Roseneath, are going to be very pleased with this bill. I have a couple of recent clippings—April 8—from local papers in two different areas of my riding, which point out the 13- and 14-year-olds and the kind of property damage that has been happening there.

This is from the Campbellford Courier, and talks about damage that was occurring between March 7 and

20. Charged were a 14-year-old female with two counts of theft, one count of possession of stolen property; a 15-year-old female, two counts of theft, one count of possession of stolen property; another 15-year-old female, four counts of theft, two counts of possession of stolen property, one count of break and enter; a 17-year-old male, two counts of theft, one count of possession of stolen property and one count of break and enter. There was a 17-year-old male and an 18-year-old adult, for whom warrants were outstanding and who had not been arrested at the time. That's from the Campbellford-Seymour corner of my riding.

Then, from down in the southwest end, and also I guess a bit in the east, the Brighton area, a 15-year-old male youth was allegedly assaulted by another 15-year-old in the local high school. The victim, from a community west of there, received facial injuries. The other youth was charged with assault. That's right in our high school. From that kind of activity, I think we desperately need a code of conduct.

Uttering threats: A 12-year-old boy verbally threatened a 12-year-old female, also from that same area. More to the north, a 13-year-old boy and a 14-year-old boy from the same area, theft of cigarettes and chocolate bars; also in the area, a 16-year-old male on March 23, possession of stolen property—the list goes on and on. This is the kind of thing that's going on in rural Ontario, small-town Ontario, and it's time something was done about it.

I think this bill will go a long way to changing the belief and the idea that you can get away with it if you're under 18. That is what the Young Offenders Act has accomplished. Of course, that is from the federal Liberals. They brought it out, and they're standing behind it. They're not about to change it. They think a little slap on the wrist is the way to go. But obviously, from what has been happening in Ontario, and from what is being told to the Crime Control Commission, that is not working.

In the last minute, I want to describe that in July 1997 I was invited by the OPP in Brighton to visit with them and to see what was going on with break and enter—this was all youth from the area. They had a chart on the wall—the names were covered up because of course they can't reveal who, under 18, is carrying out these crimes. But they had this chart and this graph of different ones joining up with other ones and breaking and entering. Some broke into a couple of homes on the way home from a court appearance. One was quite interesting: Every home on a block had been broken into except one, and they put in security systems and then, lo and behold, the police came and arrested their son because he'd been breaking and entering all the other homes in that block.

Certainly I'm very supportive of this parental responsibility bill. I think it will go a long way toward making Ontario a better place to live and raise a family.

1700

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Peters: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments from the member for Northumberland and the member for London-Fanshawe.

It's very interesting. When I heard the speech from the member for London-Fanshawe, it sounded more like a political speech for the new CCRAP party. This government is just constantly trying to place blame someplace else. He talks about taking responsibility. This government doesn't take any responsibility. This is a government that passes the buck and lets somebody else talk about doing it.

He talks too about responsible government. It is unprecedented what this government has done. We've seen closure invoked on so many pieces of legislation where the democratic rights of individuals in this Legislature have been cut off. I'm just waiting for closure to be invoked on this piece of legislation.

He talks about partnerships. They talk about partnerships between three levels of government. Well, I'll tell you, the three levels of government in this country are like a three-storey outhouse. You've got the feds, the province and the poor municipalities on the bottom, and they've been dumped on over and over again, in particular by the provincial government. You talk about the cuts that have taken place, your great tax cuts, but talk about the user fees that have been invoked on municipalities. It's unprecedented what we've seen. The member keeps making reference to our cousins in Ottawa. I look at them more as distant relatives.

I look at the St Thomas Police Services Board under the direction of Chief Bill Lynch. Our police services board is going out and getting into the schools and getting first-hand contact with students. Those are the types of initiatives that need to be done.

The member for Northumberland talks about a government with a vision, but it's a vision with blinders on. It's a vision that is only looking to try and help certain segments of the population. They are not reaching out and touching every individual in this province and trying to do what they can to help individuals in this province, and it's a real shame. I don't see this as a government with a vision. We've had one piece of legislation in front of us as we resume: Bill 55. Where's the vision?

Ms Martel: I just want to respond to the comments made by the member for London-Fanshawe. I'm wondering, after he got off track and away from the script that was in front of him, if he realized just how badly he exposed the sham that this bill is.

Let me just go back. He spent a great bit of time talking about 200,000 cases of property damage and how a lot of those go through youth court and you never see those offenders again, but it's the other half—and of course we have no idea what those numbers are, but he said the other half—that are going to come back into the court system again and again and again and re-offend and there's no program in the world that's going to stop them or force them to take responsibility for their actions.

