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of Ontario**

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 29 November 2000

Mercredi 29 novembre 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 29 November 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 29 novembre 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Affordable housing in Ontario is in a state of crisis. The Harris government's policies—the gutting of rent control, the cancellation of 17,000 housing units and the downloading of responsibility to municipalities—have directly led to the problems we face today, not to mention the outright broken promises. Clearly, it's time for Mike Harris to stop passing the buck and take responsibility to ensure that Ontarians have safe, decent and affordable housing.

In the absence of leadership in Ontario, we are witnessing unprecedented low vacancy rates and, ultimately, a dramatic increase in homelessness. Here in Toronto, the number of homeless individuals has doubled under the watch of Mike Harris. City officials in Toronto who provide emergency shelter for 5,000 people per evening see no relief on the horizon. In fact, they predict the city will see a lot more shantytowns.

But there is a reason to have hope. The federal Liberal government—and I want to congratulate Prime Minister Chrétien on his re-election—has committed to a partnership with provincial governments to create an affordable rental program. This is a cost-shared capital grants program to help stimulate the creation of more affordable rental housing, with the federal government putting up \$700 million.

Ontarians want an end to the affordable housing crisis. I am calling on Mike Harris and Minister Tony Clement to finally live up to their responsibilities. Stop the needless and destructive finger pointing, pick up the phone and begin a constructive partnership.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I rise today to recognize professional firefighters in our great province. I also wish to welcome the professional firefighters' association to Queen's Park today. Our fire services industry has worked hard to enhance fire safety in this province and to make it one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. Last year, Ontario recorded the fewest

fire deaths in its history, and this year we're on target to reduce that even further.

Fire safety programs and education, along with the hard work and dedication of our firefighters, are making a difference. The difference is the men and women who give us the best full-time service in the world.

At the London fire service awards ceremony on November 10, we recognized contributions from such individuals as Michael Black, Douglas Crowe, Robert Hansen, Scott Jackson and Edward Stronach, who were recognized for their long-standing and distinguished service with the London fire service. Daryl Stephenson, Michael Ollson, David Beecroft, Patrick Darcey, George Smallman, John Griffeth, Douglas Shannon, Thomas Wells, Glen Pearson and William Connolly were recipients of the Governor General's Fire Services Exemplary Service Medal.

Our government is proud of our firefighters, and I ask the House to join me in welcoming them when they come in today.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to speak on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to recognize the professional firefighters who join us in the Legislature today from fire stations around the province. This is a job that places one's life on the line every single day. Firefighters perform their duties, understanding the threat of personal injury, in order to keep our communities and families safe. To them and their families I say, on behalf of Dalton and the Liberal Party, thank you.

This past Sunday, a firefighter was injured in Sudbury responding to a home fire. Earlier this month, a lone firefighter saved two lives in Midland, even under unsafe staffing levels. As legislators, it is our duty to assist firefighters any way we can so that they can do their job professionally and safely.

Firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice deserve our recognition and gratitude. That is why months ago I introduced Bill 107, the Firefighters' Memorial Day Act. This act would officially recognize the first Sunday in October as Firefighters' Memorial Day. Firefighters deserve no less. Unfortunately, the government has refused to grant quick passage of this important bill.

As important as Bill 107 is, this House must do more to assist firefighters. Right-to-know legislation, third-party investigations and recognition of occupational diseases are just some of the ways this House could assist these brave men and women. In this way we could demonstrate through our actions, not our words, that we

truly appreciate the work they do to keep all Ontario citizens safe and secure.

PHIL PANELAS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize a unique individual, Mr Phil Panelas, of Trenton. Mr Panelas came to Canada in the 1950s, becoming a successful businessman in the home and apartment construction industry. Soon after, he began volunteering for various community organizations.

The most notable of those voluntary efforts was the Trenton Memorial Hospital board. More recently, Mr Panelas led the board of directors in overseeing the reconstruction of Trenton Memorial Hospital. Mr Panelas provided a great deal of time and talent to the construction phase, devoting almost a full year of his personal time to making sure the project was indeed a success. Not only did he help raise funds for the hospital construction, he also volunteered as the primary contact between the building contractor and the hospital board and management. This daily task was done without compensation of any kind.

The recent opening of the new hospital in Trenton was a triumph for the board and marked the beginning of a more modern and efficient service for patients in the east Northumberland and Quinte regions. Mr Panelas deserves a large helping of credit for this, at least in part for his dedication and commitment. On behalf of our community, I extend my thanks and best wishes to Mr Phil Panelas and his family for their wonderful contributions.

RABIES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I wish to bring to the attention of the Legislature that there is a very serious outbreak of rabies in the Cochrane area. Fifty-one people are suspected to have been exposed and are now receiving a course of post-exposure injections. There have been 29 identified cases, primarily found in the fox population, which is the main carrier, but it has now spread to household pets and also to cattle.

This area north of Cochrane is a small farming area. There are now six cattle herds under quarantine, with some of these herds as large as 150 animals. There are other homes under quarantine because of dogs that have been infected. This quarantine period can last up to 60 days.

Our office has had tremendous co-operation from local MNR officials in both Cochrane and Timmins. Also, Dr Chris Davies, manager of the ministry's rabies unit, has been most helpful in his briefings about the present situation and the status of the bait-drop program. The bait-drop program is an aerial drop of medicated pellets that, when eaten by an at-risk population of wildlife, suppresses the spread of the disease.

To be effective, it must be employed as soon as there is evidence of rabies in an area, especially when this is occurring near human habitation. Cochrane MNR had

requested that a major bait drop be undertaken earlier this fall, but originally was turned down by the ministry. A small drop did occur as a result of some leftover bait from a southern Ontario program, but this was not enough.

I'm requesting that there be an extensive monitoring of area wildlife next spring. If it appears the fox population is again being infected, it is imperative that the MNR budget provide for an extensive bait drop next August to prevent this type of outbreak from happening again.

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Bill 71, the NDP's Oak Ridges Moraine Green Planning Act, is a green guarantee that will help restore the damage done to the moraine by Mike Harris and his pro-development agenda. Bill 71 will place an immediate freeze on development on the moraine and will put environmental protection back into the Planning Act, protection that was taken away by the Mike Harris government in 1995.

On June 1, 2000, Bill 71 passed second reading and this House saw fit to refer the bill to the legislative general government committee for public hearings. Five months later, we wait and we wait for that committee to hold public hearings. Why? Because this government does not intend to hold public hearings on Bill 71.

As with my Bill 96, the Safe Drinking Water Act, this government has decided to use cheap political manoeuvres to end public debate on important environmental issues. What are they afraid of? Are they afraid the public will actually say that Bill 71 is good for the moraine, or is it because Mike Harris receives huge political donations from the very developers who want to destroy the Oak Ridges moraine?

It is clear that when it comes to protecting Ontario's environment, Mike Harris and his government are once again letting the people of Ontario down. I urge all those who want to protect the Oak Ridges moraine to phone, e-mail and write to the Premier, demanding public hearings before the House prorogues on December 31.

1340

NORTH SIMCOE VICTIM CRISIS SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to compliment a great organization in the city of Orillia, the North Simcoe Victim Crisis Services. Their mission statement reads, "North Simcoe Victim Crisis Services is organized to assist the police and other emergency services in meeting the needs of victims of crime and other tragic circumstances."

I'm pleased to say that partial funding for this organization is provided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General through the victims' justice fund, as well as corporate donors Cantel AT&T and Casino Rama. The organization is a success story because of the huge amount of support they receive from community part-

ners. They have just completed training their fifth class of volunteers, bringing the total to 79 active volunteers.

The volunteers were first allowed to go on calls in late June 1999. Since then they have attended 223 calls. From October 1, 1999, to October 1, 2000, the volunteers had 169 calls and helped 445 people. That's 445 people who have received dignity and respect and who were not left alone at such a traumatic time in their lives.

I thank the Orillia detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police for sharing some of their office space, and I congratulate executive director Pat Hehn, her board of directors and all her volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make this service such an important asset to the citizens of the Orillia area.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Today the Ottawa Citizen is reporting that Ottawa's chief administrative officer is saying they cannot ensure safe drinking water with the current administrative structure. I would remind the House that the administrative structure for the new city of Ottawa is being organized by the provincially appointed transition board.

As we have unfortunately been reminded this year, there are few municipal responsibilities more important than guaranteeing a safe water supply.

As reported in today's Ottawa Citizen, "In the transition board's plans, there is currently no manager solely responsible for drinking water in the first three levels of the new city's administration." The CAO, Michael Shefflin, wrote to the Premier on November 14, stating that a lack of standards will "guarantee failure." He goes on to say, "There can be no justification for downgrading this, the most essential service in the new city or any city." I could not agree more.

It is incumbent that we, as provincial legislators, take a greater role in putting in place the means by which a safe water supply can be guaranteed in municipalities across this province.

The CAO of the city of Ottawa is asking the Premier and his appointed transition board to do exactly that. I would like to add my voice to his in calling for the government to take some leadership, to restore the funding to the Ministry of the Environment, and to establish the most rigorous standards possible for our water by ensuring that each municipality prioritizes it in their administrative structures.

Most of all, let us avoid future tragedies.

JOHN McMAHON

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): I rise today to trumpet the athletic accomplishments of yet another constituent of my riding of Ottawa-Orléans. Orléans native John McMahon is now the World Kickboxing Association champion. The 29-year-old captured gold earlier this month at the international competition in the Czech Republic.

The win was especially fulfilling after making a promise to his father that he would bring home a get-well present. John's dad underwent emergency heart surgery only a week before his son left for Europe.

In preparation for the world tournament, John captured first place at the Pro-Am World Kickboxing Association championships in Orlando, Florida, last month. John was originally involved in tae kwon do. He says he would never have been able to climb the ladder of success if it wasn't for the intense training with his idol, Orléans legend and multiple world kickboxing champion Jean-Yves Thériault.

After joining Thériault, John attended his first world championship two years ago in Denmark. He lost in the first round but rebounded last year and took home a bronze from the world championships in Malta. Now John McMahon is the 2000 world kickboxing champion. He says he will concentrate on coaching and hopes he can give back to the sport that has given him so much.

Congratulations to John McMahon and best wishes.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the 15th report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1345 to 1350.

The Speaker: Mrs Mushinski has moved adoption of the report from the standing committee on justice and social policy respecting Bill 128, An Act respecting social housing.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph

Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.

Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al

Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO FIREFIGHTERS' WEEK ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LA SEMAINE DES POMPIERS DE L'ONTARIO

Ms Mushinski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to proclaim Ontario Firefighters' Week / Projet de loi 150, Loi proclamant la Semaine des pompiers de l'Ontario.

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

The member for a short statement?

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I've introduced this bill, An Act to proclaim Ontario Firefighters' Week, in recognition of the brave men and women who unselfishly risk their lives in order to keep us safe from the perils of fire in our homes, workplaces and communities.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to pass Ms Mushinski's bill on second and third reading at this time.

The Speaker: We should be clear about how we're going to proceed. You're asking for unanimous consent to proceed to—

Hon Mr Sterling: Second and third reading at this point in time.

The Speaker: Just so we're clear about this, if it does get agreement, what we will do is ask for that; if we do, then I will put the question, just so everybody is clear. We can't just have a motion to pass first, second and third reading. But it can be done.

Is there unanimous consent? Unfortunately, I heard some noes.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order is one of respect to the firefighters months ago in my Bill 107, An Act to proclaim Firefighters' Memorial Day. I would seek unanimous consent, as asked by the House leader on the government side, to give us forewarning of such activities. They've had this for months now, and this is a forewarning.

Could we seek unanimous consent for the House to pass Bill 107?

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

Interjections.

The Speaker: I don't know how everybody can say who's doing it. I stand here right in front of you and I can't tell who's saying no. Everybody just claims each other.

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario

Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 35.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr26, An Act respecting the Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company.

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive KMFC Holdings Inc.

Bill Pr31, An Act to change the name of The Corporation of the Town of Sioux Lookout to The Corporation of the Municipality of Sioux Lookout.

Bill Pr32, An Act respecting the Canadian National Exhibition Association.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Through all the bickering, I want to welcome to Queen's Park the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association today.

1400

WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE GOOSE
IS GOOD FOR THE GANDER ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 AFFIRMANT QUE
CE QUI VAUT POUR LES UNS
VAUT POUR LES AUTRES

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 151, An Act to provide for mandatory drug treatment for Members of the Provincial Assembly with a substance abuse problem / Projet de loi 151, Loi prévoyant le traitement obligatoire des députés à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario qui consomment des substances psycho-actives.

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 those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): To quote the Minister of Community and Social Services, "Drug addiction is a serious problem in our community." We could turn our backs and pretend the problem doesn't exist here in this chamber among MPPs, but I'm not prepared to do that. I'm not prepared to leave even one MPP behind.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: The purpose of this particular part of our proceedings is to give a brief introduction as to what is the content of the bill. This is a speech, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I am fully aware of what it is. The member just got up. There is a little bit of time. I do give members some time. I am sure the leader of the official opposition knows that it's supposed to be a short statement and he will probably keep it very short.

Leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: As I was saying, I am not prepared to leave even one MPP behind, and I don't believe that the people of Ontario are prepared to write any one of us off.

My bill will require all MPPs to provide regular urine samples for drug testing, and those who refuse to provide samples will of course lose their MPP compensation benefits. My bill is not about saving money. It's all about saving people. My bill will help MPPs who use drugs to take the step from despair to dignity.

In conclusion, we owe nothing less to our MPPs, to their families and to those hard-working taxpayers who pay the freight for all of us.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent, given the cheers from the government side, for second and third reading of the bill.

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

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): On a point of order, Speaker: I want to say to the member opposite that following through on the government's policies is a high form of compliment.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

FIREFIGHTERS

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Today I rise in the House to welcome the members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to Queen's Park. A few moments ago my colleague Marilyn Mushinski introduced a bill to declare a week to help recognize the contributions and bravery of our firefighters. Ontario Firefighters' Week, if passed, will precede the annual firefighters' memorial service traditionally held on the first Sunday in October. At this event we honour Ontario firefighters and remember their selfless courage and commitment, and in some cases their ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

Our communities value their firefighters. Throughout the year they hold appreciation and recognition events for their fire services, events such as the long service awards for firefighters.

Nominations from the community also help us pay tribute to firefighters at the annual Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery ceremony. On November 9 the Lieutenant Governor and I presented these awards to six firefighters. The fire marshal's public fire safety council also handed out fire safety awards to 18 recipients at a special luncheon this year.

When it comes to fire safety, Ontario is one of the safest jurisdictions in North America. Last year we recorded the lowest fire death rate in our history, and we are working hard to reduce it even further. Fire safety programs and education, and especially the dedication of our firefighters, are making a difference. The commitment of our firefighters means everyone here in the House today, their families and the communities they live in, can rest comfortably knowing that our loved ones, our homes and our property will be protected.

Our government is proud of our professional firefighters, and I ask the House to join me in recognizing them today.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to speak on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to recognize the professional firefighters who join us today in the Legislature from fire services across the province. Make no mistake: words speak; actions do. The actions that we take in this Legislature dictate many things in our province and the things we don't do speak badly for us.

We haven't done some things we can do in this Legislature to improve the safety of Ontarians across the province. For example, part IV of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act needs a thorough review—this section and subsections 54(2) and 54(4)—to ensure that the front-line firefighter is not adversely affected by white-shirting. We need to have full use of the fire marshal's office to act in a secure and efficient way to protect the citizens of Ontario. The fire marshal must act in a proactive way and not react to unsafe situations.

