

No. 76A



N° 76A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 21 June 2000

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mercredi 21 juin 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 June 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 juin 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WATER QUALITY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today, unfortunately, to comment on another incident involving drinking water. A boil-water advisory has been issued by the Brant County Health Unit, the Grand River Conservation Authority and the mayor of the city of the county of Brant for the people of Glen Morris in the riding of Brant. This announcement was made as a result of E coli testing showing unacceptable levels of the bacteria in their water supply.

Officials are now hand-chlorinating the source of the drinking water. A private firm has been hired to investigate the present system and make recommendations for possible changes to the entire system. As an additional safety measure, the Grand River Conservation Authority has closed permanently the popular, publicly accessible spring-fed water source on Highway 24 near Cambridge.

Due to the proactive stance our local officials have taken, we may indeed have averted a crisis.

I repeat again for the government, we must not take our life-giving water and air for granted and we must take responsibility for our actions and/or inactions. I implore the government: Restore provincial inspectors, fully fund our local agencies so they can effectively do their jobs, stop the drive to privatize our province and, for God's sake, stop endangering our water in order to save a few bucks.

LARRY DAVIS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Joining us today in the members' gallery is Constable Larry Davis of the Cobourg Police Service. He is the strongest police officer in Canada.

Constable Davis recently earned this distinguished title at the Canadian Law Enforcement Games in Ottawa. Not only did he finish first in the Ottawa competition, bench-pressing an incredible 365 pounds, Mr Davis's other feats include pulling school buses, lifting 200-pound logs over his head and holding a keg of beer in each hand with arms extended.

If sheer physical strength doesn't impress you, Constable Davis is also leading the way in another area. He is the first police officer in the Cobourg community to be

assigned specifically to work in our local high schools, spending three days a week working directly with the students. This was made possible through our government's community policing grants which last year provided 50% funding for communities to hire an additional 1,000 new police officers across Ontario.

I'm very impressed with Constable Davis and I'm proud that he serves in my riding of Northumberland.

When Constable Davis isn't busy protecting our community, lifting weights and pulling buses, he devotes his time to local high school athletics, where he stands as a role model for all of our young people.

On behalf of the province of Ontario and the people of Northumberland, I offer my sincerest congratulations to Constable Davis. Would the members of this House please join with me in offering a great round of applause for Constable Davis.

Applause.

ONTARIO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): On Monday, in response to my question, the minister responsible for the Ontario Human Rights Commission bragged about her government's perceived successes at the commission. Let me tell you the reality of the situation.

This government does not tell us that more than 50% of the cases that have come to the attention of the commission are either withdrawn, dismissed or not dealt with by the commission. This government also does not tell us that some complainants are discouraged to seek redress by the commission.

The minister also fails to tell us that even if a complainant is successful at the commission hearing, there is a great probability that they may not realize their remedy. Far too many successful complainants are forced to wait endlessly to receive their remedy. In fact, some are compelled to seek redress against those convicted by the commission in the criminal justice system to receive their remedy. This should not be happening.

The evidence overwhelmingly reveals that the Ontario Human Rights Commission lacks the resources to deal with the backlog of cases and also lacks the mandate to enforce its decision.

It is evident that only when we have a full review of the Ontario Human Rights Commission's effectiveness and the necessary changes made that the people of Ontario have the confidence that the system works. What we have at present is a right with no meaningful remedy.

I urge this government to proceed quickly and call for a full review of the Ontario Human Rights Commission's mandate. You can see what happened today, where women are scared because restraining orders are not even followed.

MERIDIAN GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): Great news from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex today. On June 10, I had the opportunity to attend the opening of Meridian's Global Technology Centre, strategically located in Ontario on the edge of the NAFTA Super-highway in Strathroy, Ontario, which is located in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

Meridian is a truly global technology organization, with production facilities that serve markets around the world. Centred between European and Asia-Pacific markets, Strathroy is an ideal location that can best serve the needs of east and west and all of North America. In reality, Meridian's Global Technology Centre is in touch with all these markets daily by conventional means of travel and through the virtual reality of today's state-of-the-art internal technology communications systems.

From advanced engineering to product simulation and forward programs, Meridian provides hands-on solution and expertise to existing and growing markets globally. Through a knowledgeable base of in-depth experience, creative innovation and leading magnesium production know-how, Meridian has opened new markets in the auto parts sector internationally.

Meridian's people are problem-solvers that are tested every day while handling a wide range of customers' challenges. Meridian's people are the real strength of the company.

Meridian will also play a major role in maintaining the economic health in the riding of Sarnia-Lambton and, may I add, in Ontario. We wish them the best in the future.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): It's incredible that Canada, which takes pride in having one of the best health care systems in the world, should be ranked number 30 in the World Health Organization's study of health care in 191 countries. We are not number 30 because the quality of our health care is poor; in fact, we are seventh in the ranking of the health of our population. The reason we are low is because we expect people to pay too much out of their own pockets for health care. Among G7 countries, only the United States is lower than Canada in the percentage of our health care spending that is funded by government, which means we are number two in what we expect people to pay for privately.

What is alarming, I say to the members opposite, is that people in the province of Ontario pay even more out of pocket for health care than is expected of other Canadians. Across Canada, 30% of health care costs are paid for privately. In Ontario, the percentage is 34% and

it's growing every year. People are expected to pay out of pocket for more and more services that have been delisted from OHIP. They are paying more for physiotherapy and private clinics because the OHIP-funded clinics are being squeezed out of business. They are paying more for home care because home care services are rationed. They are paying newer, larger co-payments for drugs or for long-term care. In the north, people are forced to pay for travel to get care. That doesn't even count in the 34%. People are paying to jump the queue to get MRIs, which isn't legal, but it is what seems to happen if you mix public and private care in the same facility.

Canada has always prided itself, not just on the quality of our health care system, but on the fact that health care in this country is universally accessible. The report of the World Health Organization has a sobering message for us: We are losing that universal access. We do have a good health care system. Now the challenge is to make sure everyone can benefit from it.

AIR QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I just came back from a smog summit, in which all three levels of government were represented. Jack Layton, the mayor, who organized it, spoke, and I must congratulate him for getting such a fine turnout; the federal ministers of the environment and of transportation and the Ontario Minister of the Environment were there. It was a very polite meeting. There were not a lot of new things announced today, but I will say that it was a positive step forward in that all three levels of government did come together, with no new announcements particularly, but signed an agreement that they would work together to try to do something about smog, which is killing thousands of people in this province every year.

Today I'm calling on the government to do one very small thing, on top of all the other things I've asked the government to do to cut down and prevent smog. I'm calling on the government to stand up for clean air and block attempts to ban small ride-sharing services in Ontario. The government is going out of its way to make life easy for well-established bus companies by stopping the little guys who offer cheap alternative ideas, but this will also encourage people to get back in their cars and drive, which contributes to smog, when these small alternative methods are taken away. The Ontario Highway Transport Board plans to investigate four ride-sharing services to see if they should be banned. At a time when we're trying to do something about smog, the government should take a position and save these ride-shares across Ontario.

1340

LEGACY OF LOGAN

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): On Sunday, June 11, I had the privilege of attending a book launching ceremony for a community in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. The township of Logan, now part of the

municipality of West Perth, is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. To commemorate this milestone, local residents have produced a history book entitled *Legacy of Logan*.

A large celebration is planned for the weekend of July 14. There will be a variety program, a fireworks display, baseball games, an interdenominational church service and many other fun-filled activities.

The Logan township history book committee, chaired by Barb Scherbarth, has produced a very handsome 720-page book with photos and details about the township's past.

I congratulate all the volunteers who have worked so hard in organizing the many activities that are planned for the 150th celebration next month. In particular, I would like to recognize the co-chairs, Geraldine Siemon and Barry and Eileen Dietz. The members of the history book committee, Bruce Eisler, Carol Francis, Ellen Illman, Ellen Maloney, Wilma McFadden, Tim Nicholson, Diane Osborn, Jean Reaney, Margaret Scherbarth, Gerry Snyders and Gordon Young, should also be congratulated for their work. The editor of the book is Hilary Machan. Again, I congratulate and thank those volunteers for their dedication.

As the township celebration motto so aptly says, "Pride in our past, faith in our future."

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I want to use my time today to urge the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in the strongest possible terms, to set aside his decision to move ahead with the restructuring of Beardmore, Geraldton, Longlac, Nakina and the surrounding unorganized communities into the new municipality of Greenstone, at least until the Supreme Court has an opportunity to rule on the appeals before it opposing this amalgamation.

I have been opposed to this amalgamation from the very beginning. I have always felt that a municipality of this size was unworkable, would not achieve the anticipated savings and would negatively impact on the quality of life of the residents of this vast area. While I believed that was the case four years ago, I feel very strongly that that is even more demonstrably true today.

Minister, as recently as a month ago you wrote the area mayors and reeves to say that the amalgamation still made sense because of a potential for \$1 million in savings. Even the supporters of this restructuring acknowledge that those savings will not happen and, in that your reasons for moving ahead with this have always been related to savings to taxpayers, the fact that these savings will not be there should be reason enough for you to cancel this amalgamation.

There are a variety of other reasons why this restructuring should be stopped, including the frightening potential of more provincial downloading to property taxpayers and the fact that area services boards, created

especially for northern communities, completely negate the need for this massive restructuring.

Minister, there are other options you can explore which could meet your goals without ripping the independence and the heart out of these communities. Please explore those options before you turn a region that once worked strongly together on shared goals into a sadly divided, torn-apart and massive community.

HOSPICE THORNHILL

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It is my pleasure and privilege to rise today to tell you about wonderful work that's being done in my community of Thornhill by Hospice Thornhill.

Hospice Thornhill was incorporated as a non-profit organization in May 1987. It is a community-based volunteer service to meet the needs of persons with life-threatening illnesses. Hospice volunteers are specifically trained over a six-week period and complement existing health care teams in York region. The hospice provides services to meet the non-medical needs of the terminally ill person and family in the home setting.

Staff and volunteers provide 24-hour service and offer emotional support and respite care to family and friends, visit patients and accompany patients to appointments. They also assist with nourishment, telephone calls and shopping, and offer assistance during times of bereavement and continuing support through the Take Heart self-help groups.

At a recent fundraiser I was extremely impressed to meet many of the dedicated staff and volunteers who work so tirelessly on behalf of Hospice Thornhill. It was an honour to meet one of the founding members, Marleene Kretchman, as well as John Kain, chair of the board, and Joan Chesney, Libby Bailey, Isabelle Welsh and Anne Thompson. These people are here with us today and I ask that you join me in welcoming them to the Legislature, congratulating them for the dedication and commitment they offer.

VISITORS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, it's always very nice to have people in the public gallery. Today we have two very special groups in the gallery. In the gallery behind me is a group of students from Sudbury who are sort of setting a record. They are going to be the last grade 7 and 8 class at St Louis de Gonzague school. St Louis is going to be closing in June. I would like to welcome them warmly. They are certainly model citizens. On the other side in the public gallery we have a group of people from Hamilton, and in that group is a very special person, the mother of Dominic Agostino, Mrs Teresa Agostino. I think we want to welcome both groups to the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We certainly welcome all the guests, especially Mrs Agostino. The member for Hamilton East will be very well behaved

today, I'm sure. In some respects, we wish she could be here every day.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Monday, June 12, the member for Parkdale-High Park raised a point of privilege relating to an advertisement sponsored by the government that addresses issues relating to Bill 74 and specifically after-school activities.

The member asserted that the advertisement amounted to a prima facie case of contempt, likening it to the ad that was the subject of a January 22, 1997, ruling by Speaker Stockwell. Further, the member objected to the timing of the ad, which coincided with public hearings on the subject.

The government House leader, Mr Sterling, also made a submission respecting this point of privilege. It was his view that the ad in question makes no "presumption that the legislation is law or has passed."

I listened carefully to the arguments put forward and I have obtained a transcript of and reviewed the text of the ad. In addition, I have reviewed the precedents relating to privilege and government advertising.

First, to address the ruling of January 22, 1997, by Speaker Stockwell, in that instance the government had distributed a brochure which used words which presumed passage of the bill in question. The language used was definitive in that it indicated that the measures contained in the bill had already or would certainly occur.

This, in my view, is not the case with the ad in question today. It simply states that the government is taking action with respect to extracurricular activities. It does not reflect upon or presume the outcome of the proceedings of the Legislature. This ad is more akin to ads the government ran on Bill 160, which were also the subject of a ruling by Speaker Stockwell. On November 18, 1997, in respect of those ads, Speaker Stockwell stated:

"The ads may represent an aggressive challenge to opposing views put forward by others, but I do not believe they caused any of us to come here without the uncontested ability to continue the debate on this issue, nor can it be argued that the respect due to this House is diminished by the wording of the ads."

As to the timing of the ads, I note that such advertising has occurred on at least four other occasions concurrently with consideration of the matter in the House or its committees. That in and of itself does not make it acceptable. However, the determination with respect to privilege has to be whether or not the effect of the ad has been to intimidate members or cause them to be obstructed in carrying out their parliamentary functions. I do not believe this ad has had that effect. Indeed, the members have continued to debate and vote on Bill 74 unimpeded.

For these reasons, I find that a prima facie case of contempt has not been made out. I thank the member for his submission.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Pursuant to standing order 119(b), I beg leave to present a report with respect to an appeal on a decision of the Chair of the standing committee on estimates by the majority of the standing committee.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member. I shall review the report of the Chair of the standing committee on estimates and will advise the House, at the earliest opportunity, of my decision.

1350

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MUNICIPALITY OF WEST PERTH ACT, 2000

Mr Johnson moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr17, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Township of West Perth to The Corporation of the Municipality of West Perth.

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

INQUIRY INTO POLICE INVESTIGATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST MINORS IN THE CORNWALL AREA ACT, 2000 LOI DE 2000 PRÉVOYANT UNE ENQUÊTE SUR LES ENQUÊTES POLICIÈRES SUR LES PLAINTES DE MAUVAIS TRAITEMENTS D'ORDRE SEXUEL INFLIGÉS À DES MINEURS DANS LA RÉGION DE CORNWALL

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 103, An Act to establish a commission of inquiry to inquire into the investigations by police forces into sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area / Projet de loi 103, Loi visant à créer une commission chargée d'enquêter sur les enquêtes menées par des corps de police sur les plaintes de mauvais traitements d'ordre sexuel infligés à des mineurs dans la région de Cornwall.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): On Christmas Eve of 1994, at a press conference, the Ontario Provincial Police ended a 14-month investigation into this matter saying there was no evidence of a pedophile ring operating and that no charges were to be laid. They also suggested that no stone had been left unturned.

Today, after Project Truth went back into Cornwall in 1996, 114 charges have been laid, 108 for offences which allegedly occurred years prior to 1994. It begs the question, was the 1994 investigation incompetent or was there a cover-up?

Over \$200,000 was spent by the people of Ontario, private citizens, to do the police work between 1994 and 1996 to provide the evidence for Project Truth. It seems to me that those people should be reimbursed for doing the work of the Ontario Provincial Police.

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES'
SEVERANCE PAY ACT, 2000
LOI DE 2000 SUR L'INDEMNITÉ
DE CESSATION D'EMPLOI
DES EMPLOYÉS
DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mrs Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 104, An Act respecting the payment of Severance Pay to Public Sector Employees / Projet de loi 104, Loi concernant le versement d'indemnités de cessation d'emploi aux employés du secteur public.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): The incentive for this bill came from some outlandish golden handshakes in Hamilton recently which led to, quite legitimately, public mistrust.

This bill provides that a public sector employee who is not subject to a collective agreement is, upon termination of employment, entitled to a severance pay of no more than an amount equal to 24 months' worth of wages. Further terms and conditions relating to the payment of severance may be set by regulation.

In the case of severance payment in an amount of \$100,000 or more, the employer is required to obtain the approval of the minister before the amount is paid to the employee.

The bill establishes a Public Sector Employee Severance Pay Council to review all agreements relating to severance pay entered into by public sector employers and determine whether they comply with the act and the regulations. The bill also provides that if a public sector employee who receives severance pay finds other employment in the public sector after his or her termination, he or she will have to reimburse a part of the severance pay determined by regulation to the employer in certain circumstances that may be set by regulation.

Finally, the bill requires that if a public sector employee is to receive severance pay of \$100,000 or more, the employer must make available for inspection a written record of the amount of the severance pay.

TOBACCO CONTROL
AMENDMENT ACT, 2000
LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA RÉGLEMENTATION
DE L'USAGE DU TABAC

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Tobacco Control Act, 1994 / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1994 sur la réglementation de l'usage du tabac.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): This bill would amend the Tobacco Control Act, 1994, to create an offence for a person under the age of 19 not only in the purchasing but also in the possession of tobacco.

At present, no person is allowed to sell or store tobacco in a place where a person has committed two tobacco sales offences. The bill provides for an exception for a person who is not related to the person convicted of the offences, in case someone was to sell the store, for example, that had created the offence. The bill also prohibits the person convicted of the tobacco sales offences from selling or storing tobacco in any other place of business.

LYNN HENDERSON'S LAW
(WORKPLACE SAFETY AND
INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT), 2000
LOI LYNN HENDERSON DE 2000
(MODIFICATION DE LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL)

Mr Christopherson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 106, An Act, in recognition of Lynn Henderson, to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, in order to provide for compensation for secondary victims of occupational disease / Projet de loi 106, Loi Lynn Henderson modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail afin de prévoir l'indemnisation des victimes indirectes de maladies professionnelles.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): This bill will allow compensation for the secondary victims of occupational disease—people like Lynn Henderson, who is here today in the House with her daughter, Jessica, and mother, Joyce Stinson—and who suffer from industrial disease just because they lived with someone who brought home the poisonous materials on their work clothes. Might I say that Lynn Henderson is dying. She has lost a lung. Her doctors told her she would die in two years, and that was two years ago. We've also lost a 15-year-old son of a worker who worked at Holmes Foundry. Donald Fitzsimmons is dead because of workplace exposures, and he didn't work there.

This bill also allows for compensation for those who contracted cancer through airborne asbestos fibres in communities like Sarnia. We don't know exactly how

many such victims there are, and that is why the bill also requires Ontario to do a survey of Lambton county and to establish a system to identify potential claimants across Ontario.

This bill will make Ontario a world leader in recognizing and combatting occupational disease, and I urge all parties to support it.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that, pursuant to standing order 9(c)(ii), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to midnight on Wednesday, June 21, 2000, for the purpose of considering government business.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before our deferred vote, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery members of the labour market committee of the Danish Parliament, who are accompanied by the Ambassador of Denmark to Canada. Please join me in welcoming our special guests.

DEFERRED VOTES

BRIAN'S LAW (MENTAL HEALTH LEGISLATIVE REFORM), 2000

LOI BRIAN DE 2000 SUR LA RÉFORME LÉGISLATIVE CONCERNANT LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 68, An Act, in memory of Brian Smith, to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 68, Loi à la mémoire de Brian Smith modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1401 to 1406.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats.

Mr Clark has moved third reading of Bill 68, An Act, in memory of Brian Smith, to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Marilyn
Arnott, Ted	Eves, Ernie L.	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Flaherty, Jim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Galt, Doug	Palladini, Al
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Beaubien, Marcel	Gilchrist, Steve	Patten, Richard
Bountrogiani, Marie	Gill, Raminder	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Harris, Michael D.	Sampson, Rob
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Smitherman, George
Christopherson, David	Hudak, Tim	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Cleary, John C.	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Kwinter, Monte	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Levac, David	Tascona, Joseph N.
Colle, Mike	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	Tsubouchi, David H.
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Wettlaufer, Wayne
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn	Wood, Bob
Duncan, Dwight	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	
Ecker, Janet	Murdoch, Bill	

The Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kennedy, Gerard	Peters, Steve
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Curling, Alvin	Lankin, Frances	
Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 82; the nays are 10.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. The death toll in Walkerton may now be as high as 18, and that's not just a number. As many as 18 families have lost a child, a parent or a grandparent, and what shocked all Ontarians was the way they died. Death by drinking water is not something you expect in Ontario in the early part of the 21st century.