I want to ask the member, what is in this bill that's going to stop those same young offenders from offending again and again? The answer is, nothing. Absolutely nothing in this bill deals with those young offenders and whether or not they want to assume responsibility. This

bill goes after the parents of those kids and somehow assumes that because kids are in trouble, their parents are lousy or bad or don't care about what their kids are doing or don't have the adequate parenting skills to deal with the problems that their kids are into.

I say to this government, you go down a very bad and very dangerous road when you start pointing fingers at the parents of kids who are in trouble and condemning them and saying that somehow they don't care what their kids are doing and they're bad parents. There are all kinds of parents in this province today who are doing everything they can to deal with their kids who may have gone off track, who may be in trouble. They are looking for programs to get their kids into. They are trying to get special education at school and they can't. They are trying to get counselling for their kids and they can't. The counselling service in Sudbury right now has a waiting list of six months thanks to this government. So you go down a very bad road when you start pointing fingers at parents and saying that all because they are lousy parents, their kids are in trouble.

Mr O'Toole: It is indeed a pleasure to respond to the member for Northumberland, although I will say he is on the record more than I am on most issues.

As you drive down the 401 heading east, you will note that as soon as you leave my riding and keep going east, you run into Mr Galt's riding. I can tell you that Port Hope, Cobourg, Colborne, Seymour, Campbellford, Codrington and Brighton are all well represented. In fact, the voice of every one of those individuals has been responded to, because really, if you just add up the numbers of times he has spoken, he has actually spoken personally for each member who elected him to represent their area.

I think he brings the issue right into focus, because as he was reviewing the journals that report the information in his riding, he brought to light specific cases, real instances, and his commentary would say in history that the incidents are on the increase. They're on the increase because children today, the ones who are looking for supports and direction, whether it's in our schools, are looking for structure and I think they survive very well in structure. Without it, you see what's going on in parts of the world today. It's really chaos.

So I think the intent here is not to be too draconian; it's to remind parents that they have a responsibility to direct and to model for their children, and the children have a responsibility along with rights in the Young Offenders Act. The Ottawa government seems to be lacking in any leadership to stand up for our youth and show by good example what your responsibilities as a citizen are.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate, member from Don Valley—

Mr Caplan: East.

The Acting Speaker: —East.

Mr Caplan: We'll get that right one day. Thank you, Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise to comment on the

remarks of the member for London-Fanshawe and the member for Northumberland.

The member for London-Fanshawe proved the point of a lot of the remarks around here. He spoke extensively about other people trying to focus and shift the blame, trying to abdicate the responsibility of the Harris government. It's ironic that in a bill about parental responsibility and the whole concept of the lack of leadership, the lack of the ability to stand up and take responsibility is glaring. Some of the comments were amazing. In fact, he doesn't even give credit where credit is due. He talked about the previous government. Of course I know that all members would want to acknowledge that 1989 was the last time this province had a balanced budget—under a Liberal government; not accomplished by this government, and certainly not by the last. Prior to that it was 1969. I know the member for London-Fanshawe would certainly want to acknowledge that.

As well, he also proved once again that he and the members of the Harris government are in the holster of the gun lobby. They're soft on guns. Actually, they are all talk and no action, and that really is a shame.

I want to speak to the comments of the member for Northumberland. He talked about having the proper tools. I was really struck—I wasn't here at the time, but I was here subsequently when the provincial government passed something called the Victims' Bills of Rights and proclaimed it and extolled it throughout the land. When two people went to court to use the provisions of the Victims' Bill of Rights, the government sent their high-priced lawyers in and argued successfully in the courts that it conferred no rights; it was merely a policy statement. It was just window dressing, just a sham, just like the Parental Responsibility Act: something which waters down the existing provisions in law and purports to extend responsibility to parents.

The Acting Speaker: Response, member for Northumberland.

Mr Galt: I'd certainly thank the member for Durham—the member who represents places like Bowmanville and Newcastle and Courtice—for such a brilliant observation of the presentations that were made earlier. I was rather disappointed in some of the references of the other three, particularly the last member, from Don Valley East, who spoke about the balanced budget. Ask Bob Rae. Ask his mother. They'll tell you what kind of a balanced budget they had. How many billions in deficit was identified the following year? Bob Rae said he wanted to become Premier in the worst way, and that's exactly how he got it: in the worst way. You know, there was some very fancy juggling going on with those books to claim that they were balanced.