We believe in third-party investigation. We need to create a provincial agency within any one of the ministries this government chooses to investigate hazardous work sites and to enforce safety rules for our firefighters across the province. We talked to the Minister of Labour—I personally spoke to the Minister of Labour—and were assured this information is available, but you have to ask. Minister, that's not good enough. We need to have your ministry work in a proactive manner as well. You need to ensure that all the municipalities in our province have that first-hand information to protect our firefighters before they go into a fire. We need to recognize that occupational diseases that afflict our firefighters need to be responded to. They deserve nothing less.

To the firefighters themselves, every day in and out, you sacrifice the possibility of your health and your death. You sacrifice a body, a soul, a commitment, and not only that; you sacrifice your families. They understand. They know that you go to work every day with the possibility of not returning. To these people I say thank you and bless you for the ultimate sacrifice.

That is why months ago I introduced Bill 107, the Firefighters' Memorial Day Act. This act would officially recognize the first Sunday in October as Firefighters' Memorial Day. Firefighters deserve no less. Unfortunately this government no less than three times denied quick passage of this small but important bill.

As important as Bill 107 is, this House must do more to assist firefighters. The right-to-know legislation, third party investigations and recognition of occupational diseases are just some of the ways this House could assist these brave men and women. It is this way, through deeds and action, that we can truly appreciate the work they do to keep all Ontarians safe and secure.

On this side of the House, Bill 64: the member from Essex, Mr Bruce Crozier, introduced an amendment to the Safe Streets Act that would allow firefighters not only safe passage on to the streets to perform their fundraising activities for communities across the province, but it would also allow them to continue to do the good work they do day in and day out on their off-time. They are

committed to their communities. They need to be respected, not only as firefighters but as contributing citizens to their communities.

That is why we must always keep in mind, when legislation passed in this House is done in a way that protects our communities and the professionals that are asked to do so, that it is done with the understanding that these are citizens of Ontario who give day in, day out, and in this case, the fact that they can lose a life impacts on all of us in a detrimental way.

We must pass legislation on a regular basis and review the legislation that exists today to ensure that nothing less than the best possible protection is provided for our professional firefighters.

1410

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I want to say to the Solicitor General, and to his backbencher with her bill, that we'll stand any time, anywhere, to applaud our firefighters, but good God, Solicitor General, firefighters from across the province didn't come to Queen's Park today to be greeted by the warm fuzzies, to be stroked and told what good little firefighters they are across the province. They came here with a very specific agenda, with some very serious concerns that are impacting on community safety in cities, big towns, small towns across this province. They wanted those matters addressed.

They didn't come here to listen to first, second and third reading of the announcement of Ontario Firefighters' Week. They came here with some very specific concerns about your Bill 84, concerns that, I tell you, were raised persistently throughout the committee hearings around Bill 84, concerns about the licence Bill 84 gives to designate management, to scoop firefighters out of the collective bargaining unit and toss them, more often than not in rotation, into management levels as a means of gutting the collective bargaining unit of professional firefighters across this province.

This government was told about that prospect very clearly by both firefighters and delegations before that committee and by members of that committee during the process of Bill 84 committee hearings. This government denied it was going to happen. I tell you, Solicitor General, it is happening and it will continue to happen until you guys move away from the warm fuzzies, get down to the nitty-gritty and start passing some legislation to amend Bill 84 to ensure that the designated management positions are put under control once and for all.

These firefighters came here today with real concerns about the effectiveness of the fire marshal's office, especially after that fire marshal performs audits specifically with respect to the capacity of municipal firefighting services to respond adequately, yes, and safely, to firefighting emergencies, as well as to other emergencies.

You know full well that the biggest single issue there is minimum staffing. You know full well your government promised during the course of the Bill 84 hearings, notwithstanding the serious concerns that were raised about the content of Bill 84 in terms of (1) access to the fire marshal's office, (2) effectiveness of the fire mar-

shal's audit, and (3) concern about whether or not that audit would have any meaningful impact on the communities that audit resulted from—the fact remains that those audits are being ignored and shelved.

They're not being made public. Neither the press nor members of communities that are being put at risk as a result of understaffed firefighting services are having an opportunity to review those reports and debate them openly.

I tell you, Solicitor General, no more warm fuzzies. What we need are bills in this Legislature that address the issue of reinforcing the role of the fire marshal, (1) so that the fire marshal and his audits can be unilaterally accessed by firefighters or by members of the community, not just by city councils or by the Solicitor General's office, (2) so that the fire marshal's office has adequate resources to conduct those audits, and (3) so that those audits are meaningful in the communities that are audited and told they don't have acceptable levels of staffing and are expected within a reasonable period of time to incorporate those levels of staffing or else firefighters are going to die, firefighters are going to be injured, citizenry are going to be injured and members of the public are going to be put at risk in a very lethal sort of way.

Firefighters are coming here today, and throughout the course of this week, to tell you and your caucus to get rid of your stupid squeegee bill, to get rid of stupid legislation that's had no positive impact whatsoever on panhandling or on squeegee kids, but has done a great deal to inhibit the incredibly productive role that firefighters across this province engage in when they raise monies for, among other things, muscular dystrophy. Your squeegee bill has reduced the coffers of organizations like muscular dystrophy and a dozen others to the tune of, not just hundreds of thousands of dollars during the course of the year 2000 but millions of dollars.

Firefighters and others like them who are community-minded who want to go out there and support things like muscular dystrophy deserve better. If you really honour Ontario firefighters, as your statement says, if you really remember their selfless courage, as your statement says, if you really want to acknowledge their ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, don't come into this legislative chamber with fancy words and pats on the head for our firefighters; come in here with meaningful legislative changes so they can do their job safely, so they can do their job effectively, so they have the real respect in the community that these hard-working, courageous, professional women and men deserve.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to have Bill 6, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution, which I introduced on October 26, 1999, and which unanimously received second reading on May 11, 2000, brought immediately to general government for clause-by-clause and that it be enacted into law before the Christmas break.

The Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

NURSING STAFF

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier. After you recklessly fired thousands of nurses and after you spent \$400 million on severance for those same nurses, after your actions resulted in Ontario having the fewest nurses per capita in the country, you realized that you had made a terrible mistake and that you had made Ontario desperately short of nurses.

You made a very specific promise just a few weeks before you called the election. You knew this was weighing heavily on the minds of Ontarians. You made a specific promise. You said you were going to hire 12,000 nurses by the end of this year, the year 2000. Where are those nurses?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all, I think the member should be aware of a few things. I have never fired a nurse nor have I ever hired a nurse. I'm not in the business of hiring or firing nurses, nor is this government. We do, however, fund agencies; we fund hospitals. I don't think there's any secret that there were nurses who were let go by hospitals that have since, I think, acknowledged that was a mistake. As a result, the Minister of Health set up a nursing task force and the recommendation of all the parties was that we should have and fund 10,000 new nurses over a three-year period to the end of March 2001. We accepted that recommendation and we further committed that we would provide funding for 12,000 nurses by March 31, 2001. I'm pleased to tell the Legislature today that we have honoured that commitment to fully fund 12,000 nurses here in the province.

Mr McGuinty: The Premier once again reveals his complete disdain and disrespect for those very people who put the care in health care. This is the man who said, when somebody approached him about thousands of nurses being fired in Ontario as a result of his cuts in health care, "Like the Hula Hoop workers, they can find work doing something else." The problem now is that the nurses took the Premier at his word. They have left and they've moved over to other jobs.

To come back to a matter of the record, maybe you should listen to your own Minister of Health who, relying on your specific commitment, your specific promise made prior to the election, the promise so many Ontarians relied on, said in this very House on April 28, 1999, "We are moving forward to ensure that we have the appropriate level of nursing. We're going to have 12,000 nurses by the end of the year 2000." Premier, one more time: you said you would hire 12,000 by the end of this year. Where are they?

Hon Mr Harris: I think you are in receipt of a very specific commitment made by the minister and by myself, which was reinforced in the campaign, that we would provide the funds so that 12,000 nurses could be

hired by the end of this fiscal year. We have done that. I can tell you that at the end of the two-year period, when the last count was done, the ministry had identified some 6,000 nurses through the first two-year period. We are still examining, now, how many have been hired since that period of time into the third year and through to the end of this year. We have provided full funding, as was our commitment to do, and it is our hope, with a worldwide shortage, a Canadian shortage, a North American shortage, that paying the highest wages in Canada we will be able to meet that goal.

1420

Mr McGuinty: Premier, if there was such a shortage, why did you fire thousands of nurses?

Ontario hospitals today are in critical condition because of things that you did to them, and especially because you recklessly fired thousands of nurses and now they won't come back for you. Our hospitals can't provide decent care for our sick. Our hospitals are turning ambulances away. People who are desperately sick or who are suffering from serious injuries are having to wait in our emergency rooms for up to 11 hours before they can get a hospital bed. Surgeries are being cancelled on a daily basis and they are prolonging unnecessary pain, agony and anguish for those who are suffering and their families.

Premier, all of these things are happening on your watch because of what you did to health care, but especially because you recklessly fired thousands of nurses. Will you now admit for the first time that Ontarians today are paying a terrible price for your failures?

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated in the response to the original question, I have not fired one nurse; neither has the minister; neither has this government. I did acknowledge that during the period from 1993 to 1997, there were a number of nurses who were let go by a number of Ontario institutions: I think the record will show—and the Ontario Nurses' Association confirms—the majority between 1993 and 1995, but some in 1996-97 as well.

When we prepared the Nursing Task Force, to say, "We need to intervene here, we need to take a look at the overall nursing requirements in Ontario," they recommended that in fact we needed 10,000 more nurses over a three-year period. We upped that to 12,000 voluntarily and provided the funding for that, and we are very hopeful, even with the challenges that are there. It is near short of miraculous that we were able to up it in two years by 6,000 nurses, when you consider the demand across the country. We continue to work for the 12,000—

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

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): This question is also to the Premier. For the past six long years, in addition to firing thousands of nurses and breaking promises, you have waged a fairly consistent war with teachers, parents and trustees when it comes to the

delivery of public education in Ontario. You now have complete control over public education. You are the supreme authority.

Given those sweeping powers that you've given to yourself, I think it's fair to say that when we test our students today in Ontario we're really testing the job that you are doing. I can tell you the results are in and you are failing. Over half of all grade 3 and grade 6 students failed to meet the minimum acceptable standards when it comes to reading—the minimum acceptable standards.

Premier, you have been promising us that all of this disruption, all of this turbulence and all of this turmoil was going to be done for the sake of our children. What does it say about your government when after six years more than half of our children can't read at minimum acceptable standards?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me acknowledge that since we took office we have waged a significant war against mediocrity. We have waged war against accepting mediocrity in an education system that demands excellence, that demands the best, and our children are entitled, particularly in Ontario, to receive nothing less than quality and excellence and the very best.

One of the tools to do this, in addition to increasing funding to the classroom and setting new curriculum, was to bring in testing so we could measure, something you and your caucus opposed. The teacher unions didn't want testing. Therefore Dalton McGuinty didn't want testing. You have no licence to come and talk about testing that we insisted take place so we could measure the success of students, of teachers, of schools and of the system. We are very proud to have brought that in over your objections.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you promised us that all of this infighting and bickering and constant war waging was going to result in some kind of improvement in the results from our students, from our children. After six years of your government, we learn that our students, our children, who are now the product of the Mike Harris public education system—half of our kids can't read at an acceptable level, and the writing scores are no better: 48% of grade 3 students and 52% of grade 6 students can't write properly. After six years of Mike Harris as the supreme authority over public education, half of our students, half of our kids in Ontario can't read and write properly.

Premier, how do you expect our province to succeed in the future if our children, under the Mike Harris public education system, aren't learning how to read and aren't learning how to write?

Hon Mr Harris: We on this side of the House make no apologies for setting much higher standards than existed in Ontario under your administration or the NDP administration. We make no apologies for that, none whatsoever.

We make no apologies for, over your objections, bringing in independent testing that would allow us to measure this, both internally and externally. We make no

apologies that we have seen substantial improvement in the test results since we started testing, both vis-à-vis other jurisdictions and here in Ontario. We make no apologies that testing has allowed a number of boards to make outstanding—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the Premier take his seat. The member for Windsor West, come to order, please. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I can see why you want to avoid the topic. I can see why you don't want to talk about the results that you got on your test scores. You're like a child who comes home and hides his report card from his mother. You got a failing grade, Premier. Half of our kids can't read and write.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education, come to order. I'm not going to warn her again. We can't have this shouting out while the member is asking a question.

The leader of the official opposition. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr McGuinty: Speaker, it would be nice if the Minister of Education devoted some of the energy and enthusiasm she puts into heckling into reviving public education in Ontario.

Premier, let's take our grade 3 children. Let's take those students. They are fully the product of the Mike Harris public education system. These kids are yours lock, stock and barrel. They've grown up in the schools under your public education regime, and they can't read and they can't write. That's your responsibility.

There is only one way you can begin to recoup some of your losses; there is only one way we can begin to move forward when it comes to public education in Ontario: you've got to stop waging war with teachers and trustees and parents. On behalf of all those students whom you are failing so badly, I am asking you to put the weapons down, to act like an adult, to bring people together and start to restore some sense of decency and sanity to public education.

Hon Mr Harris: Let's be clear. The record shows that you have been on the side of the union bosses in every situation, against parents, against children, against quality, and for mediocrity. That's whose side you have been on, example after example. Now you want to talk about testing. What do the test results show?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the Premier take his seat. The member for Windsor-St Clair, come to order, please. It applies to both sides. When other members are answering questions or asking questions, we can't have shouting across to them. A little bit of noise is fine, but this shouting constantly at them is not going to be tolerated. Sorry, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: What do the test results show? The test results show modest improvement. Enough improvement? Clearly not, because we have set the bar for excellence so much higher than the mediocrity you accepted.

Now you talk about teacher testing. Here's what you said about testing. You said, "Teacher testing does little to improve the quality of education." That's because the union bosses said, "We're opposed." You said you'd repeal Bill 160, the fair funding formula, because the teacher bosses and the unions wanted it repealed. You supported raising education property taxes by 5% to 10% because the union bosses said we should tax homeowners more. You support principals and vice-principals back into the bargaining unit because the teacher union bosses said you should do it.

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

1430

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm glad the Premier is finally prepared to think about the impact upon homeowners, especially the property taxes of homeowners, because I want to ask you about Bill 140 again and the fact that as you download services on the municipalities, Bill 140 is going to force all the cost of that on to the homeowners through their property taxes.

Bill 140 essentially shields commercial operations, industrial operations from property tax increases and puts it all on the homeowner. It's a home invasion, Premier, and if you're really concerned about the property taxes of homeowners, you'll grant some public hearings. So how about it, Premier? Will you allow public hearings of Bill 140 so that hard-working taxpayers who own homes across the province will be able to find out what you're doing to them and have a say? Will you do it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I want to honestly say I am surprised, with your record on taxation, particularly property taxation, that you continue throwing out these lollipops here in question period, ignoring the real issues of the day.

The real issues are, are you a taxing government or are you a tax-cutting government? So let's talk about property taxes, which for example in Toronto have been frozen for the last three years, which have been less than the rate of inflation on average all across the province during our mandate in office.

What happened in education property taxes over the 10-year period of which five years were yours and you supported the Liberals in their five? Enrolment went up 16%; education property taxes went up 120% during that period. During our mandate, education property taxes have gone down. They've gone down or have been frozen every year and they continue to go down, both for homeowners and for the commercial and industrial side of taxes. That's your record and that's our record.

Mr Hampton: Premier, Bill 140 is not about education property taxes. Bill 140 is all about who's going to bear the cost of your downloading of ambulance services, your downloading of social housing, your downloading of hundreds of other services.