This is probably the last time you will appear in this Legislature prior to the House rising tomorrow for the summer, and I'm going to ask you to do two things that you have failed to do thus far. First of all, I want you to

accept responsibility for the problems caused by your relentless and ruthless cuts to the Ministry of the Environment. Second, I want you to start rehiring the inspectors and enforcement officers you have let go. Will you do those two things, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me say that the events of Walkerton shocked all of us, shocked me personally, shocked Ontarians, which is why we've been very clear from the outset that we had obligations as a government to immediately provide assistance to Walkerton and why we immediately began a process of reviewing all the pertinent regulations and legislation around drinking water. We have announced four reviews directly related to Walkerton to get to the bottom of what went wrong there. In addition, we've announced a management review to assist the Ministry of the Environment to make sure it is the very best that it can possibly be.

I sincerely appreciate the member's advice on solutions, and we'll certainly take it under consideration along with the expert opinion that we have sought as well.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, this has been a very, very sad time for Ontario, and it has been your government's darkest hour. You tried to blame the NDP, you tried to blame human error, you tried to blame the municipalities and even the town of Walkerton itself, which is immersed in this tragedy. You fought our calls for a full, independent public inquiry until the pressure forced you to flip-flop, and then you ignored our calls for action, just as you ignored so many warnings issued by so many credible parties about the dangers that were present.

At least take responsibility for doing the right thing from here on in. At least provide some reassurance to Ontario families that you are doing what you can do to make sure their drinking water is safe during the coming summer months. Why not hire 100 inspectors and enforcement officers?

Hon Mr Harris: I think when the leader indicated he wanted a committee of the Legislature with full powers to investigate, I responded immediately. When you flip-flopped and said you didn't want politicians involved and you wouldn't co-operate, I immediately came back and had a judicial inquiry. So I responded very quickly to your first request. When you flip-flopped and refused to participate in the first request, we came forward with the commission of inquiry.

I have been very clear from the beginning that what happened in Walkerton was a tragedy and we wanted to get to the bottom of it. At every opportunity I have gone to great pains to say that now is not the time to assess blame. I blame nobody: no individual, no level of government, no party. I've been very clear on that. I've tried to point out facts relayed to me as I understood them. But always paramount were, first, the interests of the people of Walkerton and, second, how we get to the bottom of this, and of course, to all the citizens of Ontario, to ensure we have procedures in place to make sure not only that an event like Walkerton never takes place again, but

that we restore the confidence and integrity in Ontario's water as being the best in the world.

Mr McGuinty: You talk about restoring confidence and integrity when it comes to Ontario drinking water safety. We had to drag you and your government kicking and screaming into a full independent public inquiry. There were no volunteers on that side of the House, Premier. You didn't want to go there. We had to drag you there.

Yesterday, perhaps we gained the greatest insight of all into where Premier Mike Harris stands when it comes to drinking water safety in Ontario. As Ontario parents who have struggled during the course of the year to earn a few dollars get ready to take the kids out and go to summer camps and trailer parks and stop at service stations along the way, when we raised the issue that those private wells are not subjected to government tests, Mike Harris says, "Let them boil their water"; he says, "Let them bring bottled water." That's what Mike Harris says.

Why are you remaining so stubborn on this point? Why won't you do the right thing? Why won't you hire 100 inspectors and enforcement officers and send them out today to make sure that today our water in Ontario is safe? Why won't you do that?

Hon Mr Harris: I certainly appreciate the question and the advice of the member. I appreciate his interest and concern, which we all have, in this matter. With regard to the first part of the question, when he on behalf of the Liberal Party called for an all-party committee, we responded favourably. We said yes, we would do that and give them full power to investigate. When he flip-flopped and said, "No, I don't want to be involved; I don't want my members involved; I won't co-operate with what I first asked for, Mr Premier," I said, "You know what? Walkerton is too important." We ignored the flip-flop and said, "Then we'll have a judicial inquiry." Both, I indicated, would have full powers to get to the bottom of the matter, but when you reneged on your initial commitment to the legislative committee, I was happy to respond with the judicial inquiry.

With regard to the specific recommendations, I think they will be helpful to the—

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

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have another question for the Premier. It touches another important aspect of public safety. Today we have more proof that when it comes to crime, you are continuing to fail to protect Ontarians. We learned through freedom of information that you have a habit of releasing prisoners from Ontario jails before their time has been served. I'm not talking about early release on parole here. I'm talking about Mike Harris's early release program. In the last three years 40 prisoners, many of them dangerous, were released when they should still have been in jail—all this,

Premier, on your watch. Why are you giving dangerous prisoners in Ontario get-out-of-jail-free cards?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Correctional Services can respond.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I'd be happy to respond. In fact, I responded to that question as it was raised by one of our caucus colleagues yesterday in this House. What you're referring to is the measurement of statistics of people who are unlawfully released from jail. That's a statistic we started to monitor after we took government that you failed to do when you were in government and the NDP failed to do when they were in government.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Member for Windsor West, come to order, please.

Sorry for the interruption. Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Mr Sampson: I say to the Leader of the Opposition, you and your party have been relentlessly against our establishing standards for the correctional services of this ministry. We are going to establish standards that deal with safety, security, effectiveness and efficiency of the corrections system in this province and we'll do it—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The minister will take his seat. We'll just wait.

Supplementary, leader of the official opposition.

1420

Mr McGuinty: We already know what the government's standards are when it comes to the Mike Harris early release program. Over the course of the past three years, you let 40 dangerous prisoners out early. Listen to some of the charges under which these prisoners were convicted: aggravated assault, assault causing bodily harm, assault—resisting arrest, assault with a weapon, possession for the purpose of trafficking, robbery, traffic in a controlled narcotic, trafficking in narcotics, unlawfully at large—all of this on your watch. You're the people who are going to be tough on crime. This is tough? You show them the door and you say: "Have a nice day. Here's a get-out-of-jail-free card." Are those the kinds of standards you bring to Ontario when it comes to protecting Ontarians from crime and criminals?

Hon Mr Sampson: I find the leader's question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member will take his seat. Member for Hamilton East, come to order, please. Now you know what I have to put with some days, Mum.

Sorry for the interruption. Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Mr Sampson: I find the theme of the leader of the official opposition's questioning quite amusing because only two weeks ago the critic for this ministry stood in front of one of our detention centres and declared that the correctional system in this province is a model for other jurisdictions to follow. That came from

the mouth of the critic for corrections, the very member of your caucus.

I disagreed with him because we need to change corrections in this province to get tough on crime, to get tough on criminals, and to establish standards of safety and security, effectiveness and efficiency that are accountable to the people of this province. You don't want to do that; we do.

Mr McGuinty: I guess now we have the real definition of "safety and security" for Ontario communities when it comes to prisons and prisoners. You're talking about letting out 40 people on the Mike Harris early release program during the course of the past three years—40 dangerous offenders. One of them was out for—just wait for this—292 days before the police could catch up with him. These aren't releases that have been prompted by judges or early release programs or parole. It's been prompted by your incompetence, pure and simple. That's what we're talking about here.

You may want to joke about this, but think for a moment about the victim of crime, somebody who was assaulted who learns today that the individual who was convicted and sent to jail by a judge for a specified period of time was let out on Mike Harris's early release program and received a get-out-of-jail-free card. That's your plan, that's your program.

So tell us once again, how is it you can stand up with a great sense of pride and assure all of us that you're doing everything you possibly can here in Ontario to protect us from prisoners when you've let out 40 during the course of the last three years on the Mike Harris early release program?

Hon Mr Sampson: I thank the leader of the official opposition for the question because it allows me to stand up yet again and say that we are coming forward with tough new standards that will improve the performance of the corrections system in this province.

You are apparently happy with that. I don't—

Interjections.

The Speaker: We're not going to continue if the members choose to shout across the aisle when the minister is trying to answer. We just can't continue. I can't hear what he's saying, and quite frankly no one can hear what anybody's saying; it's just a dull roar.

Sorry for the interruption. Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Mr Sampson: I think it's quite clear what the Liberal position on early release is. All we have to do is to look to your federal cousins in Ottawa, who have a release quota for parole. They legally let people out when they shouldn't be out. That's the Liberal position on release from correctional systems in this province and this country.

We categorically deny that. In fact, I'm proud to stand in this place and say parole under this government has dramatically lowered and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Members should know I'm at the point now of warning people. That's what stage we're at, so members should be prepared for that.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. I want to ask you about a cabinet document dated March 14 entitled A Cleaner Ontario, a cabinet document that I am told proposed environmental SWAT teams. It asked your government for immediate approval to hire 138 new staff in the Ministry of the Environment, including 60 inspectors, 23 investigators and 45 technical support staff. This was a proposal that I'm told came forward, as I say, on March 14, two months before the Walkerton tragedy, two months before 18 deaths.

Your civil servants were asking you in this cabinet document, I am told, for the approval to hire these additional staff because they were very worried about what was happening in terms of protecting Ontario's environment. Can you tell me, Premier, why this cabinet submission was turned down?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): To the best of my knowledge, you were told wrong.

Mr Hampton: What I've been told is that the document says that the existing Ministry of the Environment inspectors and investigators are fully committed to the current work plan activities. Through these activities, approximately only 10% of current known sources of pollution are inspected annually. Taking staff away from these activities would result in slippages; ie non-enforcement. The option of increasing the existing staff, using the existing structures and delivery approach to get to a level where all sources of pollution are inspected annually, would require in excess of 500 new staff.

The case is made for 500 new inspection staff, but the option that is put forward, the SWAT team option, asks, as I say, for 138 new inspectors, investigators and enforcement staff. As the core business outcome, it cites cleaner water, quality of drinking water, communal water supplies that provide access to safe drinking water to Ontario residents.

Premier, it's a very specific cabinet document. Can you tell me why your government turned down a request by Ministry of the Environment staff two months before Walkerton for the vitally necessary staff to protect our drinking water?

Hon Mr Harris: As with a lot of the opposition information, it's just totally incorrect and not true. We did not turn down any request on the date. I don't recall the cabinet document, but I have a little signal from the Minister of the Environment. He knows nothing about it, I know nothing about it, cabinet knows nothing about it, so obviously somebody made it up.

I can tell you that we have been looking at the requirements for the Ministry of the Environment. We've been looking at the legislation. We've been looking at regulation. I have announced, as you know, that we've appointed Valerie Gibbons to assist with the total management review of the Ministry of the Environment. I have indicated that some have called for 99, some have called for—somebody somewhere, you say, gave you a

phony-baloney document and said 128. If 300 people are required, then that's what we will retain and hire.

As I've said, we have given absolute carte blanche to the Minister of the Environment, following the reviews, to hire whatever people it takes and to assign whatever responsibility is required to ensure we have absolutely the safest water, the cleanest air and the cleanest land anywhere in North America.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

1430

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): This document was so specific that it had a proposed cabinet minute attached to it. Premier, you have received warning after warning and you did nothing. Now we know your own cabinet submission told you that the majority of people had no confidence you were protecting their water. It said you needed to hire at least 500 new staff right away in order to increase inspections of all sources of pollution. It said you are so far behind in environmental protection that even if you had approved and implemented all of the recommendations, your government was still not able to deliver on your commitment that Ontario has the toughest penalty structure in Canada for environmental offences.

This cabinet submission warns you that if you do not do what they recommend, it may draw attention to your perceived poor track record on enforcement and prosecutions. Is that the reason you didn't approve this? If so, Premier, this is no time to worry about your reputation. It is time to repair it. Will you immediately hire the 500 staff recommended by your own Ministry of the Environment?

Hon Mr Harris: As I've already indicated to you, you've got a phony-baloney cabinet document that somebody has given you for whatever purpose. Second, I have already made the commitment that we would hire whatever staff are required, that we would want to do that. I appreciate your advice. I suppose, because you want us to hire 500 immediately, you care five times more about the environment than the Liberals. I don't know how you guys measure success. Clearly we faced a major tragedy in Walkerton. We have promised that we will fully investigate that and address that all across the province.

There was mention of a SWAT team. It was in a Blueprint document we took to the people of Ontario in 1999. We committed to bringing in an environmental SWAT team, so it would be no secret they were looking at that. But the document you have is as phony as a \$3 bill.

CASINO NIAGARA

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the Attorney General: Two years ago Stanley Beck was appointed to inquire into the circumstances around the awarding of the Niagara Casino project after allegations of serious conflicts of interest were raised throughout the province.

Mr Beck determined there was no conflict because the information he had at the time indicated that the business relationship between Michael French of Coopers and Lybrand, the casino corporation's consultant, and Andrzej Kepinski, who was involved in the winning bid, had ended before the bids were opened.

Earlier today we delivered to your office documents that illustrate clearly that the business relationship between Mr Kepinski and Michael French of Coopers extended far behind the April 30 date. We believe this information should be taken very seriously. We believe, as well, that it should be investigated. What steps are you going to take to get to the bottom of this?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): To the member opposite: I have his letter that was delivered this morning—I just saw it a few minutes ago—in which he says he's "enclosing documents that I believe call into question the conclusion reached by Stanley Beck in his report of August 1998." I have Mr Beck's report here from that time, and as the member knows, among other conclusions, Mr Beck concluded that the Niagara Falls bidding process was detailed, complex, open and fair, and that the selection of Hyatt as the winning bidder was, in his words, "beyond reproach."

I understand that the member opposite feels this information he has enclosed with the letter may be information or documentation that was not available to Mr Beck. I have no idea whether that's so or not, but I will certainly, on behalf of the government, forward these documents to Mr Barbaro, the CEO of the Ontario Casino Corp, so that, as he did before in 1998, he can pass them along to Mr Beck, review them with Mr Beck and report further.

Mr Kormos: Attorney General, the project involved detailed, complex bids. It also involves hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of profits. This matter, as you know, was a scandal in 1998. It involved individuals such as the Latner family, major contributors to the Conservative Party, and Leslie Noble, who acted as a consultant. The Beck report appeared to put the matter at rest, but the documents we have delivered to you today clearly indicate that Mr Beck did not have this information that indicates the relationship between Michael French of Coopers and Lybrand and Andrzej Kepinski lasted well beyond the April 30 date of opening the bids. We demanded a full public inquiry. It appears that Mr Beck, among other things, may well have been misled—grossly misled—in the course of his investigation and had information purposely withheld from him. This aggravates the scenario far beyond what it was, sir, in 1998.

I submit that you should be asking your deputy minister to refer this matter—the matter of misleading Mr Beck, obstructing his investigation and attempting to conceal a serious interference in what should have been a fair bidding process—to the police for a full investigation. Will you instruct your assistant deputy minister to do that?

Hon Mr Flaherty: What he has sent to me are some documents that he says in his letter to me he believes call into question the conclusion reached by Mr Beck. It seems to me that the reasonable course of action is to pass the documents on, through Mr Barbaro, to Mr Beck and ask Mr Beck to report with respect to whether these documents would alter his conclusion. I would remind the member that his conclusion back in 1998, after he had thoroughly reviewed the matter, was that the selection of Hyatt as the winning bidder was beyond reproach. I will do that on behalf of the government. I'll refer the matter, through Mr Barbaro, back to Mr Beck and ask him to report.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I have a question for the Premier this afternoon. Yesterday your government made a sudden 180-degree turn in regard to Toronto garbage. It has been your policy, and you have stated on countless occasions, that garbage is a municipal issue. You repealed Bill 163 that restricted the export of waste to other municipalities and disbanded the Interim Waste Authority, returning responsibility for waste to regional government. You've gutted the Environmental Assessment Act to ensure more landfill sites would be approved. You scoped the EA hearings for the Adams mine proposal to facilitate its proposal.

Every action you've taken over the last five years has encouraged Toronto to select the proposal of your friend, Gordon McGuinty, as put forward for the Adams mine. Now, as Toronto nears its final decision and it appears you may not ship garbage north, you threaten to intervene by stopping Toronto from developing its own solution. Why this massive provincial intervention into a municipal matter now? Isn't it because you want Toronto garbage to go to your friend's dumpsite?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I don't know why you would bring up a relative of your leader, who has a proposal in conjunction with a number of other parties before the Legislature, but I assure you the fact that he is related to your leader has no bearing on any decision or any action that our government would ever take.

Let me assure you that we do not plan to involve ourselves in any of the selections of any of the sites. What happened unfortunately, as you will recall, in the 1980s was that municipalities delayed finding decisions to an extent that the Liberal government of the day—it's not because it was Liberal; it had built up over a period of time—had to step in and try and impose solutions. Then the New Democratic Party had to step in and try and impose solutions. We have worked hard to ensure that municipalities understand the rules and commitments and make intelligent, informed long-term decisions.

In the case of Keele Valley, a commitment was made to the residents of Vaughan and York region that 1992 would be the last date—and lots of notice for that to find alternatives—for dumping garbage on the Oak Ridges moraine. We intend to make sure that's the case.

Mr Ramsay: The city of Toronto has a certificate of approval that allows them to finish up with that dumpsite with a certain quantity of garbage, and they are not asking to extend that amount of garbage. This is really a purely political play to enrich your friends and supporters and to save seats in the York region. In fact, you specifically mentioned the Adams mine proposal today in a scrum this morning. I wonder why you happen to have singled out this proposal and to be so interested if it's a municipal issue and the province isn't supposed to intervene.

Let's look at the reasons: First, the Adams mine proposal is the pet project of a good, long-time North Bay friend, as I mentioned, Gordon McGuinty. Second, strong financial supporters of you and your party in Nipissing, in my riding, Timiskaming, and in the 905 seats north of Toronto are partners and shareholders in this proposal. Third, Al Palladini wants Keele Valley closed. Fourth, Ontario Northland Railway, which your government owns, will benefit, as will the economy of North Bay in your riding, where the railway is based. If you're so concerned about the environment, will you undertake to develop parallel legislation that would protect the groundwater of the Timiskaming farm region, or are you only going to make sure the garbage goes to a Liberal riding and not where it's going to be voting Tory?

1440

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member knows there is a consortium of the Ontario Northland and the CNR and a number of companies, and a proponent who is related to your leader, which has no bearing on any of the decisions involved. We have not been involved in any of the decision-making on environmental approvals or assessment. They've all been handled independently, and we are making no decisions on who the successful proponent would be.

But we do expect municipalities to act responsibly and find long-term solutions. Clearly, a commitment was made five years ago by me personally while campaigning, I believe by your party as well, as I recall, that we would respect that Keele Valley would be closed on time and within the lift constraints and within the capacity. The date of 1992, we understood, was agreed to, certainly by me and by our party. Unlike your party, we keep our word when we make a commitment.

I understand there is a proposal now that talks about the profit that Toronto makes by continuing to dump garbage on the Oak Ridges moraine. We don't think that's in the interest of the environment. We don't think an extension of having six more years of garbage dumped on the Oak Ridges moraine so the city of Toronto can make a profit makes sense. Any other option is—

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

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and

Universities. I took note recently that you announced that the province would be moving forward to allow private universities to operate in Ontario. Clearly, our government believes that this is good news for Ontario, that it will provide more opportunities for Ontarians to learn and will complement our publicly funded institutions. The opposition claims that private universities will have a negative effect on our public institutions. They clearly lack faith in our public system.

In taking this action, our government has expressed confidence in the track record of our public institutions, and we've also increased funding to ensure that they can compete with the best in the world. Minister, constituents in my riding have asked me about this initiative. Could you explain to the House the government's reasoning in allowing private universities to operate in Ontario?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): We are totally committed to excellence and choice for our students in post-secondary programs across this province, no matter where they live. In fact, private degree-granting institutions in Ontario will complement our excellent public post-secondary education system. Our universities right now welcome competition, and these private universities will be funded by private money. To ensure quality, we will be establishing a quality assessment board, and this board will assess both applied degrees that will be allowed by our colleges and degrees that will be allowed by institutions inside of Ontario and outside of Ontario. In fact, out students are needing these kinds of applied degrees to be competitive in the global economy, they're required for their future work, and we support them fully.