The member for Nickel Belt talked about condemning parents—far from it. It's very clear in here: only if it's identified as intentional. If condemning means that's part of bringing them to the courts with their young people, I don't think that's condemning. No, that's accountability. Also, that they identified reasonable efforts to train the child who's being charged I think is common sense.

1710

Then we heard the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London moaning and groaning something about lack of vision. I just explained to him earlier about the vision. People—third parties, not politicians but those who are very involved in watching it, and not Conservative-type politicians—are saying that Premier Harris is the first politician in the history of Canada to have a political vision, laid out in the Common Sense Revolution, published more than a year before the election that we had in 1995. It came out in early May 1994, expecting probably that there would be an election in the fall of 1994, when there should have been one. That was a vision, concise and to the point, a true vision, and we're still following the vision that was laid out at that time.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have waited so long for this moment. I know that many of my colleagues have commented on this legislation that is before us. I want to say how much I appreciate this opportunity to do so.

I feel slightly different from quite a few people who have spoken here. I think it's an important piece of legislation. Like all legislation that is put forward here in this Parliament, it is extremely important. Furthermore, this government feels very strongly about this. Mark you, most of them haven't read it. I noticed that from the comments they have made. They haven't read it, so most of their comments are quite irrelevant. As a matter of fact, if they had read it, as my colleagues in my party have pointed out to them, they would have found that they are reading legislation that was done in 1986 and they would not have made all those comments and would have saved themselves all this time. So far as they're concerned it's very important, because it impresses upon the public that they are doing something. Even though it's duplication, they feel they are doing something, so it is important.

Again, though, when I look at it, they are saying, "We're trying to attempt to deal with all this youth violence." I'm saying to myself, where is this youth violence they are talking about? I want to deal with those youth and to deal with them appropriately. Inside this legislation it says nothing about how they're going to deal with those individuals who have committed this violence or these crimes or these situations within the schools or anywhere as to property damage. Even the act itself doesn't mention anything about the young people. It says, "An Act to make parents responsible for wrongful acts intentionally committed by their children." This has nothing to do with young people; it has to do with their parents. Furthermore, when they even try to define a parent in this, I'm pretty lost again. When it comes to the government taking some responsibility, which my colleagues have pointed out, this government is very astute to say, "Who do we blame now for anything that happens badly around here?" When it comes to taking responsibility, it says it's the parents who must take responsibility for that.

The reason why I'm taking a different direction in this debate is because with new legislation in this House since the government has come here, having a democratic process of good debate, no matter what we say, I know they won't change their mind. The fact too is that neither do they request any sort of public input into this legislation. I would not be surprised at all, nor are the people surprised now, if they put closure on this debate, because the more one speaks about it, I know there are quite honourable people over on the other side who would say, "My golly, with the conviction that they have and the convincing argument that we find on that side, we may just have to change our mind." They may have to change their little briefing notes that they got from the bureaucrats to say, "Stick to the notes." The fact is, if we open this and say we will have public debate on this, public input, they will hear the real story.

Let me tell you why it's important that we have public debate on this. In our society, which we brag about and we applaud, it's a diverse community. We are talking about parents and we are talking about people understanding the laws. As I've told many of the students when I go to them every Friday, laws are made for the people, by the people. The only way you can have laws that are made by the people is to have their input into them.

Here we have a very diverse community. People from all walks of life, from different ethnic or religious walks of life, are going to address themselves to legislation. But somehow, in the backroom of some place, somebody picked up 1986 legislation and flagged it through and said, "That's the law." Many people outside would say, "I'd like to make some comments because I understand that in the bill it will say that if you, as a parent, did not act properly, we will then chastise you for the action of your child." They said, "I'd like to tell you how I have done so."

What this law has done is to say: "You're all guilty. You come before me, the judge, and I'll tell you very well if you have been a good parent or not. Right now, you're a bad parent because that child has done something wrong, so you are a bad parent." They said, "If we had a chance, your honour, to improve on this legislation, maybe we would say you're going in the wrong direction in that regard." No input.

There are two people who are pretty happy about this, I know. Insurance companies are applauding this because when there is any damage in the schools, of course they have to come up with that. I would like to ask the insurance companies, after this legislation, which is a duplication, is through, do they drop the premiums anyhow because now they can recover their money? They could have done it all along, but the government has taken this opportunity to say, "We are doing something rather sensible and we're taking the big stick out, because we're a government which is committed to law and order."