It's clear when you read the bill that you're going to shield your business friends and you're going to shield

your industrial friends and you're going to stick it all on the homeowner. It's clear, no matter whether you live in Kenora or Fort Frances or Toronto or Hamilton or Sudbury or London.

Premier, what's your reason for time-allocating this legislation, for not allowing any amendments, for not allowing any hearings and for limiting debate altogether? If you're not afraid to let the taxpayers out there see this bill, hold public hearings. Let us see what's going on.

Hon Mr Harris: This specific bill extends protection. It extends protection for business, it extends protection for commercial taxpayers and it extends protection and tools for protection to municipalities for residential homeowners. I don't know why you are opposed to protecting taxpayers from the kinds of increases that happened when you were in government.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: I hear the Liberals interjecting. There were massive increases under the Liberals as well.

I am happy to compare our record with your record. I'm even happier to compare it with the Liberal record not just on provincial taxes but on property taxes. It was out of control under both your administrations. It is now less than the rate of inflation, and I see nothing that will cause that to change as long as we keep electing tax-fighting Progressive Conservative governments right here at Queen's Park.

Mr Hampton: Premier, if you want to defend your record, send the bill out to public hearings so you can go out there and repeat your rhetoric and people will find out just how much they're going to be hit by property tax increases.

The auditor acknowledges that the cost of downloading ambulances is going to be \$100 million a year on an overall basis for municipalities. We know that the cost of repairing and maintaining seniors' housing and social housing in the province, as you download it, is going to be over \$40 million a year for municipalities. Those are the added costs for municipalities. Your Bill 140 says none of that can go on industry. No, no, you want to protect your friends who own the paper mills and the sawmills. You're saying none of it can go on commercial operations. It's all going to go on the homeowner.

Premier, they are only public hearings. What are you afraid of? Why are you so afraid to hold public hearings on your property tax bill?

Hon Mr Harris: As always, I'm not afraid to hold public hearings on our tax record versus your tax record. I did it in 1995, I did it in 1999 and I'll be happy to do it again in 2003.

The net result of fixing the assessment system that you foolishly allowed to get further out of whack than the Liberals, which they had foolishly allowed to get further out of whack, which foolishly the Progressive Conservative government in the late 1970s and 1980s allowed to get out of whack—that compounding had to be fixed. The auditor acknowledges that.

The auditor also acknowledges that while municipalities have been asked to pick up \$100 million in costs

here and \$50 million in costs there, they also got \$2.5 billion worth of tax room to do so. They also acknowledge that these trades not only weren't revenue-neutral, but they were to the advantage of municipalities, which is why we have had tax decreases or freezes at the municipal level of a type that was unheard of—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. New question.

NURSING STAFF

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is also for the Premier, and never have I seen the Premier so afraid of public hearings on a tax bill.

Premier, I want to ask you about the phantom nurses you have created in Ontario, because it's clear you haven't created the 12,000 new nursing positions you refer to in your press releases. In fact, it's clear you haven't even created 6,000 new nursing positions. When we talk to nurses, they tell us that when the College of Nurses statistics come out in February, they doubt there will be even 2,000 new nursing positions.

The problem with your phantom nurses is they can't ensure that your elderly mother is receiving the proper medication. The problem with phantom nurses is they can't take care of sick children in the hospital. Premier, show us where the nurses are, or are you really satisfied with the phantom nurses that come out of your press releases?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the record is very clear that we have provided funding for 12,000 new nursing positions. That goal and that target have been set out and targeted for the end of this year. We have acknowledged this is a huge challenge, but we've never shied away from accepting huge challenges, whether it be quality in education or having record hiring of nurses exceeding all of the rest of Canada. We don't shy away from those challenges. We provided the funding for that.

I'm surprised you raise the question since the facts show that most nursing positions that hospitals eliminated occurred between 1993 and 1995. I'm a little shocked you have the gall to ask the question. Nonetheless, I think some nursing positions disappeared in 1996 and 1997 as well, before we intervened, before we said, "Enough is enough," and before we brought forward a nursing task force. We have now reversed—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier's time is up. Final supplementary, the member for Beeches-East York.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Premier, the bottom line is that you can't even tell this House today that the number 6,000 is accurate. Let me tell you why. In the estimates committee we asked your health minister whether she could tell us how many new nurses had been hired in this province. She couldn't. The chief nursing officer of the province couldn't. In fact, she told us that they hadn't been able to track how many positions had been created by those nursing dollars, that they were

trying to but they wouldn't have any idea until the middle of December at the earliest.

With respect to the number of 6,000 that you've stood here today and defended and used and said you have created in this province, she said you were estimating that you had been able to create that many positions, yet the College of Nurses' numbers show that every year since 1995, every year right up until 1999, there have been fewer nurses in Ontario.

Premier, will you tell us, can you in fact defend that you have created 6,000 new nursing positions in this province or is that just another spin doctor's myth?

1440

Hon Mr Harris: What I confirm for you is this: I think when the nurses' association and the hospital association and the task force members, including the OMA, that were set up to bring forward the recommendations, asked us to fund 10,000 new nursing positions, we responded by funding 12,000 new nursing positions. We have flowed those funds and made them available. That target was to be met by March 31 of this year. That was our target; that was our goal.

The minister and I have acknowledged—I think the other provinces have acknowledged—that we have not been able to fully fulfill our complement yet. We estimate about 6,000 after the first two years. We will be able to give you that number once March 31 comes. I can tell you this: we are hiring every nurse we can. We committed to providing the funding and we have done that.

AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Health. I was reading through the recent edition of the auditor's report, page 165, where it talks about ambulance dispatch services. I note that there are problems across the province, but we have a specific problem in Niagara. We have an ambulance dispatch service which is located in Hamilton. We have ambulances that are going to the wrong places. Sometimes they're delayed. Sometimes whole communities are not even covered by an ambulance dispatch service we have there. As a result, the health of people is placed in jeopardy and there's a fear that deaths could occur because ambulances are not going to arrive on time. This chaos has existed for some time. Your ministry is aware of it. People in the local area believe we need an independent audit.

I'm going to ask you for this commitment today: will you order an independent audit of the central ambulance communication centre for Niagara and will you order that audit immediately today?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very pleased the member opposite has taken a look at the auditor's report and understands what is contained therein, because we take the recommendations of the auditor very seriously. As I have indicated on another occasion, we are moving forward to ensure that the recommendations of the auditor are implemented. We certainly would share your concern.

Mr Bradley: I'm going to move outside the purview of the auditor's report. It talks about the situation in many places in the province. I'm specifically zeroing in on the regional municipality of Niagara and the surrounding area, where we have a genuine problem with ambulance service. I've had people call me about this on many occasions at my constituency office. Certainly paramedics are expressing genuine concern about it. They need an immediate response to this problem.

When there are complaints, they either don't get a response to the complaint or the response takes a long period of time, or the complaint is responded to in a very minimal fashion. I mentioned that the paramedics are concerned, and the general public is concerned, medical people are concerned, the hospitals are concerned that we've got a chaotic situation existing, that people could die, that people's health could be hurt irreparably as a result of the time it's taking and wrong dispatching.

Will you today give an undertaking to have an immediate, independent audit of the dispatch service for Niagara?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I do thank the member for his question. I think the member needs to know that every complaint that is received regarding ambulance services is very carefully reviewed by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care officials. Emergency health services has a very special investigation and regulatory compliance service which investigates all complaints received regarding ambulance services in Ontario. It is responsible for the enforcement of the regulation under the Ambulance Act and it is monitoring the quality of the ambulance service delivery. Again, I would say to the member opposite, we take the recommendations of the auditor seriously and we are moving forward to ensure the implementation.

ONTARIO'S PROMISE

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for the minister responsible for children. Earlier this month I was honoured to join the minister, the Premier and General Colin Powell to support the launch of Ontario's Promise, a bold initiative that will form partnerships for a better future for Ontario's children.

Having volunteered in the past as a Big Brother in my riding, I was thrilled to learn that Ontario is challenging individuals, groups and governments to make mentoring a priority for children who need positive role models. My question to the minister is this: will the minister inform the House how Ontario's Promise will benefit Ontario's youth?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank my friend the member for Waterloo-Wellington for this question. Premier Harris has shown strong leadership and he has created a plan to secure an even brighter future for Ontario's children and youth through Ontario's Promise. This call to action will help bring parents, communities, business, not-for-profit groups and governments together to fulfill five important

promises to Ontario's children and youth, which are a healthy start; an ongoing positive relationship with a caring adult; a safe place that offers positive meaningful activities outside the home; marketable skills through effective education; an opportunity to give back to the community.

I believe we must all work together to fulfill these five promises to help our children to reach their full potential.

Mr Arnott: I want to thank my friend the minister for that answer and I hope that all members of this House will fully support this effort to achieve the goals she has described for us today.

Ontario has come a long way in recent years in providing a better head start for Ontario's children through programs such as the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, which screens some 140,000 infants a year.

Ontario's Promise is another way in which the province can bring people together, along with their ingenuity and resources, to help young people find the best within themselves and lead fulfilling lives. Would the minister elaborate on how well the support is coming in for this initiative in terms of who the partners are and how much is being invested?

Hon Mrs Marland: Ontario's Promise truly is a catalyst, a coordinator and a champion to create new opportunities, partnerships and initiatives for our children and youth.

I am very excited that we have already seen tremendous interest in and support of Ontario's Promise. Approximately \$22 million has already been donated by private sector partners who want to work together to help us fulfill our five promises to Ontario's children and youth. I would personally like to thank donors McDonald's Canada, the Royal Bank of Canada, Bell Canada, Howard Johnson, the TD Bank Financial Group, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce and Scotiabank for their generosity and for helping us to get this important initiative underway. By working together we will provide Ontario's young people with the attention and resources—

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

1450

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns hospital services in eastern Ontario. Minister, this week's Renfrew Mercury has a headline, "Surgery Delays in Ottawa Hospitals Devastating for Renfrew Patients." Monday's Ottawa Citizen has a headline, "Clogged Hospitals to Refuse More Ambulances."

Minister, there is, by any objective standard, a real and growing problem for patients who need timely access to operating theatres at the Ottawa Hospital not getting it.

I know this problem has been around and I, perhaps better than most, appreciate the history of this, but from talking to patients, their doctors and hospital adminis-

trators, particularly in the rural communities of the Upper Ottawa Valley, I can tell you the situation is bad and getting worse.

One of the specific requests that has been made of me, and I believe of you—but let me make it on behalf of patients today—is, will you license or fund some additional alternate-level-of-care beds for Ottawa so that those alternate-level-of-care patients who are taking up, we are told, something like 13% to 15% of the medical surgical beds in the Ottawa Hospital can be placed elsewhere and so the 75-year-old patient from Pembroke, Eganville, Perth or Hawkesbury who has been waiting for weeks and months to get that surgery in the Ottawa Hospital can do so? Are you prepared to give that undertaking to the needy patients of eastern Ontario today or at some early point?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We're well aware of the situation in Ottawa. In fact, when I met with the CEO and chair of the board not too long ago when I was in Ottawa, certainly this situation was presented. I indicated at that time there was funding available to open up alternative long-term-care beds for patients who were occupying acute beds. We did commit that we would work together in order to find locations where those ALC beds could be put in place immediately.

Mr Conway: I just want to stress in a supplementary the urgency of this. Talking today to officials in Ottawa, I'm told they are very concerned, as they head into the flu season, into the holiday season, that the situation has reached a critical point.

Today I received a letter from a doctor in my community who has told me that because of the current situation in Ottawa, he's being told to refer to Toronto and Montreal patients who would normally go to Ottawa. This is unprecedented, and there's more and more of it. I am hearing from far too many patients and doctors in my constituency and I know if I'm hearing it, my colleagues in Lanark, Leeds, Prescott and Russell and SD and G are also hearing it.

We need to act now. Can you give me and, more importantly, the patients and the health care providers of eastern Ontario a more specific timetable as to when you will act and when additional alternate-level-of-care beds will be in place so that this increasing and almost unbearable pressure on the medical surgical beds in the Ottawa Hospital will be relieved? More precisely, Minister, when do you expect to announce some additional alternate-level-of-care beds for the Ottawa area?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, we need to remember that we had a gap of 10 years where there were no long-term-care beds awarded in the province, between 1988 and 1998. We are now in the process of constructing 20,000 beds, which will all be open by the year 2004. If we take a look at Ottawa-Carleton, 1,102 beds have been awarded to date and 210 are planned for the final stage.

I should also indicate to you that we have been working with the Ottawa community to find interim long-term-care beds. We have found over 140 already. As I

say, the funding is available and we will continue to work with the community to find more. We recognize the pressure and want to resolve it with the local community.

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege today to ask a question of the Solicitor General. I know every party has shown respect to the Ontario professional firefighters, and certainly I'll be meeting later with Tim Calhoun and Jeff Nester from my riding of Durham. All of us have been familiarized with the issues. They've been printed in the recent issue of the newsletter from the firefighters' association. There are important issues facing the firefighters of Ontario. Specifically, I'm just reading from their recent distribution here: "... then legislation must require that each municipality has an obligation to disclose, to all citizens, the nature of the fire and emergency response level that is being provided in that community...."

Minister, if you could explain, not just to my constituents but to all of the people of Ontario, what steps you are taking while working with the fire marshal's office.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I thank the member from Durham for the question. Last week I met with the members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association executive and we discussed a number of issues, this being one of them.

Currently under the legislation, if there is some sort of a serious threat to public safety, there is a process they go through to resolve it and make sure that somehow it's resolved. But if I could put this in a context by looking at the police adequacy standards, we have standards now across the province that ensure the safety and a level of standard of policing right across this province. It doesn't matter where you live.

Similarly, I believe it's important for people in this province to have standards of fire safety and fire protection right across this province. It doesn't matter where you live. To that end, as a result of our discussion last week, I've asked the ministry to work on a review in terms of the fire sector to see what we can actually do to address the concern. I believe, at the end of the day, it doesn't matter if you live in Paris, Ontario or the city of Toronto; all citizens across the province deserve to have a level of safety, including, of course, the safety of the firefighters as well.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that response, Minister.

The member from Scarborough Centre today personally proposed a recognition piece of legislation for firefighters, and I know that each one of us on all sides of the House is trying to not just raise the issues but also to educate. If I look at, for instance, the legislation that was passed in 1997, it was the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, and I know, Minister, in the briefings that you have given us that there are a lot of important initiatives that you've undertaken to enhance the level of service, but

also the awareness and safety aspects of fire prevention and fire safety in our communities.

Perhaps today you could tell the members who haven't been paying attention some of the important initiatives that you've taken under your charge.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: First, I'd like to give credit to my predecessor, Bob Runciman, who brought in legislation that, for the very first time, required municipalities to provide fire prevention and public fire safety education. Fire prevention is very important.

This was clearly evidenced just a few weeks ago at the public safety awards, where a number of people received these awards for public safety, including the York region fire prevention officers, who have always taken initiative but also showcased something called escape routes. That of course also translated into a number of children who saved their families as a result of this fire education.

Firefighters have an extremely important role, and I believe that when we start talking to our young people through our firefighters, with the service they provide, we'll continue to make sure that people are safe, their families will be safe, but also young people can educate the adults in making sure they are safe as well.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): To the Premier: I'd like to ask you about your refusal to respond to the concerns of the people of Walkerton when warned of the potential for serious problems back in 1998. At that time the chief administrative officer of the town of Walkerton wrote directly to you, expressing concern at the province's abandonment of its role as the guardian of municipal water systems and at the downloading of responsibilities to the municipalities.