Mrs Elliott: Minister, presently four provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and Manitoba—allow private universities to operate. From all reports, the quality of their public institutions hasn't been negatively affected—in fact, the opposite. I understand that you have sought the input of a variety of concerned individuals and groups on this issue through a consultation process. Would you please share with my constituents and with members of the House an update on the consultations you have taken regarding establishing private universities.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I'd like to thank the member for her observations. Over the past two months, we've had the opportunity to meet and consult with more than 150 individuals across Ontario representing public universities, colleges, academics, private colleges, student groups, labour, business associations, and the list goes on.

The consultation documents have been posted on the ministry's Web site for public review and feedback, and so far, to this moment, we've received more than 2,500 hits.

We continue to hold one-on-one meetings with groups that have specific interests or recommendations that they want to share with us. Almost 50 organizations have taken the time to prepare written submissions, and we've had encouragement by the large number of people who

are totally interested in our students and the opportunities they have for more choice, no matter where they live, right here in Ontario.

We have consulted broadly, we have consulted with those who have asked to be consulted with and we have reached out.

AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, I attended Toronto's first-ever smog summit this morning. I was there in anticipation of some momentous announcement by you as to direct action that would improve the air quality in this province, and was deeply disappointed, as was virtually everybody else there, that we had no such announcement.

So let me give you a chance today to make such an announcement, which I will applaud if you agree to do right now—guaranteed. Will you now tell the House and the people of Ontario that within three years you will have all coal-fired plants in Ontario converted to natural gas? As you know, at this time they spew forth all kinds of toxic-soup pollution all over Ontario. In this area particularly, you have Nanticoke and Lakeview, which is a given you should be converting right away. I expect a big announcement. Will you now guarantee that you will do that? It's very easy—yes or no—and if you do so, all of Ontario will applaud you.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): Indeed, I did attend the smog summit today at city hall. It was an excellent event. It was organized by Jack Layton, a Toronto city councillor, and the Toronto Environmental Alliance, as well as others. The federal minister, David Anderson, was there along with another federal minister, David Collenette. I attended as well. It was an excellent event to exchange ideas and to discuss what was happening.

I did announce the executive of the anti-smog action plan that has been put in place. These individuals are going to help ensure that the reductions this government wants to see with respect to smog emissions happen.

I also made an additional statement regarding what Ontario Power Generation has done. Effective January 1 of this year, on smog alert days, they are going to use the Lennox plant before they use the Lakeview plant in Mississauga.

Mr Bradley: I'm hearing—and I say this kindly—the same weasel words and manoeuvring and skating that I heard this morning in his speech.

Interjections.

Mr Bradley: Well, they are weasel words, because what you're saying is that you're not prepared to commit today to convert those coal-fired plants to gas, which is the best thing you could possibly do.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Why didn't you do it when you were the government?

Mr Bradley: I hear the Minister of Transportation, so I have a second proposal for you as the Minister of the Environment. Your Minister of Transportation, along

with the Treasurer, took all the money away from public transit, all that money that was helping GO Transit and municipalities across Ontario. You took it all away. As Minister of the Environment, this is your chance to make a big announcement now. Will you announce, on behalf of the government, that as Minister of the Environment you will recommend that the government return the funding that was in public transit before, that you will massively invest in public transit, so we have an alternative and can reduce smog in this province?

Never mind Stockwell and Clement; they're in enough trouble now. Just you.

Hon Mr Newman: First off, if he's going to talk about weasel words, he shouldn't be talking about what happens in his caucus meetings.

First and foremost, I think it's important to keep in mind that this government gave \$829 million to the city of Toronto, to the Toronto Transit Commission, for the Sheppard subway. That's a public transit project.

You should also know that today I indicated we were successful in lobbying the federal government to agree to obtain a commitment from the United States to reduce emissions. We've said, in fact, that over 50% of the smog that comes into Ontario originates in the United States, and there are parts of Ontario where 90% of the smog originates in the United States.

1450

LANDFILL

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. I was very interested in your answer yesterday about the Keele Valley landfill. I've been reading about the city of Toronto's reaction to your announcement, and, quite frankly, it's obvious to me that the city's interests are strictly financial and they don't take into account the interests of the citizens of Vaughan.

In light of all the issues facing your ministry right now, why is resolving the Keele Valley landfill site such a high priority?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I'd like to thank the member for Scarborough East for the question. We indeed made a commitment in 1995 to the residents of Vaughan, and we intend to honour that commitment. All along, we have done what we said we would do.

Unfortunately, the city of Toronto has stalled and delayed when it comes to this issue. We know that the city has some tough decisions to make. They have the proposals on the table, and we would encourage them to seriously look at long-term solutions to this problem, as they said they would do over five years ago.

Mr Gilchrist: Minister, we heard from the former Minister of the Environment opposite comments such as "weasel words" and "politicking." If I've seen anything that falls into that category, it's their johnny-come-lately defence of the Oak Ridges moraine. They didn't know where the moraine was before last—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I say to members on both sides, it's not helpful using words like that. If I have to get up, I will. All members are honourable. We don't need to start getting into name-calling on top of everything else. We can get our points across using language that everybody understands. We're all honourable members here. Quite frankly, as you know, that's one of the reasons we refer to people by their ridings, because you come here to represent the people. When we throw words around here, it is a reflection on the people of that riding as well, so I would encourage members on all sides to think about the language they use.

The member for Scarborough East.

Mr Gilchrist: I'm sorry if using that word when the member for St Catharines was not asked to withdraw it was inappropriate. But I find it ironic that the city of Toronto on the one hand claims it wants to protect the moraine from development—and, to their credit, gave some money to its defence—but then, on the other hand, want to continue collecting a profit for another four years by dumping tonnes and tonnes of garbage on the very same land. They can't have it both ways.

Minister, what is your advice to the city of Toronto councillors who are considering the issue of the Keele Valley landfill and further dumping on the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Mr Newman: Garbage is indeed a global problem. If we want our children to have a planet that is worth inheriting, we have to make sure that we use the three Rs: reuse, reduce and recycle. Each of us must take some responsibility.

The Keele Valley landfill site sits on the Oak Ridges moraine and close to the sensitive headwaters of the Rouge River. This is not only a serious environmental issue; it's a quality-of-life issue. I heard today that children can't play in their schoolyards for fear of being swarmed by seagulls, and this is wrong. Closing the dump is the right thing to do, and we hope the city of Toronto will indeed do the right thing, but if not, we're prepared to look at other options.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, Gillian Hadley, a mother of three, was murdered in her Pickering home by her estranged husband. Her death marks the third time this year in the GTA that a woman has died at the hands of her violent partner—the third time that we know of.

Gillian Hadley's estranged husband made no secret that his wife's life was at risk. He had been charged twice this year with assaulting her. He had been released twice on conditions that were supposed to prevent him from stepping a foot near Gillian Hadley. But bail conditions alone were clearly not enough to prevent this tragedy.

Your government calls regularly for tighter restrictions on parole, and yet this person was released twice, after assaulting her twice and violating conditions. He was released again, and the results are tragic.

Let me ask you, how on earth in Mike Harris's Ontario did Gillian Hadley's estranged husband ever manage to get bail a second time?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Attorney General can respond.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The events yesterday in Pickering are tragic. They are within the region that I and other members on this side of the House represent—very sad circumstances, obviously, in what we know about what transpired yesterday. Our condolences go to the family and friends affected by this tragedy.

The member opposite is absolutely right: Domestic violence is a very serious crime and is not tolerated in Ontario. We've taken a leadership role as a government with respect to dealing with domestic violence, in particular by the expansion of domestic violence courts in Ontario. We moved from eight to 16, and in the most recent budget to 24. That's not just creating another type of court; that's creating a structure where people who have difficulty controlling their anger and their reaction to domestic discord can be moved through the system in co-operation with the social service agencies, with specialized crown attorneys, with specialized court staff, with experienced judges so that the type of tragedy that apparently occurred yesterday can be avoided.

Ms Lankin: Minister, these two people were already in your system. The estranged husband was already in anger management. I'm telling you he was charged with assault in January and released on conditions to stay away from her. He was charged again in February with assault and with violating those conditions. He was released again on bail with more conditions. All of your rhetoric about defending victims meant nothing to Gillian Hadley.

Why is it that a violent offender who violates those conditions to stay away from his victim gets a second chance in this province? There should be no second chance. What are you going to do make sure there are no second chances for these violent partners to go out and kill?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The bail hearings the member refers to are a matter with respect to which I can comment as Attorney General, since the agents of the Attorney General, the crown prosecutors, represent the interests of the people of Ontario and often speak for victims at those hearings. Indeed, in these circumstances, I'm told through the local crown attorney, on the second hearing that took place the crown prosecutor opposed bail being granted. Those decisions, as the member opposite should know, are then made by the presiding judge, not by the crown.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Mr Speaker, my question is to the Premier and I wonder if a page would take that to the Premier. Today, as you know,

is National Aboriginal Day. It has been almost five years since the shooting death of Dudley George of our First Nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park. That entire event was tragic and a black eye for Ontario. Several extremely serious questions were raised, including the role of you and your cabinet.

The only way to find out what really happened at Ipperwash is with a full public inquiry. We have examined carefully the terms of reference you gave Justice O'Connor for the Walkerton inquiry. They provide an appropriate model for an Ipperwash inquiry. We have sent those proposals to you right now. The question is, now that you have determined how the Walkerton public inquiry can proceed and not interfere with matters before the court and protect matters before the court, will you today finally agree to a full public inquiry on Ipperwash, using very similar terms to the Walkerton inquiry?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I didn't get a lot of notice of this, but I'm happy to send these to the Attorney General. If and when all court actions are disposed of, and if and when at that point in time it's deemed appropriate, and if and when a judicial inquiry is the best way to proceed, then I appreciate your advice.

1500

Mr Phillips: The Walkerton terms of reference, Premier, provide for protection for people in matters before the court. It's spelled out very clearly. I assume that the Walkerton inquiry will continue to proceed if criminal charges are laid. You have spelled out in detail how an inquiry can proceed.

The matters at Ipperwash are serious and, frankly, involve you and your cabinet in very serious allegations, with much public evidence of inappropriate behaviour. The only way Ontario will get a full public explanation of this is with an inquiry. You determined the terms of reference at Walkerton. We've examined them. They provide a model, Premier.

If you want to do the right thing, the decent thing and remove this black eye from Ontario, you will today commit to holding a public inquiry so we can finally get the truth about this sad episode at Ipperwash. Will you agree, using the very terms that you proposed at Walkerton, to commit today to a full public inquiry at Ipperwash?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the advice. If at the time it's appropriate, I'd be happy to pass it to the Attorney General.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): In the terms of reference in the O'Connor inquiry, I think the honourable member must be referring to the term that says, "The commission, in the conduct of its inquiry, shall ensure that it does not interfere with any ongoing criminal investigation or criminal proceedings, if any, relating to these matters." That doesn't tell the commissioner how to make a decisions about that, if and when that issue comes up in the O'Connor inquiry.

The reality is that there are no criminal proceedings with respect to Walkerton. There is a serious criminal

proceeding en route to the Supreme Court of Canada from the Ontario Court of Appeal now in the Ipperwash situation, which is a fundamental difference, which I would think the member opposite would appreciate.

STROKE STRATEGY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Health. As you're aware, strokes are one of the leading causes of death and long-term disability in Canada. In fact, the incidence of stroke is expected to rise by more than 30%—if I can interrupt the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Minister, constituents in my riding are quite interested in your recent announcement regarding the development of a provincial stroke care strategy. How will this strategy prevent and treat the incidence of strokes? Is there a public education component to the strategy to help raise awareness of deadly stroke symptoms?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes. On Monday this week we did release the information regarding a stroke strategy for the province of Ontario. Our government is committing \$30 million to ensure that the incidence of stroke in our province does decrease. As the member has indicated, it is the third leading cause of death and it is the leading cause of disability in Canada. Our strategy will ensure that we are able to provide a continuum of care.

For a long time, there has been certainly a concentration on rehabilitation. But we know today, and the medical community has indicated, that we also need to take a look at what we can do in the way of prevention. There are significant resources and information that can be made available. A very large component of the strategy will be to raise the public awareness, because people today don't have knowledge of the symptoms. We will be making this information available.

As I say, it is anticipated over the next five years that we'll be leading the world as far as the strategy is concerned. We have the potential to save 9,900 lives.

Mr Johnson: I think the aim of the program is to help those 8,000, and prevention seems to me to be a lot better than a cure.

When can we expect the stroke care strategy to be implemented, and what other groups and agencies is the ministry working with in the development and implementation of the strategy?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The working group that prepared the report for us was made up of many stakeholders throughout the province of Ontario. In fact, the report wouldn't be at the point it's at today without the type of collaboration and partnership that we experienced. In particular, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of this province has worked very hard and very collaboratively with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Over the course of the summer, we will be identifying the implementation plan as to how we're going to follow through on all of the recommendations in order to ensure that no matter where you live in Ontario, you will have

access to a regional centre, you will have access to a continuum of care and we will be able to treat stroke victims as quickly as possible.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. The Swaru incinerator in my riding of Hamilton East last year produced dioxin emissions six times higher than allowed under current provincial standards. The level of dioxins out of the incinerator are about 15 years out of date. Dioxins are associated with cancer and other serious health effects.

Your ministry has been requested a number of times to review this by area residents and the region has been asked to review this matter by area residents. We're now at a critical situation where residents in the area are fearful, they're afraid. In view of what has happened in Walkerton, they fear for their health and their safety. In view of the fact that we know dioxins cause dangerous health effects, including cancer.

Minister, I'm going to ask you very clearly: What steps are you taking today to ensure that the Swaru incinerator in Hamilton—with levels that are now 15 years out of date and emissions that are six times higher than allowed under your regulations—is brought into line with provincial standards?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I can assure the honourable member it's an issue that is taken seriously. We want to ensure that provincial standards are adhered to in this province, whether it be for water, for air, for incinerators or land. It is, indeed, a serious issue and the ministry will be looking at that.

Mr Agostino: It's obvious you're totally clueless as to the problem. You were asked a month ago, under the Environmental Bill of Rights, to ask for a provincial review into Swaru. You stand here today and give me some standard answer that's in your book there, not having a clue what Swaru is all about. You were asked a month ago for a review. You have not yet given a response.

The emissions are six times higher than allowed under your own provincial regulations. That is a danger to people's health. Swaru is located in the middle of a residential neighbourhood. It's in the east end of Hamilton. Unfortunately for you, if it was one of your Tory-held 905 ridings, maybe you would act. But the reality is that those people are affected every day by those emissions.

You've been asked to act, and you haven't. You were asked for a provincial review under the Environmental Bill of Rights. You have not responded. Will you stand up today and commit to a provincial review of the Swaru incinerator under the Environmental Bill of Rights? You have the power to do it. You have the power to stand up now and say yes. Will you do that to ensure the health and safety of the people living in the east end of Hamilton?

Hon Mr Newman: That's an absolutely ridiculous statement from the member opposite. To somehow imply that the riding someone represents has a role in decisions being made is absolutely ludicrous. We take the protection of the environment in this province very seriously, whether it be the water, the air or the land. It also includes incinerators. These are issues that are very important to this government and to me as minister.

ST CLAIR PARKWAY COMMISSION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. As you are aware, we have a situation in the riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex which has been ongoing for eight or nine years between the former city of Chatham and the St Clair Parkway Commission whereby the former city of Chatham refuses to pay its levy to the St Clair Parkway Commission.

You stood in the House three weeks ago and you stated that you were very close to having this problem resolved regarding the issue between the now city of Chatham-Kent and the St Clair Parkway Commission. Could you please give us an update as to where the negotiations are?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): I'd like to thank my colleague and to acknowledge his leadership as the local member in trying to resolve this issue, which has gone on for almost nine years. He has been very helpful in fine-tuning the issues and making sure that we came to an equitable and fair resolution between the two municipalities and the parks commission.

I'm pleased to report that an agreement in principle has been reached, that both municipalities have agreed, that Chatham-Kent has agreed to pay its back levies to the taxpayers and to the commission. The agreement calls in the future to transfer Marine Park and McDonald Park to the community of Chatham-Kent. We can assure all the tourists and residents in the area that services will not be disrupted this summer.

I'll also indicate a promise I made that, because of the national and provincial historical significance of Uncle Tom's Cabin, this property would not transfer out of our ministry's responsibility.

1510

Mr Beaubien: Thank you, Minister. I would like to congratulate you for finally reaching a conclusion to this problem that's been ongoing for a number of years—under different governments, may I add. With regard to the solution you've reached with the St Clair Parkway Commission and the Chatham-Kent municipality, where do you see the role of your ministry and the St Clair Parkway in the future?

Hon Mr Jackson: As you know, our Premier committed in the most recent budget to an expansion of marketing dollars for tourism in the province of Ontario. We recognize that the third-strongest industry in the Chatham-Kent area is tourism and our ministry is going

to be increasing its marketing activities in this area. We're also bringing together all the parties to expand the St Clair Parkway Commission to look at the natural beauty of the south shore of Lake Huron all the way through to Grand Bend, and to look at expanding it under a new Bluewater parks commission.

Our government has recently committed some additional dollars to study RV parks development to bring more Americans into this area, because Sarnia is one of the most important gateways to Ontario for our American visitors. It's an opportunity, and we believe that with the full support of the community of Sarnia-Lambton and with the local member's vision and support, we will see a significant increase in tourism in this part of Ontario.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to revert back to ministerial statements so that the Minister of Labour can make a statement with respect to the future of Bill 69.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard a no.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the health restructuring commission has slated St Joseph's Hospital in Brant to close; and

"Whereas this decision does not reflect the long-term health care interests of Brant;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to reverse the decision of the health restructuring commission as follows:

"We request that St Joseph's Hospital, Brantford, be kept open for the use and in the best interests of the citizens of Brantford and area."

I sign my name to this petition.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I have more petitions supporting my private member's bill on the safe water act. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive clean and safe drinking water; and

"Whereas clean, safe drinking water is a basic human entitlement and essential for the protection of public health; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario have the right to receive accurate and immediate information about the quality of water; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to protect the quality of drinking water in Ontario; and

"Whereas Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have failed to provide the necessary financial resources to the Ministry of the Environment; and

"Whereas the policies of Mike Harris and the government of Ontario have endangered the environment and the health of the citizens of Ontario;

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

"(1) Immediately restore adequate funding and staffing to the Ministry of the Environment;

"(2) Immediately pass into law Bill 96, the Safe Drinking Water Act, 2000."

I completely agree with this petition and will affix my signature.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's again a pleasure to introduce an ongoing petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I'm happy to affix my name.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): There's great concern about the Ministry of Natural Resources' possible attempt to allow hunting in wilderness parks in this province, which we strongly oppose, and I want to read a petition related to this.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Natural Resources has confirmed that the province is considering allowing

hunting in Ontario's wilderness parks, including Quetico, Killarney, Wabakimi and Woodland Caribou;

"Whereas the provincial government made no mention of opening up wilderness parks to hunting when it came up with the Ontario Living Legacy policy last year for a vast area of publicly owned land across northern Ontario;

"Whereas the province's wilderness parks were originally established to be sanctuaries where the forces of nature would be permitted to function freely and where visitors could travel by non-mechanized means and experience solitude, challenge and personal enjoyment of that protected area; and

"Whereas opening wilderness parks to hunters undermines the principles the parks were established to fulfill, threatens animals and exposes the public to risk;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Ministry of Natural Resources renew and reconfirm its ban on hunting in all of Ontario's wilderness parks."

I'm pleased to sign my petition. I'll give it to Riley, who's actually taller than me. I'm proud to sign this petition.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I am extremely proud today to present petitions organized by the West Hamilton Interfaith Committee on Child Poverty, a dedicated group of community activists who care about the growing number of children in Ontario who are falling into poverty. The petition reads as follows:

"Petition to eradicate the hunger of poor children.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Hamilton and the surrounding communities, beg leave to petition the government of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the federal government signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and passed a resolution to eradicate child poverty by the year 2000; and

"Whereas at the first ministers' meeting in June 1996 the Prime Minister and Premiers made tackling child poverty a collective priority; and

"Whereas Campaign 2000 records the province of Ontario as having the highest increase—116%—in child poverty since Canada's House of Commons vowed unanimously in November 1989 to eliminate child poverty;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario take immediate steps to eradicate the hunger of poor children by working vigorously with the federal government to reduce the poverty rate among Ontario's children and to follow and implement the recommendations of the Early Years study, commissioned by the Ontario government in the spring of 1998."