Let me tell you about law and order. I want to give an example, because something came to mind. I spoke to a

principal last night and she told me a very shaking story. She said that one of her nieces was in a school and was playing basketball. Somehow an elbow got into one of her partners on the basketball team and damaged her eye. The police were called and took this young kid to the police station until the parent arrived. The kid was extremely depressed and very frightened about all this. Later on the parent came and they had to resolve this. The child was charged, of course, for this act.

Two weeks afterwards—a very sad story—they discovered that this young kid was taking some tablets to kill herself, to commit suicide. Luckily enough the parents caught her in time. What happened was that the kid was so depressed she had let her parents down because she was playing and had damaged someone and then had been charged and now the police had come and it had been dealt with in a criminal way.

The kid was very depressed. She was an honours student and she dropped out of school. After great love and attention by the family and friends, they put that young person back on track. The person is now ready for university and has gone on to better herself in life.

I am just saying to this government, when you bring this big stick out, be concerned that what you're doing sometimes is damaging families, damaging people who could contribute so well in our society. You must take some concern about what's happening with your actions. Take some responsibility. When things like this happen, when legislation like this is put through, you can't come and say it's the Young Offenders Act or it's the federal government or it's the municipal government or it's young kids who are having kids too early, and what have you.

You've got to take some responsibility for your act, and this direction is wrong. It's a wrong direction. Now that we have this society, let them have input into it. I'm going to be a prophet now. I will say that they will put closure on this. They don't want to hear the truth any more. They don't want to hear more input from many members of our caucus and the NDP and people outside who would say, "I want to have some input into this legislation so we can have good legislation in this province." No, it is, "I want to wave this around and tell you I am tough on this."

Let me go back to that young lady and let's do a comparison. On Hockey Night in Canada fights are on the TV every night. Guys are fighting openly. As a matter of fact, the commentaries are there, blow by blow, kick by kick, bite by bite. Has anybody been charged? No. But a young person in school will be charged.

Take some responsibility. Realize that you can ruin someone's life in that sense. Make sure we have legislation that reflects our province. Make sure we are a government that is caring.

We know, of course, the saying that an individual alone cannot raise a child, a village raises a child. But if you start beating up on teachers and on people on welfare and on nurses and on anyone who comes before you, by the time you're through, people will feel so disillusioned,

discouraged and despairing about where they are going. That is why today, regardless of all the money, regardless of the way you may balance budgets and do all of this, if the people are not with you, you're going to spend more money trying to bring the individuals back to be caring and loving. They want to be. Parents are caring and loving for their child.

One other quick point before I close: The fact is that when they define "parent" in here, the children's aid society sometimes has wards of the government; they are wards, our children, in those circumstances. I want to ask the government, if that child commits any acts there, will they pay for it? It seems to me the act doesn't say that. The act says, "No, we're not responsible one bit for all this." Who's the parent there? As soon as the government becomes responsible for anything, they blame someone else.

1720

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Ms Martel: I want to reinforce some points that were made by the member for Scarborough-Rouge River. It has to do with parents. I am a parent of two small children. We haven't had many major traumas in our life. I'm sure we're going to as they grow older, and I'm sure there are a number of people in this House today who are parents of teenage children.

I really believe, because I've seen more than a number of parents come into my office, that most parents are really concerned about what their kids are up to and what they're doing. Most parents are doing everything they can by way of trying to get their kids into recreation, trying to ensure their kids have special needs if they need to at school, trying to get them special tutoring, trying to get them into all kinds of experiences so they don't end up in trouble.

I firmly believe that's what most parents are doing, whether they're single parents or they're poor parents or middle income parents or rich parents. What I find so disheartening about this bill is the way the government has tried to frame it to attract public attention and hopefully public support, trying to say that the reason kids are in trouble and bad is because their parents don't give a damn what they're doing at night and who they're out on the street with and how late they are out at night and what they're doing in the school yard, and on and on.

I have seen too many parents who are really good parents and who are doing everything they can who still have a kid who seems to be going off the rails. I've seen all kinds of parents who have spent all kinds of money and time trying to get counselling—drug counselling, alcohol counselling, behaviour management counselling—to try and get their kids back on track. I really abhor the way the government has framed this bill, because it's all about a bill, frankly, of beating up on parents who I think at the end of the day are already trying to do everything they can to get their delinquent kids back on track.

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, I would like to congratulate the member for Scarborough-Rouge River for

an excellent speech and an excellent presentation of the views as they relate to this bill.