The letter noted that poor testing had been found in at least 23 municipalities in southwestern Ontario, creating potential for serious illness. Yet the town of Walkerton says they never received a reply from you or the Minister of the Environment or anybody else in the province government. It was plain to the people on the ground that your agenda of cutbacks to the Ministry of the Environment and downloading responsibility to municipalities was creating the conditions for a crisis.

Premier, I ask you, why did you ignore the warning from Walkerton?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Contrary to the information you're sharing with the House today, I did respond very specifically by a letter acknowledging their concerns. The ministry has certainly taken into account their concerns and, as you know, we have several reviews underway to look at the restructuring of the whole Ministry of the Environment. In addition, we have an inquiry underway to determine what happened in Walkerton and why it happened, with a view to making sure it never happens again. But the specific question is, why didn't I respond? The simple answer is, of course I responded. I responded by letter. I'm sure they'd be happy to share that with you.

1500

Ms Churley: Premier, I suggest that you table that letter with the Legislature today, and I suggest that you read the transcript from yesterday. By the way, all the public can now view those transcripts, thanks to the issue being raised by the NDP.

Jim Bolden, the mayor of Walkerton at the time, says his main concern with the ministry pulling out from the water testing service was that the chain for sharing information had been broken. He said that if a bad water test comes back from the private lab to a manager, if the manager decides not to share the information in that sampling package, doesn't advise the MOE or the health unit until we have a real problem, no one would even know the sample had come back.

Premier, as you know, it turns out that's what happened. Seven people died and 2,300 became ill as a result. The warnings from Walkerton came more than two years ago. The tragedy occurred six months ago. You still have not re-established the provincial water testing labs. Premier, are you waiting for more people to die before you will open up the provincial water testing labs?

Hon Mr Harris: The suggestion is actually so non-sensical it borders on being silly. The letter from July 3, 1998, was specifically to respond to the mayor's letter and council's resolutions regarding the realignment of provincial-municipal services. I don't know if I can table it. It is a letter to the chief administrative officer, who forwarded me the letter, so I did, of course, respond to their resolution and their letter.

Secondly, it is clear that we all have lessons to learn here. We have put in place the wherewithal and the inquiries to make sure we get the answers to what occurred, to make sure we learn from those lessons and make sure we can restore the integrity of Ontario's water system to the very highest quality that we possibly can.

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): My question is for the Solicitor General. I find it rather interesting that the member for Durham asks a question that provides you with an opportunity to tell us exactly what your plans are to be proactive, and still you stall.

I want to bring to the minister's attention that since 1997 firefighters across the province have been voicing concerns to you, the fire marshal's office and to the general public that downloading, amalgamation and local municipal decisions have jeopardized public safety when it comes to fire services. Since 1997 you, along with the fire marshal's office, have taken a hands-off approach to fire protection services, especially concerning reduction of operations by municipalities forced to do so because of you government's downloading.

Minister, once and for all, do you believe that your office and the office of the fire marshal should be proactive in the safety of the public when it comes to minimum standards of staffing, or do you intend to continue

your wait-and-see approach after staff reductions have taken place?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I'd once again like to thank the member for Durham for first bringing this up. Too bad you're a little bit too late on this.

First of all, let's put things in context. As a result of a number of changes in responsibility, and certainly the concern of this government, there's absolutely no reason for, for example, property taxpayers to be concerned about anything. Obviously we've made it easier by taking education taxes out. As I said before, I spoke earlier on, last week, with the executive of the Ontario firefighters' association. They were concerned, I was concerned and, frankly, so are all the members of my caucus. We all want to make sure that people across this province are duly protected. That's one of the reasons why we're going to review exactly what is happening in the fire services. For years, unfortunately, going back over the time the Liberals were in power and certainly the NDP, fire services were not looked at in the same—

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

Mr Levac: I find it rather interesting that the minister stands in his place and says that last week it was brought to his attention and he's going to think about it. In 1997 the then critic, Mr David Ramsay, brought it to your attention, when the bill was first introduced. So you've had since 1997 to deal with this issue. The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, in section 3, clearly outlines the power and the duties of the fire marshal with respect to the municipalities' provision of fire protection services. There is not one sentence in this entire section eliminating the opportunity of the fire marshal's office to perform its duty in a proactive manner. Why would you not want to see a reorganization of a municipal fire protection service plan before it is implemented?

Therefore, I ask you a simple question. For the safety of all of our citizens, will you commit to ensuring that municipalities submit fire protection service plans to the fire marshal's office so that they can do a complete audit before they implement the plan?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Unfortunately, the fact of the matter is that one of the reasons why we have a number of different approaches across this province is because municipal fire services traditionally have always been handled a little bit differently in every municipality. There's a certain amount of responsibility that each municipality has to have, and is required to have, by the way, to ensure public safety within their own community. There is a process, if in fact public safety is threatened, to be followed, and in fact it can be remedied. But that's not good enough.

By the way, since I was made Solicitor General about a year ago, I've had an open-door policy. In fact, I've agreed to meet with all organizations, including associations, from time to time to make sure we address these issues.

One of the reasons why we need to address this is that we need to ensure that people across the province, despite decisions made at the local level by municipalities, are somehow protected, that you have fire protection and it's reasonable and you're safe in your own communities.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the minister responsible for community and social services. As you are aware, Minister, many families in southwestern Ontario are experiencing difficulties or having major concerns with family members who have developmental disabilities. One of the issues that keeps coming up is the syndrome of the aging parent. As you are aware, some of these parents are finding it increasingly difficult to look after their sons and daughters. Can you tell my constituents what your ministry is doing in order to help some of these families with their concerns or problems?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): This government has made providing supports to people with developmental disabilities a genuine priority. Over the last four years, we've increased spending on helping people with developmental disabilities and their families, going from \$839 million in 1996-97 to more than \$965 million in the estimates this year. That includes \$24 million to provide more residential supports to people with developmental disabilities. The priority in that area has been designated to aging families, people who have built community living, who have made community living a reality in our province, people who have provided care for their loved ones for 30, 40 and 50 years. We certainly recognize that we can do more, and we're looking at additional opportunities to provide more support to these, our most vulnerable citizens.

Mr Beaubien: Recently you met with representatives from Lambton and Chatham-Kent, and we thank you for meeting with these people concerning this issue. As I'm aware, you had discussions with you staff and the representatives from Lambton and Chatham-Kent. What is your ministry willing to do in the future when a similar situation arises?

1510

Hon Mr Baird: We have been consulting with stakeholders around the province, with people with developmental disabilities and their families, with advocates, with workers in this sector, with agencies, to look at what additional opportunities we can provide.

Later this month we are going to be able to begin receiving applications under the foundations initiative designed to help 21-year-olds leaving the school system and provide additional supports with that. Through the consultations we've been having, we've been able to learn a lot to help identify what additional support can be provided for families, and for individuals with developmental disabilities. Wherever we've gone across the

province, we've heard from advocates about the need to address aging parents. The member opposite has been a big advocate in that area. With him, we've also met with the Wallaceburg and Sydenham District Association for Community Living and their executive director, David Katzman, and with the Lambton County Association for the Mentally Handicapped and their executive director, Don Seymour.

We're going to continue to work. This issue is a genuine priority. I don't think it's too much to ask for an aging parent to have—

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

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Yesterday we debated the time allocation motion on Bill 140, An Act to amend the Assessment Act. This is the eighth property tax bill in three years. Not only that; this bill was tabled only two days after the municipal elections to make sure your government would avoid any criticism.

In my riding, we are already above the industrial-commercial transition ratio of the province. This means that some municipalities will have no choice but to raise residential taxes to meet all the obligations of your downloading. My resident taxpayers cannot afford any tax increase. Even yesterday the Premier said the taxpayers should not be faced with any tax increases. Therefore, if the Premier says taxpayers should not be faced with tax increases, will your government extend the CRF, the community reinvestment fund, to the municipalities to ensure they can continue providing the necessary services to their local taxpayers?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. It allows me an opportunity to tell this House that more CRF funding has been announced for this year and special transition assistance funding has been announced for those municipalities that have transitional issues with respect to municipal restructuring.

All of these are policies of the government of Ontario designed to help municipalities deliver better, safer, more efficient services at less cost to the taxpayer. That is a common thread through our government legislation that we share with the municipalities. We are serious about it. CRF funding is undergoing a complete review by my colleague the Minister of Finance to ensure that CRF funding is available in the future in a way that will assist municipalities that genuinely need some assistance as a result of the realignment of services or as a result of special conditions that exist in that municipality.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, I didn't hear yes or no. I don't know where the level playing field is. Your government has set the tax rate for business education property tax. This tax is more than 50% higher than the residential tax. Can you tell me why businesses in Glengarry, Prescott

and Russell having the same assessment value as those in richer areas are paying up to four times more for their education tax? This is unfair.

Let me give you an example. Why is it that in the finance minister's riding, Parry Sound, a business is paying \$4,700 a year, and in Oshawa it's \$10,500 a year. And this always with the same assessment value of \$500,000. In Prescott and Russell it's over \$15,000 a year, in Glengarry over \$17,000 a year and in Cornwall over \$21,000 a year. And that always with the same assessment.

Minister, your government has set the tax rate. Is it fair? I thought your government was supposed to help the poorer communities. Tell me what your plans are to rectify this unfair situation. What do you plan to do to help the businesses in Glengarry, Prescott and Russell?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me be as direct as I can if he felt I was not direct enough in the first part of the question. The answers are: yes, this government is concerned that past governments did not relieve the inequity inherent in the education tax system; yes, this government is concerned and acted on the inequity many homeowners faced as the result of a system of assessment that was not fair and even throughout Ontario; yes, we acted to make the tax assessment system more accurate, more fair and more equitable across this province; yes, we are concerned when municipalities don't have the resources necessary to deal with some of the uneven aspects of the local services restructuring; yes, we acted to ensure that fairness was guaranteed throughout Ontario when it comes to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. New question.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Earlier this week the major newspapers in Toronto carried reports that obesity in Canadian children has doubled, putting our children's health at risk. The media quoted a study stating that obesity rates of children between the ages of 7 and 13 have more than doubled over a 15-year period. From 1981 to 1996, the percentage of obese boys rose from 5% to 13.5%. For girls, the percentage rose from 5% to 11%. Lack of exercise and a poor diet is the cause of the increased levels of obesity. These factors are proven risks for heart disease and stroke, among other things.

In light of the fact that news reports suggest the Liberals have cut ParticipAction's budget over the past few years, I'm asking you, as the minister responsible for recreation, what are you doing about this?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for the question. I can see the Speaker smiling because he, like myself, is a hockey parent. We try really hard to keep our young boys active so that this doesn't happen to them.

Let me first say that we are providing leadership in the province to make sure that more and more children are active in sports. We think it is important to do that. In the February 2000 budget, we provided an endowment fund for Ontario's youth and recreation. That \$5 million was matched by community foundations across the province. They support projects all across the province for children and youth to become involved in recreational activity.

We were also concerned that some children couldn't afford to get involved in sports, so in the budget we received a program called the community sport opportunity fund. It is \$6 million over three years to make sure that, for children who haven't got the financial wherewithal, money can be matched and they can then get the dollars to get involved in opportunities in sports. It is our goal to make sure we increase the activity rate in the province from 38% to 41% within the next two years.

PETITIONS

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My constituents in Sudbury are very concerned about firefighting services and about our firefighters such as Chris Stokes, the president of the association; Marc Leduc, the vice-president; and Mike Ouellette, who are in the gallery today.

It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, otherwise known as Bill 84, threatens public and firefighter safety by altering the definition of a full-time firefighter so as to allow municipalities to hire part-time firefighters; and

"Whereas part-time firefighters do not have sufficient training and expertise to fill the role of full-time firefighters; and

"Whereas we believe the fire marshal should perform more audits to ensure that municipalities are meeting minimum standards of fire service; and

"Whereas firefighters must often respond to blazes that involve dangerous and hazardous materials; and

"Whereas the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety does not have adequate enforcement powers needed to protect Ontario workers, including firefighters, using hazardous materials; and

"Whereas we believe that in order to make hazardous work sites safer, the government of Ontario must take a lead on this issue;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the efforts of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association as they lobby the Mike Harris government to take immediate action in implementing their recommendations so that public and firefighter safety is never compromised again."

Of course, I affix my signature to this petition as I am in complete agreement with it.

1520

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition regarding this government's ongoing discrimination against northern cancer patients. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

"Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

"Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province;

"Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Loughheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petitioners, I have affixed my signature to it, and I'd like to thank Gerry Loughheed Jr for all of his efforts in this regard.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

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

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposures to sexually explicit materials;

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

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

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

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, the Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots; and

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependant on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

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

"We ask the Ontario government to amend provincial legislation by passing Bill 64 (the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 2000) to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

I'm in full agreement and have affixed my signature to this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions. The Chair recognizes the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and the Holland Marsh.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Thank you for mentioning the Holland Marsh, part of my riding.

This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It says:

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

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers a bundle. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in Canada. Some people with diabetes simply cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing diabetes. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood, and even reuse lancets and needles. These budget-saving measures can often have disastrous health care consequences;

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontarians' and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain the best glucose control possible. As you all know, good control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

It's signed by hundreds and hundreds of petitioners, and I affix my signature to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition here in regard to education funding and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government wants to take an additional \$1 billion out of the education system this year and every year; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has decided to hire uncertified teachers in kindergarten, libraries, for guidance, physical education, the arts and technology; and

"Whereas the Ontario government wishes to remove the right to negotiate working conditions; and

"Whereas the Ontario government would remove at least 10,000 teachers from classrooms across the province; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has become the sole decision-maker on class size, preparation time and the length of the school year and the school day; and

"Whereas the Ontario government proposes to take decision-making powers out of the hands of locally elected community-minded trustees,

"We, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge the government to repeal the education bill and create an accessible public consultative process for students, parents, teachers and school board administrators to study alternative solutions that have universal appeal and will lead to an improved educational system."

Since I agree wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to affix my signature to this petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, for a moment there I thought it was petition apartheid, but now I am up on my feet and reading into the record.

I have a petition here from a Mr R. Atkinson, and also a Mr Don Samos, and he's from Thedford, Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage auto enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year-of-manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked" tirelessly "together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow year of manufacture plates to be used on vintage automobiles."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this on behalf of hundreds of Ontario car enthusiasts.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): I'm very pleased to read this petition on behalf of Laurel Seybold and a number of students from the University of Windsor concerning Bill 132.

"Whereas the Ontario government has introduced Bill 132, which will allow private universities in this province;

"Whereas the \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year tuition fees charged by private universities will unfairly limit access to a small number of privileged students;

"Whereas private universities will take away faculty from public universities, many of whom are already understaffed due to government funding cuts;

"Whereas education is a right and should be accessible to all qualified students regardless of their financial status;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Bill 132 and instead focus on improving Ontario's existing public university system."

I'm happy to affix my signature to this.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually"—it's quite a tongue-twister—"explicit material;

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

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I am in total agreement with that, and I'll sign my name.

1530

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): This is a petition in tribute and support of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, such as Fred LeBlanc, Bob Belzile and Kevin Welsh, who are here visiting us today from Kingston. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, otherwise known as Bill 84, threatens public and firefighter safety by altering the definition of a 'full-time' firefighter so as to allow municipalities to hire part-time firefighters; and

“Whereas part-time firefighters do not have sufficient training and expertise to fill the role of full-time firefighters; and

“Whereas we believe the fire marshal should perform more audits to ensure that municipalities are meeting minimum standards of fire service; and

“Whereas firefighters must often respond to blazes that involve dangerous and hazardous materials; and

“Whereas the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety does not have adequate enforcement powers needed to protect Ontario’s workers, including firefighters, using hazardous materials; and

“Whereas we believe that in order to make hazardous work sites safer, the government of Ontario must take a lead on this issue;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the efforts of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association as they lobby the government to take immediate action in implementing their recommendations so that the public and firefighter safety is never compromised.”