I am proud to add my name to those of these Hamilton petitioners in the fight against child poverty.

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 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 affix my signature to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have countless petitions with hundreds of signatures, mostly from the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin.

"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

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"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 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 that care is available in our communities.”

I fully support this petition.

STUDDED TIRES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have another 350 names to add to a petition that was introduced by my colleague from Sudbury on the issue of studded tires. He has also introduced a private member's bill on this subject.

“Whereas personal safety on winter roadways would be greatly increased; and

“Whereas improved technology on studded tires has proven in other countries and provinces they will not damage the roadways—in Sweden, 80% of the population has been using the new softer studs with no damage to their roads and has cut accidents by half; and

“Whereas studded tires are used in many northern countries and all other provinces in Canada; and

“Whereas studies have proven that studded tires outperform all-seasonal and winter tires in manoeuvrability and braking on ice and snow-packed roads; and

“Whereas studded tires can save lives—”

The following petition is presented to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, asking the government to rescind the law banning studded tires. As I said before, I have over 350 names on this petition, all people from Sault Ste Marie, and I add my name.

SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by five people. It calls on the government of Ontario to increase the allowances paid to disabled persons.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): “Whereas the Kinsmen/JS MacDonald school is slated for closure,

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

“To direct the Upper Canada District School Board to remove the notice of closure for the Kinsmen/JS MacDonald special school facility.

“Since 1963 the special education facility has adequately served the needs of those students requiring special education programs and services throughout Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh.

“Presently, the Kinsmen school meets the needs of 45 children ranging from minor learning disabilities, behavioural to more complex multi-challenges.”

I have also signed the petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): “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 that care is available in our communities.”

Once again I affix my signature in agreement with 97 further constituents who add their names to this petition.

ONTARIO WORKS

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas section 12 of the Ontario Works Act requires those who are homeowners and are on assistance for 12 continuous months to consent to Ontario Works having a lien against their property;

“Whereas Ontario Works Act provisions are not flexible to adapt to the conditions of the rural work environment;

“Whereas the employment rate in rural areas is significantly higher than those of urban areas (north Hastings has an unemployment rate 17%);

“Whereas the labour/work market in rural Ontario is often seasonal, lacks benefit coverage and the part-time work rate is significantly higher than urban settings (north Hastings is 52%);

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Repeal section 12 of the Ontario Works Act; and

“Adapt the regulations under the Ontario Works Act to provide flexibility and support for the current Ontario rural labour market realities.”

I affix my name very happily to this petition.

HUNTING IN WILDERNESS PARKS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is proposing that Ontario’s Living Legacy proposed land use strategy permit hunting in designated wilderness parks which are currently used for vacationing and recreation for the general public; and

“Whereas we believe this change in policy would endanger the serenity, ecology and remoteness of these existing wilderness parks. The Legislative Assembly does not have to wait until one innocent vacationer is shot in error until reconsidering the danger of allowing hunters into our precious wilderness parks;

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

“To continue the prohibition of hunting in wilderness parks in order to ensure the preservation of safety, tranquility and environmental well-being.”

I will affix my signature to this petition.

DURHAM COLLEGE

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): Just under the wire, as usual.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support Durham College in their bid for university status;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“We feel for the economic well-being of Durham region a university is necessary and we strongly support of the bid by Durham College to achieve this status in the immediate future.”

This is submitted by Frank Hoar, secretary for the Newcastle Lions. I’m pleased to sign and support this petition.

SPEAKER’S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Today during reports by committees, a report was presented by the Chair of the standing committee on estimates relating to an appeal to the Speaker of a ruling made by the Chair of that committee.

I have carefully reviewed the report and the transcript of the committee meeting at which the appeal of the Chair’s ruling arose.

As I understand the events in the committee, the member for Durham, Mr O’Toole, sought to raise a point of order with respect to an occurrence in the estimates committee at a previous meeting, June 13. The Chair of

the committee declined to hear the point of order, presumably on the grounds that Mr O’Toole’s point of order was not raised in a timely manner since it related to a previous meeting. The Chair was not explicit that this was the reason, and I have to infer this from the general discussion that took place.

The issue of timeliness is important with respect to points of order. However, the matter raised by the member for Durham related to his view that a practice decided upon by the Chair at the June 13 meeting was continuing in yesterday’s meeting. Therefore, the member for Durham did raise his point of order in reference to the proceedings of the committee actually in progress.

In any event, the core of the appeal as I see it centres around the civil servants from various ministries being called upon to assist in answering questions posed during consideration of a ministry’s estimates. It is a long-standing practice of our estimates committee that ministry staff do attend committee meetings and are permitted, at the request of the respective minister, to answer technical and non-policy-related questions. Indeed, this specific practice was observed at yesterday’s meeting. A point of clarification, however, may be helpful.

At the June 13 meeting, the issue of the ministry staff responding to questions also arose. At this meeting, the first the committee held to consider the estimates of the Ministry of the Environment, the first order of business was for the minister and the critics of the two opposition parties to make their 30-minute opening statements, followed by a 30-minute reply afforded to the minister. This process is for the mentioned members to make statements; it does not contemplate that this time is to be used to question the minister or ministry staff. If this does happen, I see no reason for the member asking the question in this period to expect or to require that answers will be given. It is a statement process, not a question-and-answer process.

Yesterday’s meeting saw the committee engaged in the actual consideration of the votes and items of the environment ministry estimates. This is a much more open process, a process of inquiry. It clearly involves an ongoing exchange between the committee members and the minister’s accountability for his or her ministry’s estimates. As I said earlier, it is a well-established practice that ministry staff may assist the minister by answering some of those technical or non-policy questions at the minister’s request.

1530

The role of the Chair comes in here: The Chair must ensure not only that there’s an opportunity for oral questions to be offered and asked by the committee, but also that the answers are to be on topic and do not unduly consume the time of the committee. However, this is the Chair’s role, who is presiding over the committee, and not the role of other members of the committee. The member whose question is being answered may not agree that the response is what he or she wishes to hear, but the goodwill nature of the response from ministry staff must be taken at face value. Where the Chair feels the dis-

cussion has reached an unproductive point or the time being taken is unduly wasteful of the time apportioned to a particular member, the Chair must interrupt and move the discussion along in the interest of fairness to all members of the committee. This, however, is a function of the Chair's duty to maintain order and secure the advancement of the committee's business. It is not for the Chair to do so based on his or her own views about the matter being discussed.

For the most part, however, the Chair should need to inject him- or herself into the proceedings of a committee only relatively rarely. The Chair should be an impartial, largely silent observer of the committee's proceedings who has no voice except in the case of disorder or when an imbalance in or an infringement of the rights of any member, whether of the minority or of the majority, is apparent.

I therefore concur that the committee's demonstrated and observed practice of permitting ministry staff to answer questions raised by committee members is correct.

I thank all of the members for their participation in this report by the committee.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Mr Turnbull moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to require the mandatory reporting of severely damaged vehicles to counter motor vehicle fraud and theft / Projet de loi 91, Loi exigeant la déclaration obligatoire des véhicules gravement endommagés afin de lutter contre la fraude et le vol des véhicules automobiles.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Turnbull has moved second reading of Bill 91.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I believe we have unanimous consent to divide the time equally among the three caucuses and to forgo any questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Agreed? It is agreed.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I will be dividing my time with the members for London-Fanshawe, Guelph-Wellington—

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, Minister. I wanted to clarify for the clerks at the table what the agreement was that we just agreed to.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I believe that the time will be equally divided among the three caucuses and that we will forgo questions and comments.

The Deputy Speaker: The time is split evenly till 6 o'clock. It is agreed. Thanks very much. Sorry to interrupt, but I did want to clarify it.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Do you want me to point out again the people with whom I will be dividing the time? The members for London-Fanshawe, Guelph-Wellington, Northumberland and Durham.

It's my pleasure to lead off the debate on Bill 91, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act. Bill 91 will require the mandatory reporting or branding of severely damaged vehicles. This legislation is an important step in protecting consumers against auto theft and vehicle fraud. I believe it will contribute to improved road safety in Ontario as well.

Consider the following facts: Each year about 90,000 vehicles are written off in Ontario by insurance companies. Many of these vehicles find their way back on to Ontario roads through the black market. Buyers are unaware of their new vehicle, or supposedly new vehicle, being a danger to themselves and their families or others on the road.

Auto fraud and theft impact everyone who owns a vehicle and drives on our roads, through higher insurance premiums and unsafe vehicles on our roads. It's important to understand how serious this problem is. In 1998, our government established the stolen and salvaged vehicle program to deter automobile vehicle registration fraud and vehicle theft. Since the program's inception just two years ago, more than 4,600 vehicles have been branded as stolen. According to Ontario's Crime Control Commission, vehicle theft has increased by 79% in the past 12 years in Ontario, and as of 1998, 50,000 vehicles were unrecovered in Ontario. This quite simply is unacceptable.

The amendments I'm introducing will require the mandatory reporting or branding of severely damaged vehicles. Branding involves putting vehicle status information on registration documents and other information products, such as vehicle abstracts and used vehicle information packages.

This new legislation clearly makes vehicle owners accountable for the condition of their vehicles. With this Legislature's approval, the proposed legislation will enable the following:

—A Highway Traffic Act amendment to make it more difficult for stolen vehicles to be re-registered using information and parts from written-off vehicles.

—The registrar of motor vehicles will be able to amend the official records and to reissue permits classifying vehicles as irreparable and salvage.

—Salvage vehicles can be reclassified as rebuilt and fit to be driven, provided the vehicle has been repaired and the chassis, engine and doors have been inspected and are in working order.

—The ability for the vehicle's history to be clearly identified, effectively alerting purchasers of its status and history.

—New regulation-making powers to deal with items such as the question of who is required to report severely damaged vehicles.

—Further development of regulations which will put this program into effect.

Our government made safer communities an election commitment, and safe roads are an important part of safer communities. Bill 91 builds on our track record for strengthening road user safety, a track record that includes the most stringent truck safety laws in the whole of North America; the action plan for safer roads; the Ontario Advisory Group on Safe Driving.

These initiatives are working. Ontario's roads are now the fourth-safest in the whole of North America. Road fatalities are at their lowest level since 1950. While these are encouraging statistics, I've said it many times before, we can and we simply must do better. I have frequently articulated my goal of making Ontario's roads the safest in the whole of North America. Bill 91 will bring us even closer to this goal by taking irreparable, salvaged or stolen vehicles off our streets.

Support for this initiative is strong. The Ontario Crime Control Commission has indicated that mandatory branding is an effective tool in the campaign against auto theft and fraud. The insurance industry, under the existing voluntary program, has provided extensive support.

In preparation for this legislation, we've also worked with a wide variety of stakeholders, including the enforcement community, collision repair industry, vehicle sales industry and auto recyclers. These groups are also highly supportive of this program.

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Once again, I'd like to thank the members for Thunder Bay-Superior North and Timmins-James Bay for their support of this legislation. I hope we can work together on future initiatives that will further crack down on crime in our communities.

All interested parties have told me that this program must be mandatory to be truly effective in promoting road-user safety and consumer protection.

Our government has made a commitment to introduce tough measures that will tackle crime and build safer roads and communities for our families. This is one more initiative introduced by our government that supports law enforcement officials in their fight against crime.

I invite all members to join me in strengthening consumer protection and making Ontario roads even safer.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I was listening carefully to what the minister said, and I'll just go back to my time as a member co-chair of the Ontario Crime Control Commission with the member for Cambridge, Gerry Martiniuk.

When I first was appointed to the commission in July 1999, instructions had been left with the then Solicitor General, the Honourable Bob Runciman, that the Ontario Crime Control Commission look at ways to reduce automobile theft in the province. The reason was that our automobile thefts had increased double digits over the past several years—as you've heard, they increased over the last 12 years by 79%—to the point where, in 1998,

approximately 168,000 vehicles were stolen in Canada, 50,000 of those in Ontario.

What was very disturbing was the number of unrecovered stolen vehicles in Ontario—approximately 15,000 per year. At one time, we had a recovery rate of stolen vehicles of approximately 90%. That recovery rate has, all of a sudden, fallen to approximately 65%. The unrecovered rate of automobile theft is due to crime organizations—people in this for profit. Essentially three things happen to a stolen automobile:

The first is that it's exported. We often hear about high-end vehicles that are exported abroad through certain initiatives to get them out of the country.

The second thing that can happen to a stolen automobile is a vehicle identification number switch. That is simply purchasing a vehicle that has been written off—that has absolutely no hope of ever being repaired—and then stealing the exact same automobile and perhaps switching the vehicle identification number, and all you essentially buy is the paperwork, and then going in to the Ministry of Transportation, saying that somehow you've done an incredible repair job and re-register that vehicle. That's the second thing that can happen to stolen, unrecovered vehicles.

The third thing is that they're chopped for parts and sold independently.

Although stolen automobiles are not the only unrecovered portion, there's still that 60% or 65% that are recovered that we know are predominantly youth joyriding or using stolen vehicles to commit crimes such as break and enter and so on. Those are still of enormous concern to us, because it's often that 60 to 65% that are involved in police pursuits and so on that we still need to continue to deal with.

This legislation, aside from reducing automobile theft based on vehicle identification number switches, will provide better consumer protection in many regards, one being that in Ontario at the present time, a person does not know if he or she has purchased a vehicle that has been rebuilt. There's nothing in the paperwork, on a voluntary basis, that would enable one to figure out for sure that a consumer has purchased a vehicle that had been written off by an insurance company and no standards to go with that.

With this present legislation, when a vehicle is deemed to be irreparable, it can never again be fixed in this province and can only be sold as salvage, obviously, to be used for whatever parts it can be used for.

When a vehicle is branded as salvage, it is certainly one of those that is definitely not irreparable and yet requires work to be rebuilt. So at some point it can be moved up to a rebuilt category as long as it meets all of the safety features that one would expect a normal vehicle to meet.

When we talk about consumer protection, a person who buys a vehicle that has been branded as rebuilt, that information will be readily available on the purchaser's package, purchased from the Ministry of Transportation. So a consumer would clearly know that he or she is

purchasing a vehicle that has been rebuilt and therefore knows any risks that might be associated with purchasing a vehicle that has been rebuilt. So that's the other component of consumer protection.

But I want to move to another part. Auto recyclers, many in my riding that I've spoken to, are in a situation where they've actually had to purchase irreparable and salvaged vehicles from the United States. The simple reason is because the vehicle identification numbers at our auctions are going for too much money. Why are they going for too much money? Is it because the components of those irreparable vehicles are that valuable? Well, in fact, no, they're not. The reason they're going for more money than they are worth is because people are out purchasing vehicle identification numbers because they know that after they purchase that vehicle identification number they can go out and steal the exact same make and model of vehicle and quite simply, through no repair, just put the VIN on.

When the minister made this announcement at metro police headquarters compound, I was interested that there were several vehicles in the lot. At one time, criminals actually used to take some pride in when they switched vehicle identification numbers. They used to actually take out the whole dashboard and replace it, even if it had not been damaged in any way. But I saw a couple where the vehicle identification number had actually been switched. I mean, there are some old criminals around—and I see the judge here—in this province who would be embarrassed by the quality of work that actually had gone into switching the vehicle identification numbers, the quality level. That's sad, because what that tells us in fact is that it is so easy in this province that even criminals are actually having no pride when they do this, make no attempt to re-stamp secondary numbers, make no attempt to remove the windshield so that the vehicle identification number is not damaged when they're placing it on the stolen vehicle.

I think that's certainly an alert for many of us, that it has become so easy in Ontario to re-register a new vehicle identification number that certainly no thought by criminals or even concern about being caught is there.

This legislation will certainly help in the component of stolen vehicles, which is estimated to be a large part of that 35% that's not recovered. A large part of that 35% is suspected to be vehicle identification number switches through stolen vehicles. So we look forward, through this legislation, to reducing that portion of automobile thefts out of the 15,000 a year that are not recovered. We certainly suspect that many numbers are being switched and are being sold right across this province.

When we talk about consumer protection, I already spoke a minute ago about vehicles that are legitimately repaired and sold. People will know how they are branded. But there's a second component of consumer protection here that is very important. We've heard many stories in the media and elsewhere of someone, an innocent victim, who has purchased a vehicle and then, at some time later, has found that that vehicle is in fact

stolen and they're out the monetary value of that vehicle, with no compensation. We certainly need to protect consumers the best we can by not allowing them to be able to purchase stolen vehicles.

1550

In the past, there was really no paperwork that would allow you to think that you had purchased a stolen vehicle or a rebuilt vehicle. Now the vehicle purchase package or seller's package, whatever you may call it, will clearly outline the history of that vehicle, with the various owners and so on.

Again, in the past, occasionally a vehicle had switched names to a wrecking yard. If they had actually done the switch, a trained person could look and say that in such a year this vehicle was owned by a wrecking yard. It may give them a clue that it's a rebuilt vehicle. But many times it would just go from owner to the next owner without ever being transferred to the wrecking yard, so people would have no way of knowing that this was a vehicle that had been written off and was going to be salvage.

This is an important first step, I believe, to reducing automobile theft in Ontario. The portion we're talking about reducing is the unrecovered rate of vehicles. In our Crime Control Commission report on auto theft, there are many other recommendations. I applaud the Minister of Transportation for jumping on this one and introducing legislation immediately to deal with this problem.

I spoke about the 35% of unrecovered vehicles. There's a portion that are exported. We've made recommendations in that report for Canada Customs to put what they call gamma ray X-rays at some of the ports where they can x-ray the containers leaving the country that, in many cases, have very valuable vehicles in those containers.

Throughout the consultations, many police organizations came and made presentations. The Automobile Dealers Association also came and made a presentation. One dealer, who happened to be the owner of a Jaguar dealership, lost seven vehicles in one day. They were loaded on a truck and gone. A couple of those vehicles were found, the evidence says, in Poland and a couple in Saudi Arabia. When vehicles of that sort leave this country, rarely do they come back. Even if you do pursue it and track down where they are, the cost of bringing them back becomes enormous. We certainly need to do a better job at our ports across this country to ensure that product that leaves this country is legitimate product and not stolen product. That's a recommendation.

Then there are further recommendations to deal with that 65% of what I called "recovered vehicles." That is the youth component of stealing a vehicle to go from point A to point B and perhaps commit a break and enter in between. Those are the ones that are generally involved in police chases. In our report, we addressed some changes to the Young Offenders Act and some issues on repeat offences, that young offenders with stolen vehicles be targeted and be taken seriously.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I would just like to speak for a few moments to add my voice and

that of my constituents in the riding of Guelph-Wellington in support of this bill.

Before I begin my remarks, I'd like to say hello to a gentleman I met recently at an event in London. His name is Mr Al Plumb. He's a very conscientious watcher of the legislative channel. I was quite impressed by his dedication to seeing what happens in the Legislature. If he is watching, I would like to say hello to him from the members here in the House.

I found this bill very interesting from a consumer's point of view. A couple of years ago, I didn't realize just how extensive the whole issue of auto theft was. We happen to have a family friend who is part of a police force which was especially assigned to deal with the issue of auto theft and fraud. I was astounded when he told us some of the stories of things that have been happening here in Ontario, how extraordinary numbers of vehicles would be stolen and would be in countries thousands and thousands of miles away within hours. What that says to me is that we have a lot of people here in Ontario who are being victimized, and not just by having whole vehicles stolen, but in fact people who thought they were legitimately purchasing a vehicle from a reputable dealer who also was being defrauded, having purchased a vehicle from a firm which somehow or other—I can't comment on whether it would have been legitimately or illegitimately—found itself selling vehicles to lot owners.

Suddenly, people were phoning our constituency office because an officer had arrived at their door, indicated to them that their vehicle was thought to have been stolen and their car was being taken for investigation purposes. This poor constituent would then find themselves without the means to get to work, without means to carry on their daily activities. This would be quite a shock and could in fact result in them having no vehicle for months and months and months while the investigation occurred.