The thing that amazes me and that I think the people of Ontario really should know, and we talked about it earlier here today, is that in effect the content of this bill has already been law in Ontario since 1986. I would just like to remind the people once again that section 68 of the 1986 Family Law Act specifically states, "In an action against a parent for damage to property ... the onus of establishing that the parent exercised reasonable supervision and control over the child rests with the parent."

This is exactly the same section which is the operative section of this bill, so I would once again like to ask the members of the government, and the minister who is now coming back into the House, to answer this question: Why do you feel this particular piece of legislation is necessary when it's already on the books, since 1986?

It is only about one thing and that's optics. You would like to create the illusion out there that the Harris government is tough on crime and somehow have the people of Ontario believe that. Why don't you deal with the real underlying issues: that of poverty, that of a lack of adequate housing, that of the greater divide between the haves and the have-nots in our society? Those are the issues we should be talking about.

Now that the minister is back in the House, I would like to ask her once again, where does it say anywhere in the Early Years Study of Dr Mustard that you talked about so eloquently earlier today that this kind of legislation is necessary? Would you tell me that, Minister, please?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I too want to compliment the member for Scarborough-Rouge River on a first-class presentation, and I want to echo the comments of my friend from Kingston and the Islands when he talks about the redundancy of this bill. If there was ever something that should go before the Red Tape Commission, it has to be this bill. We talk about red tape often, but when this Legislature sits to put an act in place that just mimics another act of the Legislature, I tell you, we're all scratching our heads over on this side.

The problem with this is that I don't know how, and I don't think anybody knows how, this bill will have any effect on the actions of young offenders. I don't know how anyone expects that this will help anybody in the province of Ontario. If it's about restitution, the mechanism is there. It doesn't need to happen.

So what is this bill about? This bill is about beating up our young people. I was in Elliot Lake 18 months ago and it was the Renaissance group, I believe, that had organized a seminar to talk about crime issues that might be in the city of Elliot Lake. I was very heartened because those seniors—and they were all seniors, 150 of them—were very interested in finding ways to assist young people. They recognized that the young people in their community were great young people. The young people were contributing to society in Elliot Lake. They were not into punitive actions. They understood that you

have to be of assistance. I wish the government would understand that.

Mr Parsons: This is a difficult bill to speak to at this stage because it is so absolutely obvious that all we're doing is treading water in here to make some media coverage to act as if we're doing something.

I would like to go back and talk to a point raised by my colleague. I have had the privilege of being a board member on a children's board for some 24 years. My wife and I have fostered for a little over 13 years and have fostered 40-some children over those years. It has been an interesting experience for us, a tremendous cross-section of children coming into care.

Almost invariably those children have been damaged in some way. To simply be taken out of a home and moved into a foster home with strangers—and we have good foster homes in this province—is traumatic. That alone does damage to a child. But the very fact that they are in care indicates there are problems in their home. These children, who may have been removed in the middle of the night, who come into the system and are placed in our homes, act out. I am thinking of cases where parents have voluntarily given up care of their children, and they act out and they do damage. One of the things they have to resort to is physical action to do damage.

This government has not done a lot for foster children in the last five years. Will they stand up and automatically take responsibility for these children, who I don't believe are liable for their actions, given what society has done to them? They are called crown wards. The government becomes a parent for these children. I challenge the government to think about the implications. Surely people who have damage won't have to go to Small Claims Court. Surely the government will take the responsibility.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Curling: I'd like to thank the members for Nickel Belt and for Kingston and the Islands and for Algoma-Manitoulin and for Prince Edward-Hastings for their comments.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: There were four questions and comments. It's now the member's chance to respond.

Mr Curling: As to their further comments and the concerns they raised, this legislation, as we know, says nothing about accountability, gives no accountability to young people who may have done some sort of damage. The fact is that young people learn from older people and mirror our society. As a matter of fact, there's a contradiction, as we see, as this government tried to fight for and wanted more guns in our society, and in the meantime we try to punish our young people if they even have a nail clip inside a school.

There was a situation where a young man had drawn a gun on a piece of paper, cut it out and pointed it at another student and was expelled from school because he had done that. How far are we going to go with this? Let us be sensible about this. We have wonderful young

people in our society. Don't send the wrong message that they are irresponsible. Don't do this. Give the support that is needed, especially when there is more poverty among our young people. There are more people at the food banks who are young. There are people who want housing. There is a lack of affordable housing.