I agree with this petition. I’ve signed it and present it to the House at this time.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, with your indulgence, I think for the first time in the history of Ontario there is a new format of petition that I am about to read into the record. This petition was given to me through the mail by people from, in this case, Marmora, Ontario. Darrell Henry and Judith Henry sent this to me and I’m going to read it into the record.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

“Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

“Whereas Durham MPP John R. O’Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

“Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to allow vintage auto enthusiasts to use year of manufacturing plates.”

I am pleased to read these, sign them and endorse them on this important day in Ontario.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):

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

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

“Whereas ... the minister responsible for persons with disabilities will not commit to the 11 principles outlined by the ODA committee; and

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

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

“To pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act that would remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities in the province of Ontario.”

I’m in full agreement and have affixed my signature to this petition.

OPPOSITION DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should stop its attacks on the hard-won achievements of working Ontarians, and instead amend the Employment Standards Act to include the following steps toward creating family-friendly workplaces:

—an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.50 per hour;

—a reduction of the standard workweek, after which overtime premiums apply, from 44 to 40 hours and the right to refuse overtime in excess of the new standard workweek;

—one full year of combined pregnancy and parental leave, with full job protection during the leave period;

—10 unpaid days of family responsibility leave for all employees;

—pro-rated benefits for part-time workers; and

That this House demands that the government rebuild the Ministry of Labour’s enforcement capacity by hiring new officers to fill all the employment standards positions that have been cut since 1995; and

That this House calls on the government to consult the people of Ontario on further measures designed to help working Ontarians achieve a better balance between work and family responsibilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Christopherson moves opposition day number 4.

Mr Christopherson: Let me say that I’m very proud to introduce this motion on behalf of my caucus. Let me

also say that, given the fact the government is using the words that they care about family and they care about workers, we decided to bring in some suggested changes that actually achieve that, particularly since we all know that the Employment Standards Act changes this government has brought in, and so far intends to ram through this Legislature with absolutely no public comment whatsoever, do not achieve that; in fact, they do the opposite. The measures contained in their new bill will have a detrimental effect on the ability of people, particularly those who work at minimum wage and don't have benefit of the protection of a collective agreement, to have the kind of life this government purports to want to govern for on behalf of everyone.

We're very much of a mind that if we, as legislators, care about families—and we recognize that no matter how much Premier Harris holds his breath, closes his eyes and stamps his feet, he can't make this the 1950s again and that Ward and June Cleaver do not represent the overwhelming majority of families. This government talks about change. Well, guess what? Work and families and the dynamics around families and the communities that families are in have all changed. Modern-day families are facing incredible pressures, not only to meet the financial needs of modern-day living but also the social demands and the expanded family demands.

How many families right now are facing the struggle of dealing with elderly parents who need time, love and attention? Often they need financial assistance. At the same time, the people who are providing that love, care and assistance are also caring for and raising a young family. What on earth, in forcing someone to work 60 hours a week or denying them overtime money that they would receive now, is in some way supportive of families that are in that situation?

This government says you want people to become more involved, you want them to spend more time volunteering in the community. Guess what? Working people, regardless of their income, want to do that. They want to be involved in their children's lives. They want to be involved in the life of their community. They want to be involved in the world that goes on around them. To do that, they need laws that reflect their rights with regard to making those choices. No one should have to choose between spending time with their child or keeping their job when they've already worked 50 hours a week. That's wrong. That's detrimental. That's harmful to family.

Let me also just throw in that it's becoming in this modern day, in Mike Harris's Ontario, that the only way anybody receives any increase in their standard of living is by a few measly bucks being cut in taxes, which nine times out of 10 they pay for elsewhere through user fees or services that are lost and the property tax increases—of course this government has a bill in the House that will provide for individual homeowners to bear the entire share of any increased property taxes as a result of down-loading.

1540

The other way that people are encouraged to improve their quality of life in terms of their financial income is by working more hours. That's in part what this is all about too: allow people to be forced to work more hours and at the end of the day they may feel that somehow they're gaining a bit because they may have made a little bit more money. But we're arguing today that the price is paid at the family level.

We've got this huge economic boom, profits have never been higher, but you're not suggesting that anyone gets to share in any of that increased productivity, increased efficiency or share in those profits. No. You're suggesting the way that people benefit from the heated economy is by working more hours, and being forced to work more hours in many cases. Then you're denying them overtime rates that they are otherwise entitled to under the current law. Wrong, wrong, wrong. It hurts families and it hurts communities, and at the end of the day it also hurts local economies because you're denying access to money to the very people in our communities who spend it right in the community. They don't put it off into a mutual fund. Any increase someone who makes minimum wage receives goes right back into that community.

So we have a number of proposals, and it's the bare minimum. This is the starting point for us. First of all, increase the minimum wage to \$7.50. Why \$7.50? That brings us on par with the United States. People are shocked when I and my NDP colleagues tell them that the United States minimum wage is higher than in Ontario. That shocks people because most of us were raised with it being the other way around. This government argues that this is no time to bring in an increase in the minimum wage because they don't want to dampen the economic boom, the economic activity that we now have. Yet the originators of the boom, the United States—because it's their economy that's dragging ours upwards. It's nothing magical this government is doing; it's a North American phenomenon actually, because it's the biggest, longest boom we've ever seen.

They've increased the minimum wage in the United States. They didn't buy the argument that it dampens any kind of economic activity. They've increased the minimum wage not once but twice since 1995, and in one of the most recent US presidential state of the union addresses, the President of the United States called for a third increase—in the time that Mike Harris has frozen the wages of about 300,000 people, the working poor. Why are you refusing them? Why did you give billions of dollars away in tax cuts to corporations and high-income people and deny people who work for the minimum wage an increase? There's nothing in this bill, not a penny, nothing. You've got all this surplus money, an incredible economy, and the working poor get nothing? I want to hear members of the government backbenches defend and justify how it is that in this time of plenty you don't even have a few pennies to give to the working poor.

We want to take another issue. Most people think that we have a 40-hour workweek here in Ontario. We don't. The law is 44 hours as the standard workweek, after which you get overtime rates. We're saying two things: first of all, let's make it the 40 hours that everybody thinks it is. Remember, a lot of this, I would suggest to members of the government, is money and leisure time that we were all promised. Remember 10, 20, 30 or 40 years ago when new technology came in—it was "automation" then—and that was going to create all this leisure time? Work, slowly but surely, would be done away with and we would all benefit and have a chance to grow spiritually, culturally. We would all find out what it was that gave us fulfilment in life outside of work, and the real question for us in the new millennium was going to be, "How shall I spend my new time?" It didn't happen. People are working longer and harder than they ever have and are more stressed out than they've ever been, and those are the ones who are making decent bucks. If you're making minimum wage, you're not sharing in that either, because you're working all these hours. And that's not enough: you want them to work even more hours.

All we're saying is, let's go to 40 hours—that's what everybody thinks is in the law anyway—and have it very simple: the standard workweek in the province of Ontario is 40 hours. If you agree, totally voluntarily, after 40 hours to work overtime, you get a minimum of time and a half. That's what the United States has, and guess what? The United States has had that as a law since 1938. The federal government has that as the federal labour code law, as do five other provinces. Why won't we do it here in Ontario?

Please, do not tell us today in this House that any reason for saying no to these recommendations, to these new laws, is because you don't want to dampen the economic activity, because, number one, it doesn't wash—we're well behind the United States and there are other provinces in Canada that have taken these steps—and secondly, if we don't do it during the boom times, it will never happen in the tough times. You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "We won't increase the minimum wage or bring in decent labour laws during the boom times because we don't want to dampen the boom," and "We can't bring them in during difficult and recessionary times because we don't have the means to do it and this is not the time we need the stimulation." You cannot have it both ways, which is the way you have it right now for 300,000 people who work at minimum wage.

I don't think this is really that radical at all, by any stretch. In fact, in some European countries they've moved to a 35-hour workweek. We can afford it. It's something that should be a law that we're proud of, and it's another reason to hope that in the future we'll maintain the status by the United Nations as the best place in the world to live.

I'll just touch on a couple more and then my colleagues, in rotation, will also speak to these and the other

measures we're mentioning as our minimum starting point for real changes to make the workplace family-friendly and to have labour laws that reflect modern life.

The 10 unpaid days off for family crisis is a good idea, no question, but we do think it's wrong to leave in place this 50-employee threshold. If we're dealing with what an individual goes through when their child is sick and should be taken to the doctor or, worse, rushed to the hospital, it shouldn't matter whether you work in a place of 500 employees or five employees if you want the assurance that when you take your sick child to the hospital you're not putting your job on the line, because that's what this is about. We in the NDP do not understand how you can legitimately, morally and ethically differentiate these rights based on where you work.

The other thing on that one is, do you know what? If somebody's got a sick child and they've got to go to the hospital, they're going to the hospital. They're going to go anyway, and we ought not allow a law in Ontario that would suggest, even hint, that they should do anything otherwise, and in this case it's because they may be putting their job on the line. That's not acceptable.

Again, let me point out this is not something radically wild-eyed. There are already two provinces, British Columbia and Quebec, that have this. They have unpaid family crisis time. There's no threshold, and that's the way it ought to be in Ontario. That is recognizing family as a priority, and that is putting laws in place that promote being a part of and taking care of a family in the way that, ideally, we would all like to see.

1550

Last is the issue of pro-rating part-time benefits. There are now twice as many people working part-time today as there were in the mid-1970s, not because it's a desirable form of employment, although it is for some, but increasingly—especially for young people—it's because they have no other alternative. There are no other options. That's all they're being offered.

If we want to talk about a family-friendly workplace, then why should someone who has no other alternative but to work part-time or contract work not be entitled to the family-friendly benefits of health and drug plans? Or the comfort that families need from life insurance? What about dental plans? Most of those things we take for granted. Certainly in workplaces that have the benefit of a collective agreement that's pretty standard. Why should someone who works part-time be denied that?

We're saying it ought to be pro-rated. Does that mean that somebody who works two or three days a week should get the full-blown dental plan that somebody who works full-time receives? No, we're not asking for something that's unfair or unreasonable. What we're saying is, if you work two or three days a week, then you ought to get two or three days worth of benefits in addition to the pay you're receiving. That's friendly to families, that's supportive of families, and when we support individual families, we support communities, and when we support communities, of course we support our province.

In closing my remarks, let me again emphasize that this is such a time of plenty and a land of plenty, these are very, very modest. Now, compared to where this government's going, you could argue that they're radical. One of the countries right now that's looking at extending the amount of hours that you can make someone work without paying them overtime is Russia. Most everywhere else is either already better than us or moving to it, and well beyond us. This is an opportunity for us to say everybody in Ontario matters, that if you are the working poor, you're just as important as that corporate CEO who got a \$15,000 or \$20,000 windfall because of the tax changes you made. This is to ensure that regardless of what kind of place you work in, if you've got a sick family member—but it doesn't have to be a child, it could be our mother. I talked earlier about how many of us are caring for parents and children. You shouldn't have to give one nanosecond's time of thinking to whether or not you should do this if you need to be there with someone who's counting on you. You shouldn't have to worry about your job being on the line just because of the size of the place you work in.

Everybody thinks we have a 40-hour workweek. Let's make it so. That might even encourage some employers to hire people. How can that be a bad thing? Then lastly, if there are people who have to work part-time, why can't they receive pro-rated benefits based on the amount of time they're working? Why should they be shut out from being able to provide their children with basic dental care when somebody who's working full-time can? Not in this land of plenty, not during this time of plenty. We in the NDP believe these are modest first steps but they're important first steps. This is the direction the government ought to be going in if they really cared about families and really wanted to create family-friendly workplaces.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's a pleasure to stand in the House today and talk about this resolution. As we've debated several of the labour bills coming forward in the last few weeks, it has become very clear that the best thing that has happened in the Ontario workplace is the election of the Conservative government. There are many initiatives that we have brought forward which are actually benefiting the worker. There's no point having great, big contracts and high wages and stuff unless the workers are working. With the Mike Harris initiative of cutting taxes, cutting employment red tape, and hopefully convincing the federal government to reduce some of these EI-type taxes they have—and they are creating \$6 billion worth of surplus—we're hoping that Ontario workers will benefit.

As you would have seen in the last few years of statistics, it has been proven and it has been stated that the best place to live, work and raise our families is Ontario. Ontario is growing. It has the best economic growth in the G7 countries. More and more people are working today than ever before. In fact, in the last five years we have met our targets, which many economists said could not be met; many economists said it's voodoo economics. We have met our targets, our commitment of a minimum

of 725,000 net new jobs, and we have actually been able to create 785,000 net new jobs.

Some 550,000 people are off welfare. They come home, they're very happy and they say, "Family, guess what? I got the job." Those are four beautiful, magic words. Everybody wants to work and we are providing workers that opportunity, which they didn't have prior to 1995. They didn't have it under the 10 lost years.

I'm going to be speaking directly to this resolution, unlike the opposition sometimes; they go off on a tangent. I'm going to talk about the minimum wage, because that's one of the things that Mr Christopherson brought forward. He's saying we should increase the minimum wage to \$7.50 per hour. Let me state that Ontario's minimum wage is not the highest in Canada but it is among the top three. The general minimum wage, for the people at home who may not know exactly what it is, is \$6.85 per hour; for students it's \$6.40 per hour. British Columbia has the highest minimum wage among all Canadian provinces at \$7.15. Does that make all the workers happy? No, because the unemployment rate in BC is so high. I'm not sure what the reasons are, but this could be one of the reasons.

Interjections.

Mr Gill: Again, I don't mean to profess. Ontario ranks third at \$6.85.

During the NDP regime, from 1990 to 1995, the minimum wage went from \$5 to \$6.85, a 37% increase, while the economy struggled. You know what happened to the economy. The NDP was going to spend their way out of the recession. That is not how you boost the economy. You boost the economy by cutting taxes, by making Ontario workplaces conducive to improved employment, by retaining the industry that we already have and by cutting taxes, bringing in more industry.

Small business, and the hospitality-tourism industry in particular, have expressed great concerns about the high level of Ontario's minimum wage. They want to be competitive, they want to bring in the conventions and they want to bring in much more employment to Ontario. The minister's decision to freeze is going to help that industry for sure.

1600

One of the things the resolution says is that we should have a 40-hour workweek. Currently on the books we have a 48-hour workweek. Under the Employment Standards Act which we just brought out, we're going to bring in a law which is going to technically have a 60-hour workweek. The opposition has been saying the sky is falling and we're going to be slave drivers and people are going to be so upset. If the opposition has been listening, the only reason we brought that forward is that in previous times, including our own time and the NDP time and I'm sure the Liberal time, there had been 18,000 permits issued each year to allow the deviation. That comes to literally 90 permits a day. That's red tape. Everybody said that we are going to be allowing that work; nobody denied that. Why then have the red tape?

We are saying employees would still receive overtime after 44 hours, and time off instead of overtime pay. We're giving the workers more flexibility: time off instead of overtime pay for employees, if their employers agree, to suit their business and personal needs. Many people do not always want overtime pay. They would rather have, to tend to their family matters, time off. Therefore, we're giving them that flexibility, and for the first time ever, new minimum universal daily and weekly rest periods. We're going to instill in the legislation mandatory rest periods: 11 consecutive hours per day; 24 hours in every seven days or 48 hours in every 14 days.