From a victim's point of view, I applaud the minister in taking forward this legislation. He is making this action mandatory. What I also noted of interest is that it's based on a national model. The government is complementing its existing road safety plan, but also working along with the other Canadian jurisdictions through what's called the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators.

Time and time again we've had pieces of legislation that have come into this House where we've said: "Ontario is taking the lead. We're doing this because it's the right thing to do. We wish other jurisdictions were doing it," or more often, "We wish the federal government was doing it. They're not, so we're going to take the first step."

In this case, we're working very co-operatively. Although many maybe wouldn't think this was the most important bill, this is a bill that is going to have very real consequences for constituents in my riding, and I'm very pleased to add my support to this.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I certainly appreciate the opportunity to be able to address this bill,

particularly as it relates to vehicle branding. When I first heard about it, being a veterinarian, I was thinking, of course, of branding of livestock, and it took me a while with the Minister of Transportation to understand that we weren't going to brand them on the right rear fender, but rather it had to do with the vehicle identification number, the VIN.

We, as Canadians, as Ontarians, get pretty close to our vehicles. They become a very personal part almost of our being. Especially in rural Ontario, areas like Northumberland and Colborne and Campbellford, if you don't have wheels you really are not going very far, and it's important to have those wheels. Certainly you hear that from seniors. When they lose their privileges to drive, they feel pretty isolated, pretty separated. It draws the comparison to the turn of the century when people felt so close to their driving horse and it was a really close relationship. I think we've evolved that way with our cars. We have great concern about public safety, particularly with the speeds they will go and the end result of what can happen with accidents.

This is a bill that's going to improve the safety of our vehicles, the vehicles on the road, not only the vehicle that we may be driving but one that might be in a collision with us. I'll explain some of that in just a few minutes.

This bill is going to give us some assurance of the history of that vehicle we're buying, whether it be new or used or whatever. That assurance is necessary to know what kind of vehicle we're getting into, what it has been through before. We are building on that registration number, the papers that go with a used vehicle.

It's also interesting to note what came in back in July 1998, the fact that we have a designation, the VIN number, that goes on the registration, that it's been stolen. It's part of the stolen and salvaged vehicle program that was brought in at that time, and that was about fighting crime.

1600

It is horrendous, some of the auto theft that goes on, some of the stories we've already heard about how quickly a vehicle can be picked up, put in a truck, transport or whatever, disappear, go into a container and off to another country, never to be seen again. I guess I don't have to worry too much about that, with the old vehicles I drive. They're not at high risk to be picked up. They're looking for the big, expensive four-by-fours and Jaguars and that kind of thing.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): A new Lumina?

Mr Galt: New Luminas. Yes, if I could afford one of those. You're absolutely right.

But this all fits in with a national model for road safety. Bill 91 is a commitment we have made through the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators and our government is following through with this particular commitment. I talked a little bit about auto theft just a few minutes ago. It's interesting to note the fact the

crime commission has been identifying, that auto theft has increased some 79% over the last 12 years. In just a little over a decade it has almost doubled. That's pretty significant. The interesting part about this is that we have little knowledge about what really happens to those vehicles. Where do they go? Yes, there are some we do identify: they're taken for joy rides and often they end up being smashed up; there are also those that are used for break-and-enters and they're there for escape purposes. Nevertheless, an awful lot of vehicles simply aren't recovered. In 1998, more than 50,000 motor vehicles were reported as unrecovered. That's a very large number of vehicles that have just sort of disappeared off into a big hole.

The member for Wellington-Guelph mentioned buying a vehicle that may have been stolen and then you find out shortly thereafter that you really don't own that vehicle. The police come in with a tow truck and off goes your vehicle. A friend of mine, actually from Guelph, had that experience, had the vehicle, I believe, approximately two and a half years and had no knowledge it was a stolen vehicle till the police knocked on their door. The vehicle was instantly taken on that weekend and he had to commute to Ridgeway on the Monday morning without a vehicle, so you can imagine his predicament on that occasion.

You know how many front-end/rear-end collisions we have. They're quite common on some of our busy roads. Once you have a car with a front end written off and another vehicle with a rear end written off, if they happen to match, some of these people, probably operating body shops, are intuitive enough to take those two vehicles and chop off the damaged parts and take the two ends that are not damaged too much and put them together, and lo and behold, you have a new vehicle—at least a new, repaired, rebuilt vehicle—and off you go.

That takes an awful lot of welding to be able to recreate this new vehicle, this new compromised vehicle. The concern we have there is that then it doesn't crumple at the same rate. Our vehicles today are designed that if they're in an accident they do crumple to a specific rate so that the passengers in that vehicle have some protection. Once parts of two vehicles are welded together, that structure is now compromised. If they're in an accident, people are at much greater risk of being injured than if they were in a car that had never been in an accident and hadn't been repaired in this manner.

It's certainly important that people understand the history of their car. I know there's a package that's now required for used cars. There is also the information that goes on in connection with stolen vehicles. But this will be a new history that we will be adding to that registration package, to the VIN.

I well recall another friend who had sold his car, actually traded his car. I happened to be in the same dealership and I noticed they were making a few minor repairs to it, so I just slipped into the driver's seat to have a look at the odometer to see what it read, because I knew the mileage that was on that vehicle. Lo and behold, it

was down to about a quarter or a third of the original mileage my friend had run up on the car before it was traded. I brought this to the attention of the dealer and he was quite red-faced, to say the least. There were really no grounds for me to say much more or to do much else at that point in time, but today obviously that could be registered. It would be a very significant change in that vehicle, and of course the new owner is going to be aware of this.

I mentioned a few minutes ago a situation where a vehicle could be rebuilt. If you follow through on some of the different categories, in that case it would be registered as a rebuilt vehicle. It would have to pass all kinds of inspections on doors, engines etc to ensure that everything was in order once it was repaired and put back on the road.

It would probably evolve from a category that would be identified as salvage. In the case of salvage, it would be "any vehicle damaged by collision, fire, flood, accident, trespass or other occurrence to the extent that the costs of repairing the vehicle to operate legally on our highways exceeds its fair market value immediately prior to damage. Salvage vehicles cannot travel public roads until they are repaired and inspected in accordance with prescribed procedures, so as to allow their status to be changed to 'rebuilt.'"

I have three daughters who, each one of them, sort of put vehicles into this particular category, and I think in all cases they were repaired and rebuilt and put back on the road, but the salvage value didn't have too much once they had had their accidents.

The other interesting one is to be irreparable. This is the responsibility of insurance companies and others who are working with these vehicles—body shops—to report vehicles they see in this condition. Being irreparable would be "any vehicle incapable of operation/use on a highway and which is so badly damaged that it has no resale value except as a source of parts/scrap. These vehicles can never be put back on the road."

Once it's registered on that VIN number, even if they try to move it to another vehicle, once it's seen by the authorities they will then know that this particular vehicle should not be on the road or it's stolen or somebody has played some sort of game with it. That's the kind of branding that there will be into the future.

Sometimes criminals can be very original in what they do and how they try to escape the law, and that's what's been happening with cars in the past, cars that have been in accidents, cars have been severely damaged. They can be out of line, there can be all kinds of difficulties, and as I mentioned just a few minutes ago, the kind of thing that can happen when a lot of weld occurs in putting some of these vehicles back together.

This bill is going to crack down on crime and that's something our government has been doing a tremendous amount of over the last five years. As I mentioned earlier when I introduced Constable Larry Davis from my riding, the strongest policeman in Canada, he was one of 1,000 new police we've hired in Ontario to crack down

on crime. We brought in our Safe Streets Act to ensure our streets are safer. Some of the young people who are darting out into the traffic to clean windshields on vehicles such as we're talking about here today—that was a very dangerous situation for them and I'm very pleased to see, especially on the streets of Toronto, that has been reduced.

This is a bill that's looking at increased safety on our highways for the vehicles that we ride in, that our families and our children ride in. It's also going to make it more difficult for criminals to deal with the selling of these vehicles on this so-called black market that has flourished in our province.

All in all, I'm very enthused about Bill 91, An Act to require the mandatory reporting of severely damaged vehicles to counter motor vehicle fraud and theft, and I compliment the Honourable David Turnbull for bringing this forward at a very timely time.

I see that the very distinguished member for Durham is now in his seat and is about to take over, so for the following 11 minutes, perhaps I can introduce the distinguished member from Durham to complete the debate.

Hon Mr Turnbull: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In addition to the earlier consent I sought, I believe we have consent for the Chair to put the question at 6 pm.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed? It is agreed. The chair recognizes the member for Durham.

1610

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): First, I would like to thank the member from Northumberland, the gentleman from Northumberland, who has worked very hard to make sure that the health care system in Northumberland, in Cobourg, has been addressed. I know just how hard he's worked.

Which is a nice segue into vehicle safety. Health care and vehicle safety fit nicely together. I'm parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Bob Runciman, and I know this is an important consumer issue. I would be remiss not to thank publicly the Minister of Transportation, the Honourable David Turnbull. He is the minister who had the courage to bring this piece of business, this legislation, to the House. It's in that vein that he's standing up for safety in Ontario.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): That's the former whip you're talking about.

Mr O'Toole: He used to be the whip. He isn't any longer. He still acts like it on occasion but that's just his nature. He is very disciplined, very focused, which leads me back to the bill. This bill is a disciplined, focused activity.

What he's doing is making it harder for criminals to operate in Ontario. There was a news piece—Mr Speaker, you'd be pleased to know this—last night on television—and by the way, there was a nice piece on my bill, the bill dealing with the Highway Traffic Act on cell phone use, on the same cast. They were talking about stolen vehicles. There were millions of dollars of very

expensive cars. There's a real ring that's collapsed, partially, I think, because of the minister's action. They feel threatened. They're under some pressure now to come clean.

Making it harder for criminals, first—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I lost my train of thought for a moment. It's also a consumer protection issue, as I've said before. Minister Runciman and I have talked about it. We're confident that this change is an important protection for consumers. The branding of the VIN plate and the record of that vehicle now become more difficult to counterfeit or misuse. It's a whole underground ring using the VIN plates for unjustified reasons.

Third, and perhaps more important, a central plank in the Ministry of Transportation is road safety itself. You may wonder how I can apply this whole issue of road safety. Vehicles that have been improperly repaired, the illegitimate activity side: The motoring public are now protected, are more likely not to find a vehicle that's been tampered with or has had parts replaced inappropriately or a write-off vehicle that finds its way back on to the road.

What does this mean to the member for Durham? To me, most of my responsibility involves, first and foremost, listening to my constituents. That's the reason I'm here and the reason I'm speaking today on Bill 91.

How does it apply right down, driving the issue down here, driving the discussion down to real people? Dominic Vetere is the manager-operator of a family business, Dom's Auto Parts, in Courtice, Ontario. You'll probably see it the odd time going eastbound on the 401 at Courtice, just east of Oshawa, just east of the General Motors headquarters building. Look him up there: Dom's Auto Parts. He's very responsible. He's been calling for this. There was a partial requirement but not a mandatory requirement for this branding. He's been calling me and following this issue and I'm certain that as I speak today and as I look into the television, I'm looking at Dominic and saying, "Thank you, Dominic, for holding our feet to the fire and for making us and the ministry do the right thing."

It's about real people. This is part of a discussion, part of the consumer responsibilities I have working for Minister Runciman as the parliamentary assistant. We are consulting. There's a whole group of members in this caucus. I think of Frank Klees, who has a great interest in consumer protection. Frank asked me, as part of our external consultations—we call them PACs, policy advisory committees. I am a co-chair and I am very privileged to have an excellent co-chair with me. We've been working with a group called CISCO, which is a sort of self-regulatory proposal in insurance and auto collision repair. You'll hear more about this in the future. We hope there will be a regulatory environment for auto mechanics and body repair, which is a side part of this bill. It's a very inclusive activity as we're moving forward.

In that role, one of the persons I've had contact with—I won't mention names from the PAC, because these

people do it in an anonymous way—one of the persons I've met with and have a lot of respect for is Lybron Neblett. Lybron Neblett runs an auto body scanner shop in Whitby called CAD-Scan. This is a coordinated measuring device to check vehicle integrity and dimensional integrity in a vehicle back to original parts specifications. So it's a CAD-Scan operation that he has been trying to convince the collision repair industry to use in an objective way, more like Drive Clean, to verify that that vehicle has been repaired to the proper dimensional specifications of the original manufacturer. I believe Mr Neblett, who has been trying to keep safe vehicles on the road, is a complement to Minister Turnbull's bill.

When looking at this thing in a broad sense, the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale is one of the very strong members of caucus who relentlessly fights against crime. I'm confident members on both sides of the House will, for this one time, set the partisan differences aside and do the right thing. I'm looking across the floor right now at the member for Don Valley East and saying, "Do the right thing." Think of young people driving.

My daughter, who just graduated from Lakehead University, who will be teaching secondary school next year, bought her first car, and it was a used car. I know you would be the same if you had a daughter that old. Of course, I'm twice your age; I could be your father—in fact, I know your mother; she used to be here. I know you'll do the right thing, because she wouldn't let you buy a used car. She'd probably buy you a new one.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: That's a whole different debate. We don't particularly want to go down that road.

The minister from Nepean-Carleton, Minister Baird, is here listening and working hard this afternoon. I know he, above all people, would put safety first. So I've pretty well covered all sides. If there was an NDP member here, I'd mention them. But I can't, so I won't, because that would be not being true.

I know Mr Beaubien just bought a brand new vehicle. In fact, it was a General Motors vehicle, and I'm sure he'll be more than satisfied with it. I've said to the member for Lambton-Kent—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I realize the member is trying to reach a point of some coordination and co-operation, but pointing out who is here or not here or might be back in the lobby watching this, as well as doing work—you're the first one to jump on your feet and say how unfair that is. I would ask you to respect those rules, because they apply to all of us.

Mr O'Toole: I do respect the member for Hamilton West and the other members of the caucus. I know them to be in committee and working hard; that's not what I implied. But if they were here, I know they would comment, and probably will, on this bill and how important it is that we move forward in the interests of making it tougher for criminals, making consumer protection a paramount issue in all of our actions here in this Legis-

lature, and for of course the most important issue of all, public safety.

I believe Bill 91 satisfies all three of those requirements, and I would be prepared to say that I'm going to be listening to all members from all parties, and I expect that there will be a vote on this later this afternoon.

My final tribute will be to the Premier, Mike Harris, who allows his ministers to bring forward legislation that achieves consumer protection and vehicle safety and, most important, makes it tough on crime.

1620

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm glad to lead off the debate for our caucus, and I'll be sharing my time, with the indulgence of the House, with the members for Eglinton-Lawrence, Kingston and the Islands, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and the member for Sudbury.

I am pleased to say that the Liberal caucus is very strongly in support of this piece of legislation, Bill 91, something that we have lobbied for and advocated for some time. I want to thank the minister for bringing it forward and thank his staff for their co-operation, particularly his executive assistant, Diane Betts, who has been wonderful and helpful to us, which we appreciate, in terms of briefings. We appreciate that this is an important bill and we think it's a bill that's been long in coming.

If I may say so before I continue, I want to thank the minister for allowing the advance warning light at Balsam Street in my riding in Thunder Bay to be made a permanent structure. A cantilevered sign support is what it will be. We fought hard to make that happen, so I appreciate that the ministry will be letting that go forward. We look forward to it being built sooner rather than later, of course. We hope that can happen.

This is an important piece of legislation and it's one that will make a great difference to consumer protection, used car dealers, and people who have been affected by the massive theft in this province and vehicles that have been damaged being recirculated throughout the province.

I think I should make some reference to two of my colleagues. My colleague from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Ms Dombrowsky, has also been lobbying very, very hard for this for some time and has had many of her constituents doing the same thing. She'll obviously have an opportunity to speak, but the fact is, and I will say it, that she is the one who actually alerted me to the need for this and came to me first, and I was then able to pursue the minister on this as well. I thank her very much for that. And my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, Mr Parsons, is also advocating very, very strongly for this. I want to commend them and thank them, and I think it does prove that this is truly a non-partisan issue in that sense. This is a piece of legislation that will make a difference.

We know this is legislation that's also been called for by many stakeholders in this province, certainly safety groups, consumer groups, car dealers, used car dealers

and insurance companies, who believe this is legislation—and it has been explained very well by the minister and his colleagues—that will protect consumers and used car dealers from fraud, and will promote public safety. There seems little question about that.

As has been discussed, each year over 90,000 vehicles are written off and they find their way back on to the road somehow. This is something we've been concerned about for some time. The Used Car Dealers Association of Ontario has told us that there has never been more underground traffic of vehicle identification numbers from written-off vehicles than we've experienced in the last several years, which makes the need to bring this legislation forward all the more crucial.

Certainly, Bob Beattie of the Used Car Dealers Association of Ontario has been in touch with me, and I'm sure he has been in touch with the minister. Their association is very supportive of this bill. Carman McClelland, who many here will know was a former member of this provincial Legislature, who's now with the Ontario Automobile Dealers Association, is extremely supportive of this bill. He has written to us on this and we are glad to support it on the basis of their support.

Another one of our former members, Trevor Pettit, is now with the Ontario Automotive Recyclers Association. Despite the fact—again, I think this won't be a surprise to the minister—they would like to have had a few more elements in the bill that would precisely be of benefit to the recyclers' association, they are in support of the bill, I think for all the right reasons as well. We also know that the Canadian Automobile Association is supporting this bill and have said so publicly. So the support is strong for this bill and I think it's true: It's going to make a real difference.

One small caveat, if I may, is that I do wish the government might have brought it forward a little bit earlier. We know that there was a voluntary branding program brought forward in 1998, which I believe was truly well-intentioned, with the hope that it would work, but the voluntary aspect did not work. Unfortunately, it didn't solve the problem. Not all the insurance companies, I understand, volunteered to brand the vehicles and that was something that was unfortunate, because it would have been nice to have done it on that basis. I think it's clear that mandatory branding is what has to happen in order to make this successful.

Unfortunately, consumers weren't protected to the degree that we hoped they would have been by the 1998 volunteer program. I know that one of the constituents of my colleague Ms Dombrowsky, Bruce Woodbeck, from Woodbeck Auto Parts Ltd, was very concerned about that. He's supportive of this and he was not supportive of the voluntary program because I think at the time he recognized it wouldn't work. I know he has been in touch with my colleague and is pleased that this legislation is now coming forward as well.

Of course, the government did introduce a bill last April, Bill 90. I think the intention was to get it through.

The election was called soon afterwards and it did not go forward and here we are today. I commend the minister for bringing it forward. It's something that we need to do and we're doing it on pretty short notice so I think it's important that we get this through before the session wraps up tomorrow so the bill can be put into effect and not wait any longer. We are supporting this bill.

There are some concerns that I have and they've been addressed, actually, by some of the government backbenchers in their remarks as well in terms of the regulations, because we recognize that regulations do have to be drawn up. What has been said is that we need a clear definition of what is an "irreparable" vehicle or what is a "salvageable" or "rebuilt" vehicle. The bill, as it reads now, it seems to me, doesn't—in fact, it leaves it up to the stakeholders committee, the Collision Industry Standards Council of Ontario, to determine that. It's important, obviously, that they come out with some clear definitions.

My colleague from Durham made reference to Mr Lybron Neblett, who is involved with the computer company CAD-Scan, which is a computer-based three-dimensional system used to accurately determine the extent of damage and subsequent repair efforts of vehicles involved in collisions. Mr Neblett is a consultant to the advocacy group Consumers Fight Back, and he has some very real concerns that the standards just aren't in place and that there are vehicles coming back out that have been officially repaired, salvaged or rebuilt that don't meet those standards. Mr Neblett wrote to the Premier not that long ago, back in May. I share the belief of the member for Durham that indeed Mr Neblett's concerns and the opportunity to be helpful should be taken advantage of by the minister.