If you start addressing those issues, I'm convinced, and many of us in our society are convinced, that some of the behaviour that would evolve out of all this would not be as bad as they say and we wouldn't need this kind of legislation.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Since none of the Tory members responded to the member for Scarborough-Rouge River, they obviously completely agree with the comments he made.

The Acting Speaker: No, that's not a point of order. Further debate?

Ms Martel: In the short time I have here this afternoon, I want to make a couple of points about Bill 55. Overall, I think the government would like the public to see this as part of their agenda to somehow deal with crime in our communities and to somehow give some additional support to victims. In both cases, the sense of security they're trying to provide and the sense that they're doing something about crime are false. If you look at the bill itself, and this has been clearly stated and I'm going to repeat it, despite what the Attorney General has tried to say, the bill does not add one, new, single bit of support to victims and doesn't provide any changes to legislation that has already been enacted in this place as far back as 1986.

In 1986, there was an amendment to the Family Law Act which clearly laid out the damages both to property and to personal injury that could be incurred, and the fact that the onus was on parents to prove they had not been negligent. So the reverse onus was already in the 1986 legislation. While the Attorney General has tried to tell this House in his opening remarks and in questions that somehow this is new, the fact of the matter is it is not. I won't read the particular section again because that was done earlier, but I will read to you from a piece of work done by professor Larry Wilson, who is from the faculty of law at the University of Windsor and who has taken a look at this bill and has provided us with some comments on it.

He says very clearly: "My response to the legislation is somewhat different. I ask, 'Why bother?' Under current law in Ontario a negligent parent can be liable for both personal injury and property damage caused by their children. Liability can include both intentional and unintentional acts of children and there is no cap of \$6,000," as there is in this legislation. "Simply stated, the present law provides much greater access to compensation for injured parties than the proposed legislation," the one we're dealing with today. "Furthermore, the perceived advantage of a reverse onus (that is, requiring the parent to prove that they were not negligent) is totally illusory. Under the current law in Ontario, specifically section 68 of the Family Law Act, in an action against a

parent for damage to property or for personal injury or death caused by a child, the parent is required to show that they exercised reasonable supervision and control over the child. What then does this proposed legislation," Bill 55 which we're debating today, "offer in terms of advancing or even altering the current state of the law in Ontario? Nothing." That's from Professor Larry Wilson, who is with the faculty of law at the University of Windsor. He has reviewed this legislation and makes the point again that there is nothing new, nothing different here, except that probably the current legislation is tougher because it allows for compensation for personal injury, which Bill 55 doesn't. The current legislation, under the Family Law Act, also doesn't have a cap on compensation, which Bill 55 does. So in actual fact, you could say that Bill 55 reduces some of the protections, some of the compensations that victims could get. That's what the government has done. They have in fact reduced victims' compensation by this law.

That reminds me of what the government did with respect to its Victims' Bill of Rights, which was dealt with by this House, I believe, in 1996. The government, with a great deal of fanfare, tried to say to the public in Ontario that under their bill of rights they could get compensation, they could get all kinds of support that they didn't have before, and that this government really cared about victims.

It wasn't until two very courageous women in this province took the government to court, essentially, that it was discovered that in fact the Victims' Bill of Rights passed by this government in the last House does nothing to help victims. I want to read into the record again—I know it was done yesterday, but I want to reinforce it here today—what Superior Court Justice Gerald Day said about this Conservative government's Victims' Bill of Rights. He said: "I conclude that the Legislature did not intend for the Victims' Bill of Rights to provide rights to the victims of crime. The act is a statement of principle and social policy beguilingly clothed in the language of legislation. It does not establish any statutory rights for the victims of crime." Nothing. It's the same kind of illusion that this government tries to provide with Bill 55, an illusion that they're going to get tough on criminals and support victims of crime, when in fact the bill, in its present form here, does nothing to get tough on criminals and certainly doesn't support the victims of crime.

It's interesting to note that after this judgment was given in May 1999, the Premier, during the election campaign of 1999, said that he was going to consider giving the bill more teeth, and we haven't seen anything from this Premier or from this government with respect to victims of crime and a Victims' Bill of Rights.

The bill pretends that if you penalize parents of young offenders, you're going to stop those young offenders from offending again. It somehow gives the impression that if you force parents to pay \$6,000 for property damage caused by their children, somehow this is going to stop their children from offending again.

I ask the government: Where is the proof that anything like that will happen? Where is your evidence to show

that parental liability legislation, which is what this is, works anywhere at all?