I'm going to speak to the pregnancy and parental leave. As you would have seen, recently the Premier launched Ontario's Challenge. We're paying attention to early childhood; we're paying attention to the Mustard and McCain report. We want to make sure that children at the early level are looked after and we want to make sure that, in line with the federal government, the pregnancy leave is extended and we'll be protecting people's jobs. One says, "Will the employee be getting exactly the same job?" In today's fluid economy, sometimes the employee comes back after the 50 weeks of maternity leave or parental leave and that job may not be there. What we're guaranteeing is the same wage and comparable employment, and we want to make sure.

It happened in my own case. When my youngest daughter was born, my wife did take a year off, and she was very happy to do that. Unfortunately, she didn't have job security per se, but she decided that for the benefit of young children it is important. We are extending that benefit to the employees: more flexible pregnancy leave provisions.

Currently the law states it must start no earlier than 17 weeks before the due date. The proposed legislation in the Employment Standards Act would propose an option to allow leave to start at the time of a live birth, even if more than 17 weeks before the due date. That is taking into account some of the medical implications, medical complications that one could have.

Family responsibility leave: it's very important, and I agree partially with the resolution. We are allowing in the Employment Standards Act places of work where there are more than 50 employees to have 10 days of emergency leave. It is important to note we are moving ahead in the correct direction. Should we extend it all the way? I don't know. Maybe we should. But it's something we have to look at gradually. At least we're moving in the right direction. The NDP had a government for five years, the Liberals had a government before that, and we have the government now. At least we are addressing the issue. I agree with Mr Christopherson that people do need some emergency leave, otherwise they might have a planned sickness day. What we are saying is that we are going to instill in the law that they should have that emergency leave up to 10 days. So we are actually going ahead with some of these great initiatives. It's already in the bill. I'm not sure what this resolution's going to do any further for the betterment of the Ontario workers.

I am going to be sharing my time, Mr Speaker, in the rotation with some of my colleagues, very honourable members, Mr John O'Toole, the member for Durham, the member for Ottawa-Orléans and the member for Northumberland.

One of the things that came up—this discussion has been going on for the last day or so—was that we've cut the inspectors. That is not the case. The minister was very clear yesterday that we've got the same number of inspectors. What we are doing instead is that we are giving these inspectors much more power. Instead of having any kind of dispute going to arbitration and sitting in the courts for years and years, we are giving the inspectors the authority to work with the employee and the employer and have a quick resolution so that everybody can benefit.

The fines could range up to \$50,000 in the most serious offences, and I think that's going to be an incentive to make sure that there's no heavy-handedness on the part of employers.

This Employment Standards Act is going to work hand-in-hand and make sure the workers and the employers can look after themselves, look after their own affairs, rather than the government coming in and meddling in the affairs of those people.

I want to assure the people at home that when you say we have 48 hours and it may go to 60 hours, the agreement to work extra is going to be strictly between the worker and the employer. I want to assure everybody that the government will have the measures, if employers are being heavy-handed, to make sure that is not the case. I want to assure the House and I want to assure the member opposite of that.

People say, what is the Mike Harris government doing for workers? What is the Mike Harris government doing for the homeless? What are you doing for poverty? The best thing that happened is the election of the Mike Harris government, is the 785,000 net new jobs. I saw, like I said before—I might be repeating myself—a bumper sticker: "I fight poverty. I go to work."

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I just want to put a few thoughts on the record this afternoon on this very important issue. As you know, the government across the way has taken the position that to put this province on a path of prosperity and improve its economic prospects, you have to attack people, you have to attack unions, you have to attack teachers, you have to attack anybody out there who might in any way be perceived by this government to be getting in the way of the free market having its way, those multinational corporations out there who actually in many instances, if they're allowed to operate the way they at the core of their being want to operate, are pariahs on communities and on jurisdictions such as Ontario.

The legislation we have before us in the House these days dealing with the Employment Standards Act is nothing more than another example of this government's anti-union, anti-labour, anti-worker, anti-family agenda. The Harris government is attacking families and the

hard-won achievements of working people through its new Employment Standards Act, attacking no institution any more directly and in a damaging way probably than the family itself, the backbone, the foundation upon which our society is built.

The government's version of flexibility means being forced to work wildly varying shifts, just by way of an example, without any overtime pay in weeks with long hours. For example, you could work four weeks with 25, 55, 35 and 60 hours and not get a cent of overtime pay for any of it. This is not the kind of flexibility working parents need to balance work and family responsibilities. It will make the work-family balance more difficult to attain.

Juxtapose that with the resolution we have in front of the House today which talks about family-friendly initiatives in the workplace. Our proposals, put forward by the member from Hamilton West and by our caucus, recognize the stress that working families face today. Many parents want more involvement in their children's lives, not less. Our proposals are based on fair treatment, better morale for workers and respect for the balance between family and work, and that leads to a more productive workforce over the long run.

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The Conservative workplace agenda of longer hours and less pay breeds employee overload, burnout and family dysfunction and does not speak well to the sustainability of our economy and the lives we've all come to appreciate in this province, driven by governments of various ilk over a long period of time.

Just by way of juxtaposing what's happening in Ontario with other jurisdictions across the world, many of you will know that I've been looking at the Ireland experience over the last number of months and years and how that economy has taken off. You would think to listen to some of the multinationals out there that want other jurisdictions to follow suit that it's only about a more competitive tax structure. Well, it's not only about that. As a matter of fact, there are some other really interesting and very important initiatives happening over there that I just want to very quickly touch on today.

I was fortunate when I was over there to speak to some people who have been involved in what the Irish are calling a national development plan strategy, which brings to the table all of the relevant partners or players in the economic and social life of that country. This country that is leading the world in so many ways where the economy is concerned, where so many of the indicators are speaking, has taken a very different tack than the government we have here in Ontario today, which chooses to attack the partners, to challenge the partners, to demonize the partners, to belittle those partners who have participated over such a long period of time in very constructive and positive ways in the development of what we have here today, which is the envy of many jurisdictions across this world.

In Ireland the government sees that its role is to lead, to be a strong presence in the lives of people and com-

munities. It brings together, by way of negotiation, government, employers, trade unions, farmers, the community and the voluntary sector to sit down and work out plans that will serve the whole community as this economy continues to take hold and as this government and those people try to make sure it's sustainable and working in the best interests of everybody involved.

When you look at the national development plan they've put out, which is called a program for prosperity and fairness, it's interesting that there is a piece here that speaks directly to the issue we're putting on the table here today, which is a reflection on and a commitment to child care and family-friendly policies. Just one piece of that, in the overview, is "to further national fiscal and social policy measures, to reconcile work and family life, including family-friendly policies in employment."

If we look at it in a bit more depth, we will see that what they're saying is, "The development of appropriate measures to assist in reconciling work and family life is important to underpinning economic, social and equality objectives."

They go on to say that family-friendly policies not only help the employee but they help, in the long run, the employer, "in the retention of skilled and experienced staff, reduction of absenteeism, improved productivity, a more highly motivated workforce and an enhanced corporate image." It improves the lot of the employee by "providing an opportunity to better balance their working and family lives, greater equality of opportunity between men and women and a fairer sharing of family responsibilities between men and women."

I just put that out there for everybody's consideration today as we look at this resolution we've tabled and as we look at the legislation under the guise of improving employment standards in this province that this government has tabled in this House over the last week.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I know it's a real pleasure for me to follow the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and to respond to the third party's opposition day number 4. For the record, I just want to make sure that the people watching are clear about what we're actually discussing here this afternoon.

I respect that Mr Christopherson, the member for Hamilton West, has a very clearly defined position. You've got to start, in a debate, respecting the person's right and privilege to have a position and then to defend it articulately, as he does. I want that to be on the record as a statement. He does that better than most in this particular issue area.

In many respects, I'm not as qualified as he is to speak from the perspective of a person who was ever a member of the labour movement in the sense that I was a card-carrying member. I did work with people in General Motors—

Mr Christopherson: You mean you never worked?

Mr O'Toole: No, no, I worked with people, and I feel that when working with people, my role was to be fair and reasonable and to listen to people. In some cases, I'll admit there needs to be protection for vulnerable people.

I think in a lot of ways the Employment Standards Act serves as a good place to make sure that we have appropriate standards and protections in the workplace; not just the safety ones—I think those are a given, hopefully, that we all take safety in the workplace extremely seriously—but I think rights, respect and responsibility in the workplace are important.

The workplace, as we all know—we use these words—has changed. I can use the quotes the same as anyone else here, and I suppose the minister himself has probably used them, but we live in a new e-commerce world. We live in a world where it's a seven-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day operation. The most important thing, in my view, is that there are processes in place to protect workers' rights and to respect the rights of the employer and the employee—a balance. Whenever that balance gets out of place, it's like any market condition: if there's not enough supply, the price goes up; if there is too much supply, the price goes down. We need to make sure there is balance in the workplace for people.

A fundamental in all this is that it's important to have opportunities for people to work. There's the point where we may begin to disagree, perhaps from perspective. I think what this government has often been accused of is perhaps removing some of the red tape and the barriers. We use those terms as loosely as others use terms like "draconian" etc, but quite honestly, I think we're still trying to find an unintrusive balance in the workplace.

I'm talking for the most part about unionized workplaces. That's where my biggest concern really is. I think employment standards and the enforcement portion of employment standards is absolutely something we should be accountable to.

Where there is a union, as in the case where I worked at General Motors, the CAW—and I'll say respectfully that they provide a useful purpose.

Mr Christopherson: Fearful, then.

Mr O'Toole: Well, it's not fearful. I'd say it's a corporate world, and in the corporate world it's very big and very powerful, but it's only as powerful as the shareholders' ability to support their policies of quality and accountability and the rest of it. The shareholders pretty soon get queasy if there isn't any profit.

I think the union leadership is quite comfortable with the word "profit," because without profit there are no investors; and without investors, there is no capital; and without capital, you can't adapt to the economy and there are no jobs. That may be an oversimplification of economics 101, but by the same token, you've got to have happy, satisfied and fulfilled workers who have safe places to work and an appropriate income.

Mr Christopherson: That's a picnic.

Mr O'Toole: No, it's not a picnic; it's difficult. I say, in the places I'm familiar with, there is that balance of good-paying jobs—in fact, they're skilled jobs—but there is also a tremendous amount of pressure. Every time they get a wage increase, a performance improvement factor, there is the potential that new employees or regrowth in employment gets sacrificed under the term of

"efficiency." In other words, to get a wage gain and not have to pass that on directly to the consumer buying the product, there have to be efficiencies in the workplace, and those efficiencies often take the form of no new employees, less apprentice training, those kinds of commitments that are made in those agreements.

Those agreements, by the way, are signed by both parties, the employer and the employee. In this case, in a represented workplace, the employee would have one of the union boss's signature.

We are very interested in looking at some of the new provisions under Bill 147. I can tell you for the record here today that there are, I think, four or five major sections of the bill—I'm going by memory here; I've sort of skipped my notes—and one of them is the permit issue, the 60 hours of work and how you would have to get a permit to work overtime and how overtime is averaged over a number of weeks. For the record, I want to make it very clear that I recognize that in today's society, pretty much as a result of overtaxation, most people have to work, that both parents in the family must work to have a lifestyle.

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In respect of that, there are jurisdictions in the world that are arguing for a shorter workweek. I question their economics, but the reality is that is happening in some parts of Europe where they are actually calling for a 32-hour workweek etc. What we're trying to do in Ontario is make sure that first principles prevail; that is, there are jobs for everyone. We're trying to eliminate exposure to unusual stress or harm for the employees in the world of work. As I said, the first principle is they have the opportunity to work, the opportunity to actually have a job.

It comes down to minimum wage. In my view there are new employers, sort of marginal employers—I shouldn't say the word "marginal" in a negative way—new employers or companies where the profit margins they operate under—for instance, a milk store or one of those convenience stores where they use a lot of casual and part-time people. In many cases these locations have—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I wouldn't characterize anyone—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: As opposed to the member from Hamilton East, I wouldn't marginalize any employer. When an employer buys a company or sets up a company and invests their money, their capital, mortgages their family home to create a business to employ someone else, then quite often the husband and wife are already working 10 and 12 hours a day with no vacation and no protection in many cases.

We're talking of small companies that are exposed. One of the biggest costs to them is the wage component, the compensation factor, the premiums they have to pay on every \$100 of payroll, the employment insurance premiums they pay. Those tax-on-job issues really become a

non-benefit. It's not just the \$6.85; it's the Canada pension, it's the EI and it's the income tax rate.

If you look at some of the issues broadly at the federal level, I personally would be on record as saying, "Let's deal with it fairly." Hard-working people: I represent those people myself; arguably I'm one of them. I'm saying that the federal government under the Income Tax Act could actually look at—this is going to sound foreign to the Liberals who are here, and there are very few here, by the way, and to the NDP; there are a couple more here—and could go with a flat tax.

Let's say that people—I'm speaking to people at home and in the gallery—making under \$30,000 a year shouldn't even pay tax. I'm saying that on the record here today. Let's get with the game here. We probably spend more money for bureaucrats to collect that tax. Employment tax, all of these taxes, are disincentives for people to be legitimate, for new employers to take the risk of buying a business, buying the inventory, renting or purchasing the property, mortgaging their house, and then saying they're going to hire two or three people and try to give them some sense of income and security and the reward of work, if that's what work is. By the same token, they're paying them by selling rakes, hoes, milk or whatever it is they're selling, and those people then get taxed on it. What has the government done for those people individually?

I put on the table today in this part of the debate under opposition day that the rate of tax for hard-working people is a threshold we should look at. For instance, for families as we've described them, working people with children, they should raise the deduction for children. I think they should raise that deduction to \$8,000 or \$10,000 per child.

I've perhaps gone off the script here, in fact totally off the script, but I would say to you that—

Mr Christopherson: You've gone off the planet.

Mr O'Toole: No. Member from Hamilton West, I was respectful to you and all I expect you do is be quiet, not respectful.

I'm trying to make the argument that hard-working people should not be penalized. They should have a safe workplace. They should have their rights protected in the workplace, and those rights include statutory holidays, minimum hours and overtime, the other provisions in Bill 147. I'm sure the member from Northumberland is far more capable of articulating the main message than I am. I usually go off message.

What I'm saying is quite genuine and I mean it from the heart. I'm thinking of people in my community who are hard-working, where the mother and father are both working, where young people are working and trying to get a start. The most important thing is to have a job. The second thing is to have a fair tax system so that they're not paying—their first \$30,000 of income, or maybe it's \$25,000, shouldn't even have income tax.

The EI rate should be reduced. We've been arguing that with the federal minister for a long time, that the EI surplus should be given back to hard-working people.

The Canada pension, the way they're ramping that up, it's going up 9% this year and 9.1% next year. That's a tax on jobs. That's paid for by the employees and the employer.

I believe there are many more attacks that could be made to protect the worker, and the federal government isn't up to it. I challenge the Liberal Party, the opposition party, and the third party that is really the opposition party on this issue specifically, to keep pressing the government to cut taxes, employer taxes and income taxes, so that hard-working people get to enjoy the rewards of their labour, and to make the place of work safe and to protect their rights.

I'm anxious to leave as much time as possible, with some reluctance I might add, to the member from Northumberland. With that, thank you for the privilege of speaking today.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm certainly pleased on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to join the debate here on the opposition day motion presented by my colleague from Hamilton West, Mr Christopherson.

The motion is reflective, I know, of the commitment the member from Hamilton West has to working men and women. Although we disagree on some issues, I cannot argue with the commitment he has demonstrated here and in the time we spent on city council to the plight of the poor, particularly the working poor, and labour. I think this motion is a reflection of that and I congratulate him for bringing it forward.