Ultimately, it's crucial to make sure that the definition is extremely clear so we're not having vehicles come back on the road that are not truly repaired and do not meet the standards. It's probably fair to say that it shouldn't just be left up to the discretion of the individual insurance providers to determine that. I would hope the minister would take advantage of that opportunity in terms of what Mr Neblett says. We do need those clear definitions in the regulations and we need a set of standards that all of us—consumers, dealers and everybody else—can clearly identify. The fact is that this mandatory branding will only work if that criteria is worked out in the regulations. I want to make sure that happens and I will be talking to the minister about that in the future.

So there's no question our caucus supports it. I think it's fair to say that my colleagues who will be speaking after me will be making reference to that. They may have some of their own other concerns that they'll bring forward, and I hope they do.

If I may, I do want to make reference, while I have the opportunity, to some other issues that I would hope the minister would consider.

We're nearing the end of the session. It's been an interesting, tough year and a lot of issues that I've been

dealing with as transportation critic I'm not satisfied have been completely dealt with. I hope the minister will take those into consideration and will try to make some changes.

One of them, of course, is the whole issue of the sale of the 407, something that we in this caucus believe is not, at this stage, in the best interests of the consumers. I'm not so sure its sale, for \$3.1 billion, which the government was very happy to trumpet before the election, was a good deal for taxpayers. I know the minister disagrees with me strongly on this. I would ask the minister, as we've all asked him many times, let's see the details of the sale. Let's get that out there. It would be great to have that put in front of the people so they can see that. It's very important. The minister—we've had an exchange about this in the past and there's an issue related to freedom of information, I understand, but it's very important that we do this.

1630

The fact is that the people who are driving on the 407 are now in a situation where there are ever-escalating tolls, which is going to be going on for some time. We've got a 99-year lease now; the people of this province will not have this back in their possession for 99 years. It's something we feel very strongly about. I can promise the minister that over the summer as well I will be probably pursuing this with him; but we will be pursuing this. It's important that this be brought out; the public has a right.

The minister made reference in his remarks, as have others, to the number one priority being safety, and I appreciate that. In terms of the concerns related to the number of commercial vehicles on our roads, the number of trucks on our roads, and truck safety and some of the measures that have been taken, I must say that one of those issues really is the amount of time drivers are allowed to drive, the hours of service. I know there are negotiations going on right now between the provincial government, the federal government and other agencies involved with trying to sort out the hours of work.

We know there are many more vehicles on the roads today—many more. We know that's going to increase in terms of commercial vehicles. We know that driver fatigue is an extreme concern of everyone. The proposals I have seen that are going forward look like they are moving in the direction, potentially, of allowing drivers to actually drive more hours per week than they have before. That's a concern. But what is probably most clear about this whole issue is how muddy it is; it's not clear at all. There's a great deal of confusion as to exactly what's in this, which is why I did ask the minister in a letter recently to provide some form of meaningful consultation so the public can be involved. If, for example, the minister truly believes that we have no reason to be concerned or that these regulations or changes in hours of service will be of benefit, then I think there would be no reason to not speak out publicly about this or have some involvement of the public in this.

I certainly know that the truckers I talk to, who tell me about the change in proposals, have some real concerns

themselves. Driver fatigue is a huge issue, and as we have more vehicles out there that becomes a greater concern. I would ask the minister to take seriously the possibility of a consultation over the summer. It's a good time to do it; we're not going to be in session over the summer. I'd be very happy to be involved in that, as I know my caucus colleagues would be as well: some form of consultation that would allow the public to understand and be involved, to express their concerns. Because what is happening is that the public is not reassured any more in terms of the volume of traffic out there, let alone the fact that drivers themselves are really suffering from driver fatigue. I really hope the minister would consider that because there is simply no question that people are concerned. It affects them and impacts them in a very profound way, as I think we all know because we're all sharing that road. I hope the minister would consider that and look at it seriously.

An issue that has come up with great frequency, particularly this past winter—but it was a concern of mine long before I was the critic for transportation—is the ministry's decision to move towards complete and total privatization of the road maintenance system in our province. We know the ministry made that determination just after the government got elected back in 1995, that this was the method they were going to go by. We also know, and they said it publicly, that they would only do this based on achieving savings of 5%. And they also guaranteed that they would not compromise safety.

We know there was a pilot project in the Chatham-Kent area, the first pilot project, which was brought forward in 1996. Even before that pilot project was completed, the ministry decided to go ahead and move forward with the privatization of road maintenance even though there were some great concerns about it. I've always objected to that; that's no secret. I think they should have at least waited until that pilot project was completed before they decided to move forward. That's pretty unusual. Usually when you have a pilot project, you want to assess its value, but there was a determination to move ahead.

This past November, in the auditor's report, he looked at, I think, four of the privatization models that were out there and he determined that there were no savings. In fact, he determined there may be greater costs involved in the road maintenance in this province. If that is the case, certainly that flies counter to what the government says. Again, I know the minister disagrees with me, but the auditor obviously is an independent, highly regarded person who reports to this Legislature, and his feelings on this are pretty strong.

We went to public accounts in February and had an opportunity to debate this. I asked the auditor to basically look at this whole issue again and unfortunately was not successful in getting that passed by the committee. But this is a huge issue, one that continues to concern people. I know there has been a complete privatization of the service in my own area of Thunder Bay. Recently the members of the public service were all laid off. The

minister and his ministry staff will bring out statistics that say there are fewer accidents and fewer fatalities than there were 20 years ago. I think that's a bit of a mug's game and an inappropriate statistic to simply use in that fashion. The fact is that we are living in very different times. We certainly know that the whole incidence of and society's view of drunk driving has changed. We also know that people are wearing seatbelts, where they didn't wear them as frequently 20 years ago.

But it doesn't matter, you know. If there's one accident that may be caused because the road is not being maintained as well, what could be more important than that? This is an issue that is very close to me and to my colleagues. If indeed we find down the line that the road maintenance is simply costing more money—the auditor gave an extraordinarily interesting example. That was British Columbia, where they went the same route. They decided to privatize all the road maintenance. They finally had an accounting firm come in and take a look at it, and do you know what it cost? It cost \$100 million more than when it was done by the public service. I just hope the minister is looking very carefully at that, because the truth is if we discover down the line that this process continues we will be incensed, and we will be incensed on behalf of the people of this province, because nothing can be more important than public safety. I happen to believe that the maintenance of our roads is a public service. I happen to believe that rather strongly, that there needs to be accountability. The one thing that's really lost with the privatization of road maintenance, in my opinion, is that accountability, is that responsibility. I believe that's absolutely lost. Again, I can anticipate what the minister would say if he had the opportunity; he would say it's being monitored. But that is a concern I have. I just want to make it clear to the minister that that's an issue I will continue to have. I am going to pursue it closely. There's no point in my pretending that I won't.

I will wrap up my remarks and let my colleague speak shortly. I want to talk about something that came up in the Legislature today. My colleague from St Catharines asked a question of the Minister of the Environment about the fact that we certainly have air pollution which is statistically killing people. The fact is it's killing people. We need to find ways to reduce air pollution; that's something we simply have to do. One of the decisions made by this government that I think has been most damaging was the removal of support for public transit. Again, I can anticipate the minister's response. He'll say there has been a shift in responsibilities—which of course has been a downloading—that has given municipalities the wherewithal to do it all. Well, the municipalities certainly don't feel that way. Public transit is something we have to support. We have to support public transit and find some way to do it. I believe we are showing a lack of vision if we do not understand the value of public transit. The fact is that we need to fight smog, we need to fight gridlock. The abandonment of support for public transit is something that I think will

come back to haunt this government. It's my responsibility as transportation critic to make those points to the minister. It's also the responsibility of us in opposition to express those concerns. I do express those concerns.

As I said, I'm strongly supportive of this bill and I commend the ministry for bringing it forward. It's going to make a very positive difference and I look forward to seeing passage of this bill as quickly as possible.

I'll now hand off to my colleague.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very pleased today to stand in the House and speak in favour of the bill that is before us, Bill 91, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, or the branding bill.

1640

I first became aware of the issue of branding on September 3, 1999. It was two months to the day after my election in my riding. One of my constituents who owns an auto parts business brought this very important issue to my attention. My colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North has already made reference to the very fine efforts of my constituent Mr Bruce Woodbeck. Mr Woodbeck wrote to me and explained the importance of this issue. Mr Woodbeck explained that there had been previous legislation introduced, Bill 90, and unfortunately that very worthy legislation was interrupted by the election and did not become the law. This was a great concern to my constituent because he certainly was worried about the safety of Ontarians and the fact that unsafe vehicles were making their way back into the marketplace. Of course we can all appreciate the many negative effects that that reality has presented for Ontarians.

In fairness to the fine work that Mr Woodbeck has done to make me aware—and consequently I was able to bring his issue to the attention of the Minister of Transportation, as well as the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North, who is the transportation critic—I was able to bring his very valid issues to their attention and I commend all of them for the interest they paid to the matter and the action that has been taken that has resulted in the introduction of Bill 91. I applaud the Minister of Transportation for acting in a reasonably precipitous fashion to address this important safety issue for all Ontarians.

If I can get back to my constituent Mr Woodbeck and his family, they own Woodbeck Auto Parts Ltd in Stirling, Ontario. I know my colleague from Durham had made reference to a particular business in his riding and the example that he thought this business set in the recycling industry. I would suggest that Mr Woodbeck and his family as well deserve that same kind of accolade and recognition for the work they've done in the auto recycling industry in my riding in eastern Ontario. I say this because I also attended an anniversary celebration that this business had a few months after my election as well. They have been in the auto recycling business for 60 years. So I have to say when constituents with that

kind of experience and background in an industry bring a situation to my attention, I think it's very important that we listen to what they have to say and see what we can do to ensure that the issues they have around safety for Ontarians—that there are measures introduced that would address their very worthwhile concerns.

I would suggest—it's already been stated and it was made very clear to me by my constituent as well—that probably the most important outcome that this bill will have is that it will ensure greater safety for Ontarians who will be purchasing previously used vehicles. Mr Woodbeck would point out to me that mandatory branding will protect consumers from driving unsafe vehicles. He has indicated that it will also stabilize insurance premiums, as insurance companies have less to worry about in terms of insuring vehicles that may or may not have the integrity of being safe. Mr Woodbeck has also indicated that this process will help curb auto theft and the sale of stolen auto parts. Any legislation that is going to curb unlawful activity within our province I wholeheartedly support.

The member for Durham has asked that we not make this a partisan issue, that we put our partisan politics aside and support this bill. I just want to put on the record that I'm not prepared to set my partisan politics aside. I am supporting this bill because I am a Liberal, because Liberals believe that consumers should be protected. We believe in the fact that the industry needs to be regulated in such a way as to ensure the safety of all Ontarians.

Another really very good point that my constituent shared with me about this bill and what it will achieve: It will cause more vehicles to be repaired due to the increase of good salvage parts and the decrease in salvage values, and that contributes to recycling, which is good for the environment. As Liberals, we are so very committed to the environment, and so that is another very attractive feature of this piece of legislation.

Finally, it will help create jobs in legitimate businesses like body shops, mechanical shops and auto recyclers. Of course, the Liberals would want to support any legislation that would encourage that to occur as well.

I'm very happy to have had this opportunity to talk about how an individual, a small business person in eastern Ontario, has, I think, been very significant in terms of providing direction to the government and moving us towards legislation that is certainly going to benefit consumers of this province. I'm delighted to have had the opportunity to speak to this very important bill this afternoon. I know that my colleagues are most anxious as well to share their views on the bill and I look forward to voting in favour of it later on today.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Of course we support this bill. As a matter of fact, this bill should have been brought in two years ago when the government, in effect, made it a voluntary measure.

I found it very interesting that the minister stood in his place here earlier and, if I quote him correctly, said that he wanted to make the Ontario roads the safest in all of the world. I'm just wondering what he has done in that

regard. When you look at some of the other measures that the ministry has been involved in, it's already been talked about here earlier this afternoon.

Look at what's been happening with the downloading of the entire road network in Ontario, other than the four-lane highways and some other highways that are still within provincial jurisdiction. I bet you that two thirds to three quarters of all the highway system that was built as part of the provincial system has been downloaded to local municipalities. How safe are those roads going to be five or 10 years from now, when the local municipalities simply will not have the financial ability to rebuild those roads?

We sometimes forget why the province was involved in a lot of those activities. It was simply due to the fact that the local municipalities would not have the financial ability to be involved in that kind of road building. What have we done over the last three or four years? Or what has this government done over the last three or four years? It has downloaded the roads to the local municipalities, some of which are in good repair right now, but they will need to be rebuilt five or 10 years from now. And what if the local municipalities don't have the financial ability to rebuild those roads? Can we then truly say that we want to make Ontario roads the safest in the entire world?

Let's take a look at another issue. Let's take a look at the privatization of our road maintenance. Do the people of Ontario really think that the roads are better maintained for our safety and those people who are using the highways on a day-to-day basis since they've been privatized, since the maintenance of a lot of those roads has been privatized? What we're having in Ontario already is a drastic variance of service levels, depending upon which company is involved.

Let's take a look at the sale of the 407, as our critic has already referred to. Is there any consumer protection involved in that? The minister said that as well, that he's interested in the consumer protection aspect of that, and some of the members opposite spoke about that. Is there any consumer protection at all when the company that owns the 407 can charge whatever they want by way of user fees, as we've already seen just in the last two years? There's no consumer protection there. Ontario's roads aren't being made safer as a result of the privatization of our roads system.

Yes, of course, this is a good piece of legislation. And the fact that 90,000 vehicles get stolen in our province on an annual basis isn't good for Ontario consumers. But you know, let's get away from the rhetoric and let's look at the reality of the situation. The situation is quite clearly out there that the way that we're heading in this province when it comes to transportation issues is exactly the opposite of any kind of public accountability. It all gets back to what we have governments for. We have governments so that people can be protected, so that we can have some rules and regulations about how we relate to one another on an ongoing basis. What this government has done over the last five years is that it has been

grabbing away at those kinds of rules and regulations, whether we're talking about transportation, social services, public housing, health care or education. Minister, don't come in here and talk about wanting to make Ontario's roads the safest in the world when in fact you have been part of a government that over the last five years has been tearing down the public services that had made us the number one country in the world. We have extra money rolling into this province, into the provincial coffers on an ongoing basis. It is still not too late to start looking at some of those vital government services, the services people need on an ongoing basis, whether it's in health care, education or road safety.

1650

Look what's happened in the Chatham-Kent area. Sure, we've got inquiries going on into the two major disasters that have happened there from a road safety viewpoint, from an accident viewpoint, over the last couple of years, but I think it's high time the province started committing some resources again to making sure that our road network across the province is really top-notch and is the safest it can be for individuals.

Look what's happened in Walkerton, again as a result of privatization, again as a result of this province deciding that no, it didn't need to regulate or run its own water-testing labs any more, that the private sector could do it.

We support this bill, but we say to this government, this is only a start. It's only a very small start in a very small area. Let us be just as concerned about many of the other areas where the protection and safety of individuals is concerned. Let us start rebuilding some of our good public institutions that have served us well in this province over the last 200 years and let's stop this tearing down that's happened.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Over two years ago, I tried to alert this government and the then minister, Tony Clement, about the epidemic of cars that were being stolen in this province and the ploy of cloning stolen cars that was taking place right across the province. I know in Toronto we had about 35 cars a day stolen. We have literally full-time operations of car thieves operating in Quebec and Ontario taking advantage of people. In fact, one day in the visitors' gallery here I had a poor woman from Mississauga, a real estate salesperson, who had bought a car out of one of those magazines. She assumed she'd bought a car legitimately from a person because the person had the vehicle identification number. She went to the Ministry of Transportation office and they had this voluntary program. They checked through it all and said, "Oh, this car's fine." She ended up basically losing that car. I think she paid over \$25,000, and the government did nothing to help her. The minister basically said: "It's not my problem. It's your problem." It was really the result of the Ministry of Transportation taking a very cavalier attitude towards stolen cars.

There are no protections. In fact, I asked for a number of things for the ministry to do and in this bill I still don't

think they've done them. For instance, I asked them to have a system that verifies stolen cars in a log that goes right across Canada. They still don't have that in place.

One of the things that was happening is that they had these stolen Quebec registration permits that were being used here in Ontario. People would come in with these stolen Quebec permits and register stolen cars as legitimate cars; therefore, the buyer wouldn't even know they were stolen. This is easy to do because at the Ministry of Transportation office they were really changing the colours and the models of the cars willy-nilly without verifying that that car was that colour.

The second thing they were doing up at the MTO—and maybe they're still doing it—is that they were also taking anybody's word that they represented a dealer. They would come in and say, "I represent ABC dealer." They weren't ever questioned or asked for any documentation that they represented a dealer. A lot of these car thieves or these operators were coming in under false pretences. They didn't represent any dealers. I don't know if they verify them.

In Australia, when you register a car, the transportation official goes out to verify that's the car. Here, there's no verification done on-site. They don't go out to look and see if that car is the car that's being registered.

Anyway, nobody helped this hard-working person in Mississauga whom I brought to this Legislature who was out of pocket \$25,000. The government refused to help. She was so angry she decided to go to court. I was in Osgoode Hall with her where we saw the so-called car thief. He was there and said the car wasn't under his name, it was under his mother's name. This poor person ended up spending another \$10,000 to \$15,000 in legal fees and they put a lien on the car, the bank account. What a mess. The lesson is that this is one small step in terms of branding, but there's much more to do in protecting consumers against these car thieves who operate in this province at will.

There should be red flags that go up at MTO when, for instance, registration forms come in from Quebec, because there were a whole lot of them stolen. Ministry staff should not be allowed to alter vehicle identification data like colour, year and make without double-checking to ensure the vehicle is not stolen. They don't do that now. Before vehicle registration for used cars is completed, ministry staff should be required to physically check the vehicle to verify that the data, the colour, the year, the make etc matches the code on the VIN, the vehicle identification number. They don't do that.

Anyone attempting to register a vehicle in the name of an auto dealer should be asked for documentation verifying he or she is the legitimate representative of the dealer. I don't know if they do that yet. All out-of-province vehicle registration permit forms should not be processed unless they are cross-checked with out-of-province transportation ministries to ensure the forms are not stolen. That's what was happening: They were stealing these forms in other provinces and bringing them to Ontario and registering stolen cars.

People across this province work hard for their money. They buy these cars. In some cases, they're trying to save a few dollars by buying a used vehicle. Right now, there are very few protections for people doing that. Despite this legislation which is good as far as it goes, people still have to be very cognizant of the dangers of buying a car privately. They have to ensure that the person selling the car is a legitimate seller of a car, that they aren't just basically laundering the car. This is what happens.

There'll be some people who will sell 10, 15 cars in a year. If those people sell 10, 15 cars in a year, I think the ministry should somehow have a check on them to make sure they aren't involved in any illegal activity. People go to a home and they think they're going to buy this car from Jane Doe, who is legitimate. They don't realize Jane Doe is a front for a stolen car ring. It is big business in this province, big business in this country, to steal cars and pawn them off on innocent people.

This bill, two years after I asked for this kind of protection, makes one small dent in it. We have many more things to do where MTO not only makes money—MTO makes over \$1 billion in selling permits and fees and licences to Ontarians—but also has the responsibility to protect the consumer. Right now, they are not protecting the consumer enough against these very sophisticated car thieves who are operating all over this province. People still have to be very much on guard and people have to—

1700

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can we see if three is a quorum in the House? I don't believe there is.

Acting Clerk at the Table (Mr Peter Sibenik): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker order the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence was finished, so we'll move to the member for Sudbury.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I feel privileged to be able to stand and speak a few moments about this bill, to tell the government that Bill 91 was certainly slow in coming. It is an admission, though, by the government that their voluntary branding process was a failure. Bill 91 is an admission, of course, that the voluntary program that they introduced was not successful and now we're bringing in legislation that will certainly meet the needs of Ontarians.

It is quite an admission by this government, because this government doesn't like to admit when they make mistakes. This is clearly an act that will correct a problem the government created earlier on when they introduced voluntary branding over two years ago and it wasn't very successful.

There are still many concerns we have with regard to this legislation. Certainly, the lack of clarity in definitions is a concern, the lack of regulations and the implementation of those regulations is a concern that we have on this side of the House, and our critic addressed those extremely well.