I go back to the information that we've been given by Professor Wilson from the faculty of law at Windsor. He talks about the most recent work that has been done on this, in 1988. This was the experience from California. "In 1988 that state introduced the most widely heralded of the American statutes, The Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act. The legislation was passed in response to public concerns about youth gangs. The statute imposed a duty of care on parents to exercise reasonable care, supervision, protection and control over their minor children," in the same way that Bill 55 tries to do. "Failure to fulfill that duty which caused, or tended to cause a person under the age of 18 to become a juvenile delinquent was an offence punishable by up to a year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine, or probation for up to five years. Thus far," says Professor Wilson, "there is no evidence that the enactment of this legislation brought about any decrease in the rate of juvenile crime. In fact, the juvenile violent crime rate actually increased."

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This government has no evidence at all, in looking to other jurisdictions that have enacted similar legislation, that parental liability legislation actually stops children from offending. No evidence at all, no proof, and they certainly haven't provided any here during the course of this debate.

If you want to do something meaningful about stopping offenders from offending, about stopping more victims from being victimized, then when they first get in trouble you deal with those young offenders swiftly through our courts. You get them into meaningful custodial programs so that we can deal with the trouble they're in. You make sure that across this province there are the alcohol and drug programs in place for young kids that they can access to deal with their problems, that there are programs in place for behaviour management that young offenders can get into and get treatment for, that you do have the special education resources in our schools in this province to deal with kids who are causing trouble at school. But you see, the fact of the matter is, the government has only offered cuts to all of these important programs.

We talked yesterday about a program in Oshawa that has been proven to deal with young offenders, a program that has the support of the police and the youth courts and everyone involved, a program that has the support of the backbench MPPs from the Conservative Party who represent that area. What did the government do with respect to that program? They cancelled the little bit of provincial government funding that actually went into that program to make it work. Now it's at risk of closing, if it hasn't already closed.

Finally, if the government wants to do something about victims, the government can do a couple of things. Number one, it could actually put into place a meaningful Victims' Bill of Rights, as the Premier promised to do in the last election campaign. If the government really

wanted to help some victims of crime, it would do away with the Small Claims Court fees where there has already been a conviction, because those fees are \$150 to \$200. If the government wanted to help victims of crime, it would address personal injury and not take personal injury away from the laws that already exist in this province. If they really wanted to do something about crime instead of exploiting it, then they would put back into place the funding for community supports that these young offenders so desperately need.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Hon Mrs Marland: The member for Nickel Belt says that if we want to do something to help young offenders, she gives some examples. What we want to do and what we are committed to doing and what we have now launched in this province is a program that ultimately will reduce the number of young offenders. We want to help them before they become young offenders. That's what early child development and parenting programs are all about.

There was discussion earlier, when I actually did return to the House, about what we have done for foster parents. We are the first government in a decade that increased the funding to foster parents, that increased the per diem rate that foster parents receive, because in fact there was a shortage. People simply couldn't afford to be foster parents for the per diem rate that they received.

We also asked the children's aid societies in this province how much money they needed to meet the increased demands of their responsibilities and they said \$170 million. Do you know how much money we gave the children's aid societies in this province? We gave them \$170 million. They got what they asked for and they are using that money very effectively because of one other thing that we did that hadn't happened in over a decade. We amended the Child and Family Services Act. We added as a condition of protection for children the words "neglect or at risk of abuse and neglect." So for the first time our children's aid workers have the tools they need to protect our precious children who are at risk, being abused and being abandoned, unfortunately and tragically around this province. We do care about children and our commitment is there, with money behind it.

Mr Curling: Let me commend the member for Nickel Belt, who has always addressed herself and presented herself very well in the House. It's unfortunate that the government wouldn't listen to some of the things she was saying. I want to commend her for her presentation.

If this government were serious about the issues and the concerns of young people, they would address themselves to the fact that there are far more kids who are going to school hungry in the morning. I've been to many breakfast presentations in the schools, trying to give food to kids who have not even had breakfast before coming to school. This is a province that applauds itself on all its richness and prosperity, yet there are more kids going to school hungry. It's unfortunate. This is not a Third World developing country. This is a progressive

province with lots of money, bragging very much about the economy, yet kids are going to school hungry.

There are far too many young people coming to school who have not had a good sleep because they did not have adequate accommodation, all caused by the fact that some parents are not able to earn enough money to pay for accommodation, or the shortage of affordable housing. Even today, you could see that the Minister of Housing had to admit what a failure they have been in building affordable housing. As a matter of fact, he even wanted to threaten the guys to whom he has given everything. You have given up the entire affordability to these people and you say, "Please build." We told them on this side that they would never build. They have no concern about those people at the bottom end of the ladder. They're saying, "We don't make enough profit."