One quick comment: my colleague across the floor from Durham was off on the federal government again. Let me remind him that the people of Canada spoke very clearly. I think we should put that page behind us and deal with provincial issues, day after day, here.

We will support the resolution today in principle. This resolution addresses a lot of issues that are important to Ontarians, particularly to the working poor and the most vulnerable in our communities. These are people who are often not represented by unions. These are often people who are struggling to meet daily financial necessities, people who are working hard under some very difficult circumstances and some very difficult conditions, simply struggling to survive. This resolution addresses that group of people.

Briefly, the Liberal caucus supports an increase in the minimum wage. We would consult with business and labour and look at a timetable and bring in a minimum wage that would reflect the real necessities of Ontarians today. This wage has not been raised in Ontario. We're starting to lag behind many jurisdictions. We believe an increase in the minimum wage is essential and we would work toward that through a phase-in period.

As to the reduction in the standard workweek, in the same way, unlike this government that has decided we're going to move back to 40, 50, 60 or 70 years ago, we believe a reduction in the workweek is a necessity in Ontario. We believe we need to move closer to the European model and not closer to the banana republic

countries this government often emulates when it comes to where labour and working conditions are at today.

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Again, we would look at the Quebec example, which has moved from a 44-hour workweek to 40. They phased it in, I think in 1996. It was 44 hours and it's now moved to 40 hours. Those types of changes, we believe, are necessary and we believe should be brought in over a period of time.

With regard to the one-year combined parental leave, of course we support that. I know this issue has been raised by my colleagues in the third party; we have raised this in the House. What I find interesting is that when this government brought this into their legislation, initially the Premier's reaction was, "Nobody is asking for this. We haven't had requests from women to bring this in." The legislation was passed in June. In October, the Minister of Labour said, "We don't have enough time. We weren't consulted early enough." Then after the public outpouring and the embarrassment this government had to face from realizing that women going on maternity leave in this province were going to be treated as second-class citizens compared to most other provinces across the country and compared to the stand of the federal government, you got dragged, kicking and screaming, into this. Don't take any credit for it. You don't deserve any credit for it. You should have had the guts to follow the leadership in June or July and bring it in at that time or bring in proposed legislation when the House resumed, instead of saying at first that it was not a big deal, it was not an issue, and then you had to be embarrassed into bringing it in. So we fully support that.

In regard to the 10 days of unpaid leave, we support that. We believe that we need to find ways of making this even longer, particularly with the nature of some of the illnesses that people have to deal with in their families every day. For example, the US Family and Medical Leave Act actually gives up to 12 weeks for this, so the Americans are much further ahead than we are there. When you look at this legislation, in principle we very much support the intent. We support where this is going.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about how we on this side of the House see labour relations and how the Americans—that's a slip-up but it's accurate to reflect what this government is moving toward. As the rest of the world continues to move toward better working conditions and better wages for people, this government is stuck in some type of time warp. I can't sit and not look at the issue of this government saying, "We don't think a minimum wage increase is a good idea, because it's not fair to business. It makes them uncompetitive; it doesn't help the bottom line."

Let's understand this: this government is saying clearly that people in this province, the working poor, the people who are struggling to get by, people who are barely making ends meet today, don't deserve any type of increase. Let's understand clearly that this government believes that people who are making \$6.85 an hour are making enough money, but members of provincial

Parliament, earning \$78,000 per year minimum, should get a 42% increase. Let's understand this—Ontarians understand this clearly, and I'll repeat it because it's important enough—the Mike Harris government believes that people who make \$6.85 an hour are paid adequately for the work they do across this province, but MPPs who make \$78,000 a year should get a 42% increase.

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: You notice the reaction. I hear the Minister of Community and Social Services heckling. Let me understand this. The minister is making over \$100,000 a year, heckling. The Minister of Community and Social Services, who is responsible for a 21% cut in welfare benefits, the man who is responsible for throwing people off welfare and on to the street, the man who believes that welfare recipients should be drug tested, that individual—so that the public at home knows, because they can't hear the heckling. If you're at home, you can't hear it. Understand that the Minister of Community and Social Services, who is responsible for cutting 21% off welfare benefits, disagrees with the fact that we have stated that people earning \$6.85 should be making more but agrees with the fact that MPPs making \$78,000, \$100,000 or \$110,000 should get a 42% increase. That is the reality of the debate we are facing here today.

You look at the legislation. You look at the facts. This is a government that believes the workweek in Ontario should be extended to 60 hours, that people should not work fewer hours, but that they should work more hours. This is a government that believes that the most vulnerable, who are working in difficult conditions for minimum wage, shouldn't have the protection of unions, they should be decertifying unions and it should be much more difficult for unions to be able to certify employers.

Clearly, this is an agenda—

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: I realize they're getting rattled. They're heckling over there. Obviously, when you hit a raw nerve it tends to get a reaction out of the government members. I understand that. But clearly the difference is this is a business agenda. Every single piece of legislation this government has brought in has been with the consultation of business. The ministers admit it. With much of the labour legislation, the minister said, "Yes, we consulted with business. Yes, business wants this." Exactly. This is what is driving the labour agenda. This decision on labour legislation by this government is not made in the cabinet room; it is made in the boardrooms on Bay Street. It is made by the folks who paid \$25,000 a table to attend the Mike Harris fundraiser. It is made by the lobbyists who are paid big bucks by big corporations to lobby this government.

This is the agenda. As we saw in the federal election a few days ago, the Stockwell Day, right-wing, Republican agenda is not going to be sold in the province of Ontario. We've made it clear. Most of those members across the floor were working hard—

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: The member from Brampton is all upset. He got upset yesterday with the liberal media because they could not elect one member in the 905 belt. They've worked hard for the Alliance and Stockwell Day and the agenda. I give them credit. I'm sorry, Speaker, I'm wrong; they doubled their numbers in Ontario: they went from one to two. The big agenda that the Tory government of Mike Harris, Bob Runciman and the rest of the cabinet members bought into failed miserably on Monday night. The people of Ontario saw clearly that the Stockwell Day agenda is not one for Ontario. That is one and the same as the Mike Harris agenda.

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: I know they're upset. I know they're upset because they're stuck again without Stockwell Day. They're stuck again with two members in the province of Ontario. I understand you're upset about that. I understand you're upset because the people of Ontario rejected your federal cousins outright on Monday night, as they're going to reject you outright in three years.

On this side of the House, we stand firmly on the side of working people. We stand firmly on the side of the working poor, while Mike Harris and his friends stand on the side of big business.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure to participate today. I want to focus on point number 3—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the government members in particular to please allow the members on the opposite side their opportunity to put their thoughts on the record, the same as they are doing for you.

Ms Martel: I want to focus on the one full year of combined pregnancy and parental leave with full job protection during the leave period. I was very proud that on November 2 I introduced a private member's bill, Bill 138, the Fair Parental Leave Act. It was a very simple but important bill—one line—that changed parental leave in the Employment Standards Act from 18 weeks to 35. The point of the bill, clearly, was to bring Ontario in line with other provinces that had already moved to extend job protection to match the extended parental leave that had been permitted by the federal government in its budget of 2000.

Why did I move the bill? Because it was painfully evident that the Harris government had no interest whatsoever in extending job protection to Ontario working families. They were clearly not interested in bringing Ontario in line with the federal government and any number of other provinces that had already made the change, to ensure that those Ontario families that took the full 50 weeks would not lose their jobs in this province as a consequence.

It was very clear the government had no interest because the Premier said it himself. He said this was not a priority for the Ontario government. He said that as early as the beginning of November. Then the Minister of Labour followed on that and said, "Well, we'll take a wait-and-see approach, even though the federal provisions kick in on December 31, 2000." Then the Min-

ister of Labour went on to say that the business community had very serious concerns about this, about extending job protection, and so he was going to ask for their input. It was interesting that he was certainly interested in the business community input, but he sure wasn't interested in hearing from Ontario families, was he? No, not at all.

Since it was clear that the government was only interested in listening to its business friends and Mike Harris wasn't interested at all in protecting Ontario working families, I moved that particular bill so that it could become a bill that people could respond to. And Ontario families certainly responded, and very quickly. Here's April Peterson from North Bay, Ontario, the Premier's home riding: "I would like to thank you," Ms Martel, "for tabling the private member's bill about one year parental leave. I would like you to know that the women and men I work with wrongly assumed the labour laws would automatically be changed to complement the changes in the federal policies. I and a number of my colleagues have phoned Mike Harris's office and told them that there is a demand for one year job protection. I have also e-mailed Chris Stockwell to tell him the same thing."

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Here's another one. Mary Lee Kapusty says, "I commend the NDP ... attempt to amend the Employment Standards Act extending parental leave.... I work with women both pre- and post-natally. In addition I also work in a preschool speech and language program. From this dual vantage point a secure, stable and predictable environment is vital to children. Extending parental leave in combination with maternity leave" would really help Ontario families. "I urge you and all your colleagues, whatever their political stripes, to seize this moment." Do the right thing.

The Reverend John Borthwick said the following: "I am surprised by the Premier's statement after reading a statement on the government's Web site that states: 'Premier Mike Harris said that his team at Queen's Park has a strong track record of initiatives and reforms to help Ontario's children grow and develop into healthy, happy and responsible adults.' Perhaps I am mistaken but extending parental leaves would go a long way to helping 'Ontario's children grow and develop into healthy, happy and responsible adults.'"

Finally, Richard King from Toronto wrote this to the Premier on November 7: "I was disappointed to read that your government does not consider giving families the choice to stay at home to look after their newborn for the first year of the child's life 'a priority.' I am aware of your government's commissioning of the report by Dr Fraser Mustard ... which explicitly recognized the importance of the early years of a child's life. Frankly, the position that your government is taking on this issue appears to be in direct contradiction to the Mustard report commissioned by you, and paid for by Ontario taxpayers," and of course it was.

I think the government got the same e-mails that I did and found out very clearly that this issue was a priority

for Ontario working families right across this province. What did the government do? The government has decided to hold Ontario working families hostage by giving them one year parental leave and then after they return to work to be clobbered by a 60-hour workweek, which will do nothing, absolutely nothing, to enhance the situation for working families in this province. I say specifically held hostage because it is clear that what the government has done is said to its business friends, "Bite the bullet, bite your tongue on the one year parental leave, and in return we will repay you by allowing you to have a 60-hour workweek in your place of employment." That's how Ontario working families are being held hostage by this government, and that clearly shows the contempt and the disdain with which this government treats Ontario working families, especially those with young children. It makes it absolutely clear.

You see, the message from the Mike Harris government is this: if you're in a position to take one year of parental leave, you'd better grab it, because after you return to work after that first year, you can kiss goodbye to seeing your families again because you will be faced with a 60-hour workweek from that point on. That is the choice that Ontario working families will be facing. That is absolutely the choice they are going to be facing. Ontario workers will face the choice that they can agree to do the 60 hours of work and they can kiss goodbye to their families or they can tell the employer that they are not going to work 60 hours and they can kiss goodbye to their jobs. That's the reality of workplaces in Ontario, especially in non-unionized workplaces in this province, because there is no balance of power in the workplace, especially in non-unionized shops.

If you have the audacity to go to your employer and say, "I don't want to work 60 hours this week," the employer will say, "Here's the door, my friend. I have 10 others who will. You can pack your bags and leave today." That's what happens in the workplace, and that's what families with newborn and newly adopted children are going to face after they use up their one year of parental leave. That's a fact. Anyone who doesn't think that's what's happening in the workplace is living on another planet.

I moved Bill 138 because it was one of the key recommendations of the Mustard and McCain report, the Early Years Study. While this government goes on at great length with lots of rhetoric about how they care about families, it is clear that this key recommendation of one year parental leave has been completely undermined by this government. I wonder how Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain feel, knowing that a key recommendation they have made about parental leave has been completely wiped out by this government's decision to move to a 60-hour workweek. Let's remember that McCain and Mustard talked about the early years: zero to six. While the parental leave covers zero to one, what happens now is that the 60-hour workweek covers one to six. There is nothing good about that for Ontario families,

there is nothing healthy about that for Ontario families, there is nothing helpful about that for Ontario families.

What we need is this: we need one year full parental leave with full job protection in an Ontario that has a 40-hour workweek. Then we would be doing something concrete, something beneficial, for Ontario families.

Mr Brian Coburn (Ottawa-Orléans): It's a pleasure for me to be able to speak to the resolution by the member for Hamilton West today. That resolution identifies a number of areas where obviously he doesn't think we've gone far enough.

This act was proclaimed I believe back in about 1968, and there hasn't really been any substantive change for about 25 years.

The other thing that's noticeable in our society today is that there is a changing economy and a new economy, and to meet that there are changes, and some rapid changes, in the workplace. When change is made, of course, there's some resistance to taking away from some of the things you're used to and introducing new criteria and new rules that are demanded of the new economy and businesses that are competing on a global basis.

Debating in here today is part of our democratic process, where in some instances whatever the government does, the opposition never thinks you go far enough, or you've gone too far.

This piece of legislation actually sets out basic working conditions for employers and employees in Ontario, including hours of work, vacation, public holidays, pregnancy and parental leave. It does give employees new rights and protections, and it provides employers and employees with new flexibility to meet those ever-changing conditions in the workplace. By modernizing the Employment Standards Act, it will bring workplaces more in tune with the demands of the 21st century.

Mr Christopherson: On a point of order, Speaker: The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour talked about the fact that they were going to speak very directly to the motion. That is in the rules. We're not debating Bill 147. It would be helpful if the member would speak to the matter at hand, which is the motion on the floor.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sure the member is intending to do that.

Mr Coburn: Thank you, Speaker. It's kind of normal in this place to be very selective on the other side when you jump up and raise points of order. I will speak directly to the issue that the member has raised in his resolution.

He talks about increasing the minimum wage. In Ontario certainly we're not leading the pack, but we're not at the tail end. We're about third in Canada in terms of minimum wage, and there's substantial and good reason for that. There's been a lot of harm done to our economy, for a variety of reasons. A lot of it can be blamed on previous governments and the economy. But what has happened since 1995 is that this government has worked extremely hard to bring renewed confidence to the workplace and to the businesses in the province of

Ontario, and that certainly has a ripple effect through our entire economy.

In order to do that, there's a fine balance to be achieved between the affordability of those who create jobs and their ability to generate returns on their investment so they can grow their business and create additional jobs. That, in a nutshell, is basically how the economy works. If you don't have a job, your unemployment rates rise, but if you do have a job—and it may not be at a minimum wage that would please the opposition or some members of our society. It is that fine balance, that you can do better if you do have a job.

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We've created with our initiatives and tax-cutting initiatives in this province in excess of 785,000 jobs since we came to power in 1995. That has created an atmosphere in the workplace that promotes investment and creates additional job opportunities. At some point in the future the timing may indeed be right that we look at increasing the minimum wage, but we feel that at the present time it is too delicate to try to tinker with, that it may upset the balance in a red-hot economy.

Just go back to when the former government, our predecessors, were in power. They had no regard for the economy and in fact had provided a 37% increase to the minimum wage while the economy was struggling. You know the result of that: the unemployment rate skyrocketed. There was absolutely no regard for that fine balance and return on investment to those who create jobs and the partnership that's created in the workplace between the employees and the employer.