But this will solve a problem. Right now in Sudbury police are investigating a situation that, if this bill had been invoked into law two or three years ago when Mr Colle first suggested it, or when Mrs Dombrowsky and Mr Parsons first suggested it over a year ago, we wouldn't be faced with the problem we have in Sudbury of people buying vehicles that are stolen vehicles or retrofitted vehicles that are not road-worthy or safe. The bill will fill a need and therefore I'll be supporting the bill. The government, though, does make an admission that it made a mistake and I'm glad they admit they make mistakes.

But when it comes to branding, I'm concerned that this government wants to make mandatory branding of vehicles the law, yet they brand people differently and that's very scary. They brand people in northern Ontario as second-class citizens when it comes to cancer care.

Let me explain to those people in the audience today who might not know exactly what I'm talking about. Patients who have to travel for cancer treatment outside of their region in southern Ontario get full costs covered. That's all travel costs, all meal costs, all taxi costs and all hotel room costs covered completely, 100%, up to \$5,000.

People in northern Ontario are branded differently. When they travel out of their jurisdiction to receive cancer treatment—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): What does this have to do with Bill 91?

Mr Bartolucci: It has everything to do with it because we're talking about branding. But now when the people in northern Ontario travel out of their jurisdiction, they get 31 cents a kilometre, one way.

For example, the average of \$1,483 for one week for a southern Ontario person to cover expenses is there. But in northern Ontario, the person travelling the same distance, only going south, gets a measly \$124. Definitely that's branding. They're willing to protect people with Bill 91, but they're not willing to protect the people of northern Ontario who are branded as second-class citizens, who are discriminated against.

Ms Mushinski: That's absolutely false.

Mr Bartolucci: The members across the way say that's not true. Well, let me tell you, every word that I said is absolutely true. This government may try to spin their way out of this, but they're out of control. The people in Sudbury, in Thunder Bay, in northwestern Ontario, in northeastern Ontario who have to travel for cancer care are branded as second-class citizens by this government.

Do you know, it led the former vice-chair of Cancer Care Ontario to found a new organization called Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care. They have a toll-free number. The toll-free number is 1-800-461-0159, and I urge those of us across Ontario who are concerned to phone that toll-free number.

Mr Bisson: Rick, what's that number again?

Mr Bartolucci: It's 1-800-461-0159.

I suggest to you—

The Acting Speaker: Could you put that down and move on with—

Mr Bartolucci: Sorry, Speaker.

I suggest to those people who are concerned, who are tired of being branded by the government as second-class citizens, to phone that toll-free number, because Bill 91 makes it mandatory to brand vehicles so that people will not have to purchase vehicles that are not safe, but they are not prepared to fix the branding of northern Ontario residents as second-class citizens.

I believe this government has lost sight of reality. I believe this government has lost sight of the fact that past governments treated everyone equally in the province of Ontario. Not any more. The Mike Harris government discriminates against the people of northern Ontario. When it comes to cancer care, when it comes to cancer treatment, they are branded as second-class citizens.

I suggest to you that this government would be wise to fix the branding problem they've created in northern Ontario, learn to treat people the same all across the province, just like you're treating cars the same all across the province.

Mr Bisson: I want to congratulate the member for Sudbury for a very interesting leap from auto branding to how we feel as northerners, branded by this government, in their work in order to discriminate against the province. As a northerner, I feel the same way as the member from Sudbury, that far too often this government moves in directions, it moves in ways of policies that are very discriminatory against the north. The latest example in regard to Cancer Care Ontario is a good one.

I want to speak to Bill 91 and I want to, first of all, put on the record that our government—our party, which will be government again—basically supports this legislation. We think it is long overdue, something that needed to be done. Quite simply, what we're trying to do here is, by way of this legislation, take out of circulation vehicles that have been involved in accidents and are not repairable any more and unfortunately are finding their way back into the market.

Just to explain this debate to people who are watching and for those members who may not have had the opportunity to pay too much attention to this particular bill, let's just talk a little bit about what it's about. Simply put, Bill 91—I see the audience in the galleries is watching with bated breath. They want to find out what's going on.

The industry in Ontario has had some problems for some years and I know the Ford dealer from—is Mr Palladini a Ford dealer?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I am the MPP for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

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Mr Bisson: But what dealership, again? “Every pal of Al Palladini is a pal of mine.” What's your dealership? Anyway, the former Minister of Transportation, who was also an automobile dealer, will know something about this.

Mr Christopherson: A politician and a used car salesman. Might as well be a lawyer, too.

Mr Bisson: Used car salesman and politician—you talk about getting low, exactly.

Simply put, what we're doing with this bill is trying to find a way to take out of circulation those vehicles that have been involved in accidents and have had damage done to them classified as non-repairable and to take their VIN plates out of the market. Because far too often in Ontario, as in many other jurisdictions, when a vehicle is involved in an accident one of two things happens.

One, somebody buys the old, bashed-up vehicle and tries to bring the vehicle back into circulation by repairing it and, unfortunately, because the car has been damaged to such an extent, buyer beware, because you might be buying a car that is not structurally sound and is a danger not only to yourself but, more importantly, to your family and your passengers, and also very dangerous to the motoring public. What we're trying to do with this legislation, by way of an agreement on the part of all parties, is find a way to get those cars out of circulation.

We're saying that once a vehicle is termed to be non-repairable—I don't want to use the word “irreparable” because that's what they've got in the bill and I just think that's bad English, so I'll call it non-repairable—take the VIN plate directly out of circulation. For those people who don't know what that is, that's the registration number that is with the Ministry of Transportation. That is the number that's in your car, so that the registration of that vehicle is completely out of the system so nobody tries to bring that vehicle back in again in a repaired state that looks good cosmetically but is probably in fairly bad shape and shouldn't be on Ontario highways at all.

I know that my friend Mr Palladini, the member from—

Hon Mr Palladini: Vaughan-King-Aurora.

Mr Bisson: Vaughan-King-Aurora. Thank you very much. The former Minister of Transportation also likes this because it means that car dealers across Ontario will be doing a better business.

I don't want to impute motives, but I'm sure that if I were an automobile dealer—Ford, GM, Chrysler, Nissan, whatever it might be—I would be happy, because once those cars are out of circulation, obviously people are going to be looking. When they're buying a car, maybe they'll be coming into my dealership to buy a good second-hand car that's certified, a car that's worth buying, or maybe even a new car. That would give jobs to the people in Ontario who construct cars. I think that's both a good thing when it comes to economic activity within a community of Ontario and a good thing when it comes to safety.

The other thing that it does, though, is deal with an issue of theft to a certain extent. Some people may not realize this, but there are some non-legitimate business people who operate in this province. They're called thieves. What they do is go out sometimes and steal cars and try to re-register the car under the VIN plate of a car that has actually been damaged and is not supposed to be

in circulation any more. By taking the vehicle information number for that damaged car out of the registry, you're in effect taking away some of the opportunity—I wouldn't say all, because I don't think we go far enough—on the part of the thieves to resell a car with a VIN of a car that was actually damaged by way of an accident. That, I think, is a good thing.

The Minister of Transportation, the Honourable David Turnbull, came to me and said: "Listen. Here's what we want to do. We have a one-off bill. We would like to be able to pass it through the House and do it quickly." I said to the minister: "Listen. We are certainly in favour of the proposal. Let me see the legislation. We'll bring that back to our caucus. We'll have a discussion and we'll let you know, but on the surface of it I don't see a problem."

What you're trying to do here makes a lot of good sense to me—I wouldn't say common sense, because this is not something this government has demonstrated on other issues. But in this particular case, it's certainly a step in the right direction.

Does it solve all of the problems? Of course not. Does it go far enough? No. Should it have been done a long time ago? Yes. But we're here today. Let's deal with it. It's enough to finally be in the position to allow this bill to pass and to be able to deal with that issue. I don't want to engage in the debate. It should have been done two years ago when the minister had an opportunity, or it should have been done by Bob Rae, or it should have been done by David Peterson, or it should have been done by whomever. The point is, in this Legislature, at a particular point in time, we're asked to deal with issues, and this particular issue is being dealt with. I'm giving the government credit for finally coming forward with legislation that has all-party support.

I wish that we'd see more of this. I think it does our Legislature and, more important, does the public wrong, when we see bills that are so contentious, that don't have the support of all three parties in this House and the government, with its majority, goes ahead with very controversial bills. I think it really takes away the respect that the public has for the legislative process.

As you very well know, I've argued for a long time that we need to have a form of democratic reform in this province so that we're able to find a way to say to the people of Ontario, "We'll give you confidence in your politicians and your political system," because people in this province, I would argue, over the last five years feel less and less enfranchised when it comes to the decisions that are being made by their government, and more important, the decisions that are being made by members of the assembly.

For example, if I'm a teacher—there's been a bunch of legislation that has been passed that people don't agree with in the teaching profession, that the school trustees don't agree with, that the students don't agree with, and certainly that the parents don't agree with, and the government, by way of its majority, has been able to pass that legislation. When we take those kinds of actions here and a government utilizes its parliamentary majority in

the way that this government has—by forcing those kinds of bills through the house by way of closure or by way of a sheer majority—I think it gives the public a really bad feeling about what we do in this Legislature.

I would argue that it would be important for us, as members of this assembly, to look at ways of being able to give the public some confidence in our political system. There are a number of ways of doing that. You would know, Mr Speaker. You were at our last provincial convention, where the whole issue of democratic reform was put on the table at the NDP convention, where we talked about possibly moving towards a system of proportional representation, possibly moving to a way of electoral reform in order to take big money out of elections so that the public has more control about what happens in this assembly.

Mr Speaker, you were a member of a government, as I was, that was elected with 38% of the vote, and we had over 60% of the seats of this House. This government, with 42% of the vote, has well over 60% of the members of this House. The David Peterson government was in the same situation. There has only been one government in the history of Ontario that was elected over 50%, the point being, unfortunately, our first-past-the-post system says if you elect more MPPs and that gives you a majority in the House, you can darned well do what you please. I think government in moderation, with a majority, works and there have been good examples of that, certainly in the days before I was here, under the Bill Davis government and before, from what I'm told by members of the assembly who have served here longer than I have. I've only been here 10 years. It's kind of interesting; I'm a veteran now after 10 years. That was unheard of 15 years ago. Anyway, the point is that there was more co-operation between the parties.

Coming back to Bill 91, Mr Speaker, because I know you want me to bring it back to that, Bill 91 is one of those bills where there is all-party agreement. The point that I want to make around Bill 91 is, in Legislatures in the past we had a situation where House leaders from all three parties sat down and said: "Here's the agenda the government would like. What is it that you like or don't like as parties in opposition and what is it that you want to see advanced?" There was a bit of toing and froing that went on, and members had more ability because the rules of the House were such that you could hold bills up if the government was trying to use a majority in an undemocratic way. It made for better debate. It made for a more tempered bills. More important, it made for respect on the part of the public for their government.

I would argue—not that I'm a big Conservative fan—that governments in the past before this government—the Bob Rae government, the Peterson and the Davis governments, and the Grossman government—certainly tried to work at ways of being able to temper their official majority by way of this first-past-the-post system in a better way.

I would say, around Bill 91, that I think this is an occasion where we have an opportunity to talk about the

importance of trying to find ways of getting all members of the assembly to work together for the betterment of legislation that affects the people of Ontario. I would propose either the government changes the rules of the House in order to allow all members of the assembly greater ability to hold up the government when they're doing something that quite frankly is wrong, that a majority of people feel is wrong, such as what happened with teachers, what happened with a number of other people, or, I would argue, as a New Democrat, to go even further, to talk about electoral reform so that big money does not decide who gets elected. This last election in 1995 saw the Conservatives spending money at an unprecedented rate, as well as third party advertising, which I think skewed the election because it takes the focus off the issues and makes the public look at the glitz. We're back to where the Americans are now, where basically elections are won by big money being spent on advertising campaigns. The voters unfortunately are bombarded by these ads day in and day out, and eventually when they go to the polls, the only thing they remember is the brand name that was advertised for the last three or four weeks. It's a little bit like walking by a McDonald's: Every time you drive by a McDonald's you hear that jingle in your ear, whatever it is, and you end up going into McDonald's to buy. Why? Because you've been saturated with advertising. So I would argue, with electoral reform, for trying to find ways to limit campaign expenses.

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I would also want to deal with issues of parliamentary reform in order to give the public more say about what happens in the Legislature so that we can deal with bills like Bill 91, where the public really does have an interest that it wants to put forward and people want to see their government and the opposition parties working together for the betterment of the legislation of Ontario, for the people of Ontario. I think Bill 91 gives us an opportunity to talk about that.

Je dirais que c'est vraiment triste quand on voit jusqu'à quel point la politique de l'Ontario a été en arrière quand ça vient au processus démocratique. On a la chance aujourd'hui, à travers le projet de loi 91, de dire, « Oui, tous les partis, les néo-démocrates, le Parti libéral et le Parti conservateur—je dois dire réformiste. Ce n'est pas vraiment un Parti conservateur; c'est un Parti réformiste. Écoutez. Stockwell Day et Tom Long seraient très contents de s'asseoir sur les bancs du gouvernement de l'autre bord. Or, on va les appeler les Réformistes. Ah, non, ce n'est plus réformiste; c'est merde, le parti merde. C'est ça qu'on dit, CCRAP, « merde » en français? Je pense que oui. Ou l'Alliance. J'oublie. Il y a eu assez de termes qui ont changé dans ce parti que l'on ne sait plus.

Le point, c'est que la Loi 91 est un exemple où tous les partis sont venus ensemble pour regarder un projet de loi et dire, « Y a-t-il une manière qu'on peut travailler ensemble? Y a-t-il une manière non partisane d'approcher un problème dans la société de l'Ontario afin de trouver une solution? »

Je donne le crédit au gouvernement. Il y avait beaucoup de fois que vous m'avez vu me lever, dans cette Assemblée, de la part des citoyens de Timmins-Baie James pour dire : « Ce gouvernement est pourri. Il fait des méchantes affaires. » Mais dans cette situation on peut dire que oui, on fait une bonne affaire. On dit en anglais, et on dit en français le même dicton : « Say it the way it is. Dis-le comme c'est. » Il faut dire que dans cette situation le gouvernement fait la bonne affaire.

Mais je veux dire que c'est un bon exemple de comment on peut travailler ensemble. Si on regarde, dans cette circonstance, la Loi 91, et on a vu ça avec d'autres lois à une couple d'occasions dans cette session, où le gouvernement a essayé de trouver une manière de travailler avec les partis, vous allez voir, membres du gouvernement, que l'opposition n'est pas, comme vous dites, tout partisane. Nous les députés de l'opposition, néo-démocrates comme libéraux, sommes ici pour les mêmes raisons que vous. On a une philosophie, une idéologie, qui est différente de la vôtre. Je dirais que les libéraux et vous êtes pas mal proches. Nous autres, on n'est pas mal loins, mais c'est une autre histoire—ben, certains dans le Parti libéral, parce qu'il y en a des progressistes, comme M^{me} Boyer et M. Caplan. Ils sont progressistes, puis je le reconnaît. On ne va pas être trop partisan aujourd'hui. Il faut essayer un peu, madame Boyer. Après tout, je vous dis, il y a de la place pour les francophones chez les néo-démocrates. Venez nous voir. Il y a un siège : neuf à 10, c'est le fun. Je vous fais l'heure pour le public. Je demande au monde de votre comté de vous contacter pour dire, « Traversez le plancher. » Venez au Parti néo-démocrate. Vous, les francophones, êtes toujours bienvenus.

Des voix.

M. Bisson : C'est M. Beaubien. Venez. On a besoin de francophones. Nous reconnaissons que les francophones ont besoin d'une voix dans cette province, et notre parti a toujours été vu comme un parti qui ne dit pas seulement qu'on est en faveur d'avancer le dossier francophones, mais on veut l'avancer, comme on l'a fait en tant que gouvernement et comme on continue d'essayer de faire en opposition. Je sais que M^{me} Boyer est partisane, comme moi, quand ça vient à ce dossier. Après tout, on est francophone, numéro un. Monsieur Beaubien, je veux dire que vous êtes dans la même situation. Peut-être que votre idéologie est un peu méchante, mais il y a de la place ici pour vous comme francophone.

Mais je veux revenir au point. C'est le « fun » de voir qu'il y a des francophones à l'Assemblée, aux deux bords de la Chambre, qui peuvent parler français et qui peuvent s'envoyer—comment dit-on « heckling » en français?—qui peuvent hurler à travers la Chambre en français. C'est donc beau, puis j'espère et je sais que M^{me} Boyer fait ça avec son caucus, puis j'espère que M. Beaubien prendra cette occasion dans son caucus pour dire : « Levez-vous comme francophones. Parlez français. On est fiers d'être francophones. » C'est l'occasion pour nous, à l'Assemblée, de dire qu'on est fiers. On est une société

importante en Ontario, on est un peuple important, et on veut faire avancer notre dossier. On veut dire au monde qu'on est fiers d'être francophones puis on a une place dans cette province.

On continue le débat. Je veux dire que c'est une situation aujourd'hui où on trouve que l'opposition travaille avec le gouvernement pour avancer un problème avec la Loi 91. On veut trouver une manière d'éliminer les véhicules endommagés par un accident et qui doivent être ôtés du système. Présentement, sans cette loi, comme nous trouvons tous, le gouvernement ainsi que l'opposition, trop de véhicules reviennent dans le système parce que quelqu'un prend un véhicule qui est supposé d'être fini, qui est supposé d'être hors du système parce que le châssis est complètement fini, et il le répare. Il ramène le véhicule dans le système, et parfois la personne qui l'achète ne sait pas ce qu'elle achète. Elle se trouve dans une situation où elle a acheté un véhicule qui n'est pas correct. C'est dangereux pour eux, leur famille et les autres sur la route.

Le gouvernement essaie avec cette loi de trouver un système où, une fois qu'on détermine qu'un véhicule n'est pas réparable, on ôte ce véhicule du système en ôtant le numéro « VIN » de la banque de données dans les ordinateurs du ministère des Transports. J'essaie de le trouver en français mais je ne le trouve pas—vehicle information number. On ôte ça du système pour que ce véhicule ne puisse pas revenir dans le système. Je pense que c'est une bonne affaire. Comme j'ai dit, ce projet de loi nous donne une chance de parler de comment on peut travailler ensemble.

I would be remiss, in a debate around transportation, not to talk about northern transportation, because in this House we all know how important transportation is to all parts of the province. For our part of the province, highways are especially important because we don't have the various modes of transportation that other people have in more fortunate parts of the province. If I live in Toronto or Ottawa, there are planes leaving every five minutes to all parts of the country; there are trains going daily, almost hourly in some cases; in cities like Toronto you have subways where you can jump in at one station and go to the next. You have good transit systems. You have GO Transit, all kinds of great transportation systems in southern Ontario that I envy, and I say, as a northerner, "Boy, I wish we had some of those services up there," Mr Speaker, as the member from Sault Ste Marie, you know just how important transportation is to economic development. It is very important.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): What about the Polar Bear Express?

Mr Bisson: I'll talk to you not only about the Polar Bear Express but about polar bears. Some people have accused me of being a polar bear, but that's another story.

Transportation is important. I want to say to the government across the way, and to the minister who I'm sure is listening somewhere in the building because I know he takes his responsibility very seriously, send

some shekels our way. Help us in northern Ontario keep on with the work we've done with previous governments, with the Rae government and, I would argue, the Peterson government to an extent, and certainly the Davis government, to build the various modes of transportation we need in northern Ontario to develop our economy.

There used to be a time—Mr Speaker, in Sault Ste Marie, you know. Do you remember norOntair? NorOntair was a crown-owned, provincially owned airline that provided east-west connections in northern Ontario so that if I was travelling for business, pleasure or whatever, I was able to get on a plane in Timmins and arrive in Sault Ste Marie or Thunder Bay or Atikokan or Moosonee or wherever it might be in northern Ontario. Unfortunately, the government made a policy decision. They said: "We have great ideas. We are the party of the right. We are the Reform Party, CCRAP, the Alliance Party," whatever they call themselves.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): Reform.