Who suffers under all of this? Our young people. And here we go again. We're going to try and put the responsibility on the parents. The responsibility lies with the government.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions?

Mr Caplan: I'd like to commend and congratulate the member from Nickel Belt for her comments. She spoke about the sham which was the Harris government's Victims' Bill of Rights. The first time somebody in Ontario tried to exercise their supposed rights under that bill, Mr Harris and the Attorney General sent their high-priced lawyers to court to argue that there are no rights contained in that bill. The then Attorney General, Mr Harnick, proclaimed in the House that this was a new era, that this was somehow a boon to victims, that this was going to redress all of the problems over all of the years. The first time somebody goes ahead and tries to claim their rights under that piece of legislation, they argued that it's simply a policy statement wrapped up in the language of legislation. The judge who heard the case called it "beguiling," trying to somehow fool or deceive the people of Ontario into thinking that something had actually been done of substance when in fact it was just a piece of fluff. It was just window dressing, just like the Parental Responsibility Act, just like this act that they're trying to pass off on the people of Ontario, to attempt to say, "We're trying to do something." But it has become clear not only to me but to the people of Ontario that the Harris government is all talk and no action when it comes to crime and when it comes to victims' rights in this province.

There are fewer police officers today on the streets in Ontario than there were in 1994. They're in the holster of the gun lobby. They challenge the federal initiatives to bring some control to guns in this province. We have one day the Attorney General and the Solicitor General opposing our legislation related to replica guns. This government is a sham.

Mr Brown: I was intrigued by the remarks of the member from Nickel Belt. They've been said in here before and she said them very well. As I've said before, this is certainly, at best, redundant legislation.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): At best.

Mr Brown: At best.

As the father of four children, there are often lots of children around our house who aren't mine, I might say, who come to visit my daughters. All I can say is that I believe we have the finest group of young people, in total, that this province has ever had. That's based on my personal observations. It's also based on the quality of our students in our high schools, our community colleges and our universities. Two of my daughters have graduated; one's about to, in a year; the fourth one's in high school. These kids are good kids.

I look over at the government bench and I wonder if any of them were ever kids. I don't think they could have ever been children. They could never at some point have maybe done something kind of stupid when they were kids. Probably all of us, if we reflect upon it—as a matter of fact, my grandfather Carruthers used to tell of his experience growing up in Parkhill. His favourite story was about going out on Halloween night with other young lads from the vicinity and knocking over out-houses. I don't think his father, Moses, would have objected at all to paying to have those replaced; I think he would have been a responsible parent. I think most parents are responsible. Shame on this government for suggesting they're not.

Ms Martel: I'd like to thank the members for Mississauga South, Scarborough-Rouge River, Don Valley East and Algoma-Manitoulin for their comments. I want to reply in this way: If you want to do something about young offenders and deal with them before they victimize someone, you have to have in place those supports that parents can turn to when they first start to see their kids go off the rails, when they first start to see their kids get into trouble.

Because the minister responsible for children's issues spoke first, I just want to say to her that we have a 500-person waiting list for speech and language pathology in Sudbury. Imagine the number of kids who start to get into trouble at school and elsewhere because they don't know how to communicate—a 500-person waiting list for that service in Sudbury-Manitoulin.

Let's look at some of the other programs the government cancelled that would have helped parents who knew their kids were in trouble and who were desperately looking for programs to get them into, to keep them out of more serious trouble. One of the first things the government did when it was elected in 1995 was eliminate funding for 64 youth support programs which served young people between 18 and 20 years of age. The government cancelled all funding for adult and family counselling in 118 programs.

We know, because the Ontario child advocate has told us, that 80% of youths who are in young offender facilities right now have mental health problems. Yet in Windsor-Essex there are 1,000 children on a waiting list for mental health care; in Halton, you've got teenagers waiting six to 18 months to see a psychiatrist; in Sudbury right now, Service familial, which provides family coun-

selling, especially when children are in trouble, has a six-month waiting list for service.

The only alternative some of these parents have, if they're lucky enough to have the money, is to try and purchase some additional private service—again, if they have the money. I think most parents are really worried when their kids get in trouble, but this government has

failed miserably to provide the services those parents need.

The Acting Speaker: It being close to 6 of the clock, I declare this House adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1754.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)	Should read:
43	2202	1	1	linkage analysis system, and that's ViCLAS. What that is

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
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		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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