Mr Bisson: Reform, exactly. They're doing it on the other side. They know what I'm talking about.

Mr Clark: Reform's not provincial.

Mr Bisson: Did anybody hear that? That was pretty good. I hope you picked that up on the mike. That was the best imitation of Preston Manning I've heard in a long time.

They took norOntair out. They said: "Shut down norOntair. We believe," said the Conservatives, "that we will end up having equal or better air transportation in northern Ontario as a result of getting the government out of the face of business."

After all, that is the mantra of the Conservatives. The mantra of the Conservatives is a very simple one: Government bad; private sector good. It's like, "Me Tarzan, you Jane." That's about the height of the intellect of the Tory caucus and the cabinet room. What they did was, they went and took norOntair out of the system. And now they've said, "We're going to be better served in northern Ontario when it comes to air transportation."

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Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I listen to the hurling and the heckling on the other side of the way of the parliamentary assistant to tourism saying—oh, it's OK, Mr Speaker. I'm perfectly capable of—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Brampton Centre will give himself a heart attack. Give the member from Timmins-James Bay a chance to put his thoughts on the record.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, you found out what my plan was. Poor Joe, I was trying to give him a coronary.

But I want to say that in the norOntair situation the government got rid of the airline back in 1995-96. The government promised us we were going to have better air service in northern Ontario. If you don't live in Timmins, Sudbury, North Bay, Sault Ste Marie or Thunder Bay, that is the extent of the service, because if you're trying to travel into Kirkland Lake, Earlton or Cochrane, you can't get there by plane. That's only three communities,

because no longer does norOntair offer any service because the government got rid of it. Matheson doesn't have an airport so they can't land there; helicopters maybe.

But the point is, the government promised us as northerners that the private sector would move in, they would kick the public sector out of the way and we would end up with a much better service in northern Ontario. What did we end up with? A loss of jobs in your community, Mr Speaker. I know you fought hard on behalf of your citizens to make sure you protected not only air service in northern Ontario but the jobs in your community where norOntair based its maintenance services, but we don't have service in communities like Kirkland Lake.

I want to say to the members across the way, my good friend Tony Martin, the member from Sault Ste Marie, who's also in the chair today as Speaker, and I travelled northeastern Ontario this spring to talk to communities like Kirkland Lake about what it meant to them. When, along with Mr Martin, I talked to people like Don Studholme, the economic development officer and also involved with the town administration, we said to them, "What does it mean?" They said, "It's very hard for us to attract business into our community." He gave us but one example. They are trying to specialize themselves as a community when it comes to waste treatment, the technologies of treating waste. Kirkland Lake is trying to find a niche for themselves. They managed to attract a couple of interesting investments into that community when there was airline service in place. Right now, they're working on two proposals to attract to their community two other individuals who are prepared to invest and build plants in Kirkland Lake, to give people in that community good jobs. Mr Speaker, Mr Studholme—well, you know; you were there—and others in that community said, "It's very difficult to do when business people are not able to travel in by air, because time is money for them." If they can't get from point A to point B fairly quickly, it is very difficult for them to do business. One of the only reasons the company that's there now stays is that the owner flies his own plane. That's one of the reasons he's able to stay there. But in the case of new investment it makes it difficult.

We talked to people in Earlton—same story. We talked to people in Kapuskasing where Air Quebec is only offering one flight a day because norOntair is no longer there. Air Quebec, being a private corporation—and I understand that—they're there to make money, and if they can't make money, they either get out of the way or don't do it at all.

J.C. Caron, who's a very good friend of Mike Harris and the Conservatives, is really worried about what this means to his community and says to me as a New Democrat, "Listen, Gilles, I don't always agree with the NDP, but in this case we've got to do something to try to provide air service to the people of Kapuskasing." I've seen him on a number of occasions speak out at the chamber of commerce, at council and in the media about his frustration with Air Quebec reducing services down

to one flight a day because he understands as a businessman. Mr J.C. Caron is a very respected businessman in his community, as well as the mayor of that community, and serves his people very well.

He stands there and says: "Listen, I'm a business person. I understand how to run a business. I also understand how to run a town. I know as the mayor and as a business person that if I don't have the infrastructure in place to attract businesses into my community and to attract investment and to allow people in my community to develop their business prospects so they can go out and trade outside of our community and hopefully bring some of that money back by way of trade, it's hard for me to do my job, both as the mayor and as a businessman."

I say to the government across the way, you promised in 1996 that if you got rid of norOntair, the private sector would walk in and take over and do a great job. Do you know what? You failed. Quite frankly, you failed. You even tried to give subsidies to the airline services, and the subsidies were not enough. The \$75,000 per year that you give Kirkland Lake, Earlton, Kapuskasing and Hearst and others to provide air services ain't doing it.

As a result of your policy initiative of getting rid of norOntair, communities in northern Ontario are being hurt. I say, as a New Democrat, Mr Speaker, as you do—because I've heard you say this—it is important for the government of Ontario to take its responsibility and to recognize it is the government. Their responsibility is to put in place policies that work for people and the communities they live in. And yes, it means to say that if a government has to provide, by way of the tax base, some dollars to operate these services, so be it. That is the job of government.

You know what happens when government gets away from its responsibilities of not providing that infrastructure, of not providing its responsibility. People die, as in the case of Walkerton. That's unfortunately a good example of what happens when governments get out of their responsibilities and say, "We as a government are going to get out of your face," by weakening environmental legislation, deregulating all of the regulations in place that they see as a hindrance to business and firing all the Ministry of the Environment employees. Basically, what happens after a time is that our infrastructure starts to crumble and eventually, as in the case of Walkerton, people die.

With the case of the norOntair transportation issue, you're in a way killing some of our communities. I guess there is no other way of putting it. I look at what's happening in communities like Hearst, Kirkland Lake, Earlton and various other communities. You've got local communities that are working really hard, because they are people like you and I. They're hard-working, honest people who are trying to do the best they can to make their communities operate and to make sure that in the end they are able to provide the kind of leadership and the kind of infrastructure those communities need to develop economically.

But it's hard when you've got a government that doesn't want to take its responsibility. It's tough when you've got a government that says, "We're the ungovernment government." These guys ran in 1995 opposed to government. They're the anti-government party and in 1995 they got people to believe that if you got government out of the way everything would be better. Everything isn't better and, in the case of northern Ontario and the economy of northern Ontario, we're lagging the boom in southern Ontario. One of the reasons is not because we're not any better than the south—I think we're probably as good if not better—but that we don't have the tools to make that economy prosper.

Can you imagine, member from Brampton—I know it's a long name on the riding and I don't want to take a stab at it. Mr Spina is a good friend of mine. We banter a lot, but we actually get along fairly well. Can you imagine what would happen if your communities didn't have good transportation? It would mean that the economy in your communities would really suffer. Imagine if we went to Mississauga or Brampton or Peel, wherever it is, and said, "Let's get out of rail service and good highway services into those communities." I'll tell you.

Hon Mr Baird: The Liberals did.

Mr Bisson: Yes, unfortunately it did happen under other governments. You say the Liberals; I don't remember, but I take it at face value. But I say your community would be hurt, and that's what happened to ours.

That's only one mode of transportation, air service. As a New Democrat, I say to the government, if we return to government—as I am sure we will at one point; the pendulum swings both ways and eventually it comes back—we will look at that issue to find a way to provide air transportation for people in northern Ontario to make sure they're able to compete with other people in the south.

Another transportation issue that touches northern Ontario is rail. Can you believe this? The PCs years ago created Ontario Northland in order to make sure that we had rail service in northern Ontario, to provide shipping opportunities for our mills, our factories, people engaged in the business of extracting natural resources and shipping them to market and bringing things back into the north, but more important, to provide transportation for people.

This government, as they did in the case of norOntair, got rid of the subsidy and said: "The private sector will walk in and do better. If government gets out of the face of people, if we as a government stop throwing money after a bad thing, Ontario Northland, things will be better."

That's basically what their theory is. The theory of the Conservative caucus—or should I say Reform-Crapper Alliance, whatever they call themselves—I would say—

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Mr Clark: Reform is not provincial.

Mr Bisson: Well, no, it's the same thing. Tom Long is provincial. He's trying to run Reform for the federal alliance now. Tony Clement is a member of the Reform

Alliance crap party. So you guys are the same; those are your brothers.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: I wish I could turn my mike so people could pick up what he's saying; he has the greatest imitation of Preston Manning. It's hilarious.

Anyway, I just say to the members across the way, Ontario Northland was put there for a reason; it was put there as an economic development tool for the north. And your government, I'm afraid, doesn't have the vision it takes to allow that company to go forward and do what it needs to do to continue in its mandate of economic development. I would suggest to the government that if we really wanted to, we could make Ontario Northland a real economic boon for northern Ontario. For example, if we were to give the ONTC, over a period of five years, \$20 million or \$25 million, \$5 million a year, imagine what we could in northern Ontario to provide the marketing opportunities to develop tourist destination packages that utilize rail service in northern Ontario.

I'll give you an example. Imagine if we were able to sell packages in Europe and North America and the United States that said, "Come and travel the north like the Orient Express," same idea as that. "Come for four days, come for five days, come for two weeks and enjoy the winter season in northern Ontario where you'll be able to do some cross country-skiing, some snowmobiling, some snowshoeing," whatever it might be. "We'll introduce you to some of the best hotels in Ontario and provide you with some of the best service you can get anywhere," or if you want to go fishing, or hiking, or participate in ecotourism. Imagine what that would mean to the northern Ontario economy. It would bring literally millions of dollars into our communities, with a small investment of \$25 million.

Do you think I'm far-fetched? Let me just give you an example. Our government, back in 1991-92, in the middle of a recession, I might add—and we were criticized for this and I was criticized for it as member—created a snow track program. That was a program where we put forward I think it was \$5 million a year for three years to develop the snowmobile trail system in northern Ontario. When we did it, boy, were we criticized by the opposition parties of the day. We were criticized even by our own people in our communities. "Imagine that, the NDP taking \$5 million a year in a time of recession to build snowmobile trails in northern Ontario. How stupid," they said, the chamber of commerce and others in my community and other communities across the north. You won't hear anybody saying that today, because all of a sudden we've developed an industry in northern Ontario.

We're selling in the community of Timmins alone almost a thousand sleds a year by way of dealers. That means that people like J&B Cycle and Marine in Timmins, people like Mikey's, people like Riverside Marine are out there selling snow machines. They're hiring people in our community to be salespeople, to be service people, to do what has to be done to sell them.

But it doesn't stop there. All kinds of restaurants and hotels across the community and across the north have had economic activity they would have never had if it had not been for that initial investment of \$5 million a year over three years.

In a time of recession, people said: "Don't spend \$15 million, Bob Rae, Shelley Martel, Gilles Bisson. It's a waste of money. You're never going to get it back. What a bunch of morons." I remember Mike Harris standing here criticizing us. Well, now we recognize that \$15-million investment has come back to the government big time. You talk about tax cuts coming back to the government. Tax cuts don't come back to the government. You and I know where they go. I took my tax cut and you know what I did? I went on holiday and spent my money out of the country. That's what I did the last time. And a whole bunch of people do that.

Mr Clark: I went up north.

Mr Bisson: Yeah, right. I didn't see you. I'd have taken your picture if you'd been up north and put you in every bloody post office in the country. That would be news in itself. A Conservative coming up north; what an oxymoron that is.

Mr Clark: I've been through the Arctic. Have you?

Mr Bisson: Yes, I've actually been further north than most people realize. Anyway, there are places in your mind even I'd be afraid to go, said Mr Stockwell one time. I thought it was a good line but not the right time.

Anyway, the point is that that small investment of \$15 million—and for some a big investment—brought back a lot of money into the northern economy. So imagine if we were to say, "We'll take \$25 million and we'll give it to the ONTC to develop tourist destination packages so that we can find ways to attract new people into northern Ontario by way of the train." I would argue that \$25 million would come back to the government big time in the way of provincial sales tax and other taxes it collects as a result of new activity that would be created in the economy of northern Ontario.

And what it would mean to our people—it would mean jobs, it would mean economic opportunity for small business people and people trying to do something with their lives when it comes to this economy. People would feel excited and re-enfranchised in what goes on in the economy of Ontario. But it doesn't happen, because this government says: "Oh no, subsidies are bad. Government doesn't have a responsibility. Leave it all to the private sector." I'm sorry, it doesn't work that way. If you live in a big market, if you live in New York City, to an extent, of course, the private sector will move in and do a whole bunch of things because the economies of scale there make some sense. But when you live in smaller communities, as I know a number of you do in southwestern Ontario, things don't happen unless your community government or provincial government does it for you—I shouldn't say "does it for you"; that would be wrong—helps you to do it with you. That would be the best way to do it. We develop our local economies how? We have developed our local economies by working

together and providing provincial and federal leadership to help communities along to make that happen.

I say as a New Democrat that this government should take heed of the comments that I make here today. Invest in the people of northern Ontario. Help develop the ONR train in a way that it really could be, when it comes to not only helping people transport themselves up and down the Highway 11 corridor, but being able to do economic development as well.

The other transportation issue for us in the north is highways. I don't ever remember highways being in worse condition than they were in the last couple of winters. This government said: "Ministry of Transportation employees don't know how to clean highways, and we know that if we give it to the private sector by way of area maintenance contracts, everything is going to be great. They're going to plow your highways before the snow hits the ground. The plows are going to be there taking it out because the private sector is so smart they're beside themselves." Do you know what? Some people in northern Ontario—not all, because a majority of them don't believe this kind of stuff—said: "Yeah, you know, the private sector's better. Get the government out of the way. Those MTO guys don't know how to do anything. They're government employees." "We all know government employees are lazy and no good," said all these Tories. "Let the private sector in. They're smarter."

Here's what they did: They basically privatized highway maintenance in northern Ontario, as they did across the province. They didn't save any money. It costs us more money than it did back then. I remember the Minister of Finance standing up and saying, "If we don't save at least 5% or 10%"—whatever it was—"we're not going to do this." It's costing us more than that now. And do you know what? Are the contractors any more efficient? No. How do they end up with more money in their pockets? It's very simple. They pay their employees less money. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that out. Basically, how do you make more money? If the contract is X amount of dollars, you either cut back on service or you pay your employees less.

Mr Bisson: You shake your head: "No, no, I'm a Tory. I don't know anything." Come on, give me a break. You're smarter than that.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: You have to defend the line of your government; I understand that. I've sat on both sides of this House. Sometimes government members have to do some pretty stupid things. I hope I've learned from my experience of being on both sides of the House. I hope I'm able to bring some common sense, not only in opposition, but when we return to government, as I know you will, Mr Speaker, along with me.

I say very simply—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Look at that. We've got them excited on the other side. I have to give the same warning you gave before: Stop that, you'll have a coronary. I don't want you being a burden to our health care system.

Anyway, I say quite simply that now with the highway area maintenance contracts, we have contractors who are doing the work that used to be done 50% by MTO employees and 50% by contractors overseen by the ministry. We're not saving any money and highways last winter, as the winter before, have never been in such bad shape as they are now. Like you, Mr Speaker, I have to drive Highway 11 regularly because my riding extends along Highway 11, as the riding of the members from Timiskaming and Algoma and Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay and other places—Nickel Belt. I can think of at least three or four times last winter when I've driven up to Kapuskasing or Smooth Rock Falls or Hearst and I've had to take a room and stay overnight. That never used to happen before, because Ministry of Transportation employees were out there keeping our highways clean.

Unfortunately, the contractors—I don't know exactly why; part of it is because there has been a real learning curve for them to learn how to do it as well as the Ministry of Transportation employees. They figure the faster you drive down the highway with a plow, the more money you're going to make. They don't realize they're blowing all the snow over the wing as they're going down the highway, so they take the snow out on the front of the plow and they put it behind the plow. I had to call the Ministry of Transportation office and say to the supervisors, "Would you tell those stupid plow drivers to slow down?" I follow them and they've got more snow going up in the air than they've got going in the ditch. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out. Eventually, they slowed the plows down.

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When it came to the idea of salting, they were throwing salt on the highways in 20 below weather. I couldn't believe it. Do you know that salt usage actually went up under the contractors? Maybe that's one of the reasons we were spending more money, because they get more money for throwing more salt on the highways. It's a cost-recovery basis. Everybody knows that as the Ministry of Transportation you don't throw salt out on a highway at 20 below zero. It just blows off on to the sides. It doesn't do anything. It doesn't get active until it's above that temperature.

That's the private sector. They know how to do it best. Boy, they're rocket scientists. The public sector doesn't know how to do anything.

I have to say to the government across the way that I hate to tell you, but we told you so back when you did this, that at the end it was going to be more expensive and we were not going to get better service. I say, as a New Democrat, that it's important government take its responsibility. There is a role for the public sector as there is a role for the private sector.

The public sector's responsibility is to provide good infrastructure so that business can operate within the jurisdiction. When government doesn't take its responsibility to provide good infrastructure, business crawls. That's what we're seeing happen in northern Ontario. It's actually very sad to see that it's going on. It's an example

of your failed agenda, your agenda of doing more with less, your agenda of getting rid of the public sector because the private sector does it better by way of privatization, your failed agenda of deregulating, what you call "cutting red tape." At the end of the day, it doesn't work.

This government forgets why all that was put in place. Governments over the years, Tory governments included, put in place legislation and regulations and programs to deal with problems of the day. I'll give you a very quick example: Hydro. This is an example as it relates to Bill 91. Hydro in this province used to be all run by the private sector. Way back when, early on in the history of this province, in the early 1900s—1903 or 1905 or whenever it was—the government recognized that there was way too much going on as far as waste was concerned in how the private sector was running its operations when it came to the generation and delivery of power.

They said: "You're paying different rates. If you live in Niagara Falls or you live in Toronto or you live in northern Ontario, there are different rates. How can you run an economy that way?" The supply was not as steady as it should've been. The government stepped in and they regulated and eventually created a monopoly called Ontario Hydro, so that no matter where you lived in Ontario you paid the best possible rate, the cheapest possible rate for hydro. If you look at our jurisdiction, compared to every other one, Ontario Hydro rates were among the lowest in North America.

This government privatizes Ontario Hydro, splits it up into three factions. We now see that the private sector that has moved in is going to the Ontario Energy Board and is trying to raise the price of hydro: in Toronto by 6%, and in Rainy River by almost 100% for one of the users up there.

Now the government runs back into the House with a bill and they say: "We've got to fix this. Let's re-regulate the price." Won't you admit that your agenda has failed and doesn't work? You got this agenda by watching too many John Wayne movies and listening to too many of Mr Reagan's speeches. It doesn't work down there any better. The only reason they get away with it is they have a much bigger population base. Their economy is much bigger. Therefore, they're better able to sustain those kinds of attacks on regulation and good government.

I want to say to the minister who is sitting with my father—isn't that nice? Everybody in the assembly should look at this. It goes to show that sometimes we can be somewhat non-partisan. We've got my good friend Mr Spina; we've got the Minister of Transportation, trying to suckhole a vote out of my father. My dad'll always vote for me. You can't buy his vote. I thought you'd like that one.

We don't always agree, as I've outlined in this speech, when it comes to every item. Are you crossing the floor, Joe? Jeez, this is working. We have a plan and it's working. I like it. That didn't work for us when we were in government. I don't want to try it in opposition.

I don't always agree with what the government across the way is doing. In fact, most of the time I disagree. But

Bill 91 is a good example of how we can do things together and how we as members of the assembly from all parties can look at an issue and say: "There is a problem in Ontario. How can we collectively find a solution?" When we do that—

Mr Clark: Bill 68.

Mr Bisson: I didn't vote for that one but I agree it was a good process. The point is, how can we work together to solve a problem for the people of Ontario? At the end of the day, if we were to find a way to reform the democratic process in this Legislature so that individual members had a little bit more ability to do that, people would have greater confidence, people would have more

confidence in the politicians and the democratic process in the province of Ontario.

With that, I'd like to thank you for having this opportunity to debate.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Turnbull has moved second reading of Bill 91. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be put for third reading? Agreed.

It being almost 6 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this same day.

The House adjourned at 1756.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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		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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