There is much more than a neighbourhood competitiveness. It's a global competitiveness now, and that very much figures into the benefits that can be achieved in the workplace by employees. You talk about a standard workweek: a standard workweek in this province is 44 hours. That has been the law for a good while. Many union contracts, of course, have negotiated something less than that, or by agreement with employers. Employees still have the right to refuse work of more than 48 hours. Nothing has changed there and they still would receive overtime over 44 hours. Nothing has changed there. Time off instead of overtime pay for employees, if the employers agree, provides a convenience for not only the employee but maybe for the employer, to be able to satisfy some of the personal needs that you have in your day-to-day lives.

For the first time ever, new minimum universal daily and weekly rest periods protected by law are part of this legislation.

I have had, actually, the luxury of being raised on farm and then working out in the construction sector, working in the office sector, being involved in a union, being a shop steward, being the owner of my own business and also being a municipal politician and now legislator in the provincial assembly. Over those years, I have gained considerable and valuable experience from the people I've worked with. Certainly in the workplace, then and today, when you talk to people, the changing economy is

not something that you can just say is black and white. It's flexibility that's needed to be able to meet some of the demands in the workplace. For example, in the Ottawa area, with the extremely explosive growth of the high-tech sector, it's not a normal workday of eight hours a day. In fact, when we try to attract business to that area, the high-tech companies tell you that it is a workplace that is not even recognizable, given what we've experienced over the last 30 or 40 years in this country. It's people who have come in with specific expertise who are working, trying to keep companies on the leading edge so they can sell their product or their technology so that their business grows and they can ensure jobs. The minute they have one product on the market, they have to have something else right on the heels of it to stay competitive.

In the workplace, the things that the employees are demanding are to make sure there are 24-hour coffee shops, that there are recreational facilities—because they don't work just eight hours; they work a combination of hours, and some work much more than 10, 12, 14 hours a day. This legislation provides the flexibility for the employee and the employer to come to that agreement on something that helps build and strengthen the workplace, where they hope to achieve that remuneration that provides the quality of life they work so hard for.

My colleagues have touched, when we've had debate, on pregnancy and parental leave. That is included in this piece of legislation.

Family responsibility leave—what happens in the workplace today? There are many companies, very small companies, who create the bulk of the jobs in this province and in this country. Their agreements—"I need a few days off; I've had a death in the family"—are worked out between the employer and the employee, and that's a relationship that is developed in the workplace.

This puts into legislation that the death, illness, injury or medical emergency of an individual described in subsection (2) in the legislation, or an urgent matter that concerns an individual described in subsection (2), where it identifies specific situations—they do have the opportunity to have up to 10 days, for anyone working in a place of 50 employees or more. That's something new that has come into the workplace, and that is another change that has happened as a result of a changing workplace. Wouldn't it be nice if you could just say, *carte blanche*, "You can take off whenever you want"? But there has to be some stability in the workplace so the employer, the person who signs your cheque and gives you the money at the end of the week or the day, has the ability to make sure the company survives and keeps the job for you.

My colleague will use the few remaining minutes that are left.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : J'aimerais partager certaines de mes inquiétudes face à l'amendement au Employment Standards Act proposé par le ministre du Travail, M. Stockwell.

Il n'y a pas longtemps, j'ai donné mon point de vue au sujet du projet de loi 139 et des répercussions néfastes qu'il porte à la démocratie. J'ai tenté de soulever le fait que ce gouvernement qui parle constamment de sa bonne considération pour les gens de l'Ontario a complètement oublié ses mêmes Ontariens et Ontariennes lorsqu'il propose cet amendement.

Encore une fois, j'aimerais parler des actions du gouvernement Harris face au secteur de l'emploi et du bien-être des travailleurs et travailleuses de l'Ontario.

Of course, along with Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus, I support in principle the opposition motion, which is to amend the Employment Standards Act to include different steps toward creating family-friendly workplaces.

La proposition qu'avance le ministre Stockwell de prolonger la semaine de travail à 60 heures, soit 12 heures de plus que la limite actuelle de 48 heures, est un changement que Dalton McGuinty et le caucus Libéral refusent d'accepter. Je trouve vraiment que cet amendement va à l'encontre et au détriment de la famille et des enfants.

Pour un gouvernement qui prétend travailler pour les gens ordinaires, cette augmentation dans le nombre d'heures de travail s'avère complètement une contradiction de leurs principes. Ce seront, comme d'habitude, les patrons, les employeurs et les grandes entreprises qui en sortiront gagnants.

Bien sûr, le ministre Stockwell va nous dire que l'employé n'a pas à accepter les heures supplémentaires et qu'un patron ou une patronne ne pourra pas forcer un employé à travailler plus que le nombre d'heures actuelles. Mais en réalité, nous savons tous qu'en certaines instances, l'employé qui est demandé par son patron ou sa patronne de travailler des heures supplémentaires n'a pas vraiment de choix. Évidemment, la majorité des employeurs sont sympathiques aux besoins de leurs employés, mais que fait le ministre pour assurer qu'un employé qui refuse de travailler les heures supplémentaires ne soit pas puni ? Les ont-ils oubliés ? A-t-on pensé à les protéger à travers cet amendement ?

1700

The Harris government will attempt to convince us that we are living in an ideal world where employees who wish to make more money can work longer hours and everything will be fine. But unfortunately, reality—and this reality is one that this government seems to forget—is such that there are people in Ontario who are less fortunate than others and who live in poverty. These are the people of Ontario who do work for minimum or meagre wages. There are people in Ontario who have little money and who must work in unpleasant jobs that pay very little because they have no choice, and it is these low-wage workers whom the Harris government ignores in this amendment. These people, let me remind you, are often single parents or new Canadians who do not have large incomes but who live on what they have. These are the people of the working class who are most affected by this amendment. The option of not accepting

to work the extra hours does not exist for these people because they simply have too much to lose. These people are stuck. They cannot, on the one hand, refuse the extra working hours for fear of losing their job, but neither can they accept them, because they have other important responsibilities waiting for them at home or in their families. What a shame.

La relation entre employeur et employé dans le domaine du travail à bas salaire est vraiment déséquilibrée, tellement déséquilibrée qu'un employé n'a plus de vrai choix. Choisir entre travailler 60 heures ou refuser et risquer de perdre son emploi n'est pas un vrai choix. Les employeurs ont la puissance de l'autorité derrière eux. C'est pour ça que je dis que les employés doivent avoir aussi la puissance de la loi de leur côté. C'est ce qu'on appelle un équilibre. Avec cet amendement, le ministre Stockwell attaque de façon vicieuse le seul moyen qu'un employé a à sa disposition pour se défendre contre un employeur qui souvent abuse de son autorité.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal caucus have other concerns about the 60-hour workweek amendment. We in the Liberal caucus are concerned with the well-being of Ontario families and we are very worried that by putting forth this amendment, the Harris government is putting Ontario families and children at risk. Obviously, when parents are working 60 rather than 48 hours a work, their time at home is reduced. This equates to almost an extra two hours a day every day, seven days a week, that parents will have to spend away from their children. For many families this might mean that a mother may have less time to read a book with her son. It may mean that a father will have less time to help his daughter with her geography lesson. It might mean that a parent will have less time to teach his or her child about music or the arts. Perhaps if this government hadn't cut back drastically on funding for music and art education in the classroom, parents would not need this extra time, but I guess this is a debate for another day.

What is clear is that while Premier Harris and this government talk about how much they respect families and are concerned for the well-being of Ontarians, they legislate in a completely different manner. Extending the workweek to allow 60 hours of work does nothing to benefit families.

Le premier ministre Harris et le ministre Stockwell peuvent parler autant qu'ils voudront de comment leurs politiques aideront les familles et les gens ordinaires, mais nous savons tous et toutes que ce qu'ils disent et ce qu'ils font sont deux choses complètement différentes.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I certainly appreciate the opportunity to finish up the time for our party, the government, on this particular bill.

This is really about doing what we said we would do. It's a commitment that we made in the Blueprint and we're certainly following through. Our government does care about how many hours people work. Our government does care about whether parents get to see their children and how much time they have with their children and we do care about the time that people need

to spend with their families. This is all very important to our government.

What this bill is doing and what I hear being opposed over here is really about expanding worker's rights. What's going on here hasn't been just pulled out of the air, pulled out of a magic hat, pulled from the sky. It's been drawn from the Blueprint. I hear some of the peekaboo Liberals across the aisle here; I really have to wonder what is their hidden agenda.

On page 14 of the Blueprint, dropping back to pick up something that wasn't covered earlier, I just want to quote to you, "With the way the workplace is changing, more workers and companies want to set up arrangements other than the traditional Monday-to-Friday workweek. We'll give workers and employers more flexibility in designing work arrangements to meet their needs, such as flex-time or four-day workweeks."

This is just one example, and I hear a lot of people saying this, especially people from small-town Ontario, rural Ontario, who work here in the big city of Toronto. They would like to work four days a week and then have a three-day weekend. It saves the cost of commuting in and it just makes so much sense, but it sounds like the third party over here really doesn't understand and they're opposed to that. Of course I understand they're the third party. The official opposition, as far as I'm concerned, is the only place we're getting any true opposition. It's sort of like they're jumping on somebody's head and then yelling that it's hurting their foot.

This is indeed about honouring a commitment and this is what the good people of Ontario voted for and we want to honour their request and carry it forward on their behalf. This is about—

Mr Christopherson: What's the matter? Can't you debate the motion?

Mr Galt: We'll debate your motion. Let's talk about the \$7.50 they're proposing. I have spent a lot of time with the farmers in Northumberland. I should tell you about this. When we went around and visited those with apple orchards, we came back with one very strong message. Actually there were two. One was, "Don't stop the offshore workers from coming to Ontario to pick the crops here in Ontario because we just can't get people here to work," and secondly, "Whatever you do, don't increase the minimum wage because if you do we're going to have to tear out these apple trees." They're in big trouble now. "We're going to have to give up the strawberries, we're going to have to give up the turnips." That's the situation we're in. What the member from Hamilton West is suggesting—

Mr Christopherson: Argue to roll it back then.

Mr Galt: Let's go back to 1995. Our commitment was to freeze it and that's what we're holding to until the other areas catch up, and we're still holding to that. I think that's important to honour a commitment. We have a hallmark in this government of doing what we said we would do. I'm just sharing with the member from Hamilton West what the farmers in my area are telling me. I think it's pretty important that we recognize what

the farmers of Ontario need, otherwise they're just not going to be there. The food will not be produced in this great province of Ontario.

A lot of what's in here is about working together and having the union work with the employer and develop their own personalized workweek. They're sounding off about a 60-hour workweek. What they're trying to do is trade on emotionalism within the union ranks, so they get all upset, when in fact you don't understand at all what's going on in that particular bill.

I think it's also that they don't seem to understand the combined pregnancy and parental leave. That's what we're doing. That's what's in a bill that's going through this Legislature that they just supported, but obviously, when they don't support the bill, I guess they don't support that piece of legislation.

That is something that a fair number of small businesses in my area are complaining about. They're saying it's going to be extremely difficult when we have two or three employees, one leaves and we have to guarantee a space when that other employee comes back. It makes it very difficult in small-town Ontario and small businesses.

Mr Christopherson: What about their sick kids? Their kids are just as sick.

1710

Mr Galt: Then I look here at the 10 unpaid days for family responsibility. Haven't you read the bill we're bringing in? Why would you have that in your motion? Do you not understand the bill? Have a look, sir.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: If the member for Hamilton West would just stop screaming for a few minutes he might hear the comments I'm making. It's in the bill. It's in the Blueprint.

Interjection.

Mr Galt: It's in the bill; it's a commitment in the Blueprint. We're following through exactly as we said we would. I think it's just unfortunate; if the members in the opposition would read the bill they'd have some idea what is going on, rather than bringing forth a resolution to try and stir up the rank-and-file people out in rural Ontario. Again, we are following through on our commitments.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West will withdraw the comment he made. I didn't stop it because I wanted to give the member time to finish off. You made a comment that was unparliamentary. I'd ask you to withdraw it.

Mr Christopherson: I really didn't, but if I did, I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: What did I say?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): If I may have the floor, I'm delighted to speak to this resolution that has been put forward by my friends in the NDP. I think the general thrust of the resolution is something that I could support, however, there are some problems associated with it.

I would like to suggest that the increase in the minimum wage is certainly something I could support, but have some small concerns about at the present time derailing any kind of momentum that has been building in terms of job creation with respect to small businesses. The concern I have is with respect to the tourism industry, of course, and as well with summer jobs etc that are associated mostly with students. I would not want to see any kind of erosion in job creation as a result of the increase in the minimum wage—which I honestly don't think is going to happen. At the present time we have a real increase in economic growth. We certainly have positive productivity gains which can result in improvements generally economically and as a result I think an increase in the minimum wage can be sustained at the present time economically. I think it's important to be concerned—

Mr Christopherson: So when do we raise it, in a recession?

Mr Cordiano: I think it's important to be somewhat concerned about the impact this will have on small businesses, particularly in the tourism industry and in industries associated with tourism; the restaurant industry as well would be concerned about this.

With respect to the rest, though, I think some people have commented with regard to the increase in the number of hours worked during the workweek, changes to the Employment Standards Act. This is a fundamentally retrograde kind of initiative by the government, going back in time. It's a backward step.

There is no doubt that the pressures on people who work for a living have increased enormously. The pressures have increased with respect to their time. There isn't enough time to do the things that are required for the average person out there—looking after children, looking after adult parents, looking after all sorts of requirements and responsibilities that a family faces these days. I speak from some experience with regard to that. It is quite difficult.

The naïve assumption that somehow an employee can dictate to the employer, that they can come to an accommodation with the employer that they would not work additional hours and still hold on to their jobs or still be held in some kind of regard with respect to the employer is simply not going to happen. There is a real problem associated with an employee single-handedly going to the employer and negotiating the terms of employment on an individual-by-individual basis, because that's what this contemplates.

In a situation where you have collective bargaining agreements, obviously that is not of concern. These things will be negotiated. But in workplaces where there are no collective agreements in place, the individual simply doesn't have the leverage to deal with the employer. So I fail to see how this quaint notion that there has to be agreement on the part of the employee to work those additional hours and that this would be resolved with the employer—by virtue of the fact that the employer asks the employee, there's an implied request and certainly the

employee would have to agree with the employer, otherwise they'd be facing difficult circumstances in their employment. I think that is a realistic assumption of what might occur in this circumstance.

I don't believe for an instant that every employee has any kind of leverage over their employer to negotiate that on an individual basis. It's simply not going to happen out there. That may happen in the case of software programmers at the high end of the workplace, but it's not going to happen with respect to these minimum wage workers who are at the low end of the scale. You're going to have these problems that aren't quite contemplated, and if they are, I say to the government, think about it very carefully. If that's what you intend to have happen, that's not what's going to happen and I think it's rather naïve. Or maybe there's really an intention to have the employers gain the upper hand and to force workers to work additional hours. Rather than going out and hiring additional workers, it's a much cheaper proposition to allow your current employees to work additional hours. So that simply doesn't work.

I think when you examine this in the clear light of day you will find that the Employment Standards Act amendments that are being contemplated would have the effect of increasing the workweek, not the opposite impact. Certainly most people today would say that what they're looking for, the most recent studies that have been conducted by employers, is the additional flexibility and time off from work. I think that's the number one request of employees today, looking at their workplaces and what would make them happier. It's not additional pay, necessarily, for those who are earning good salaries—and there are many people out there in this prosperous economy who are doing just that. But what they're really looking for is some flexibility and some time off, which they find almost impossible to achieve in this growth economy.

The other concern I have is with pro-rated benefits for part-time workers. This is a difficult issue. Which employees in the workplace who are working part-time are going to derive these kinds of benefits? Is it going to be those who are in organized workplaces that have collective agreements in place? What's going to happen to those who are not in organized workplaces? Their chances of receiving pro-rated benefits are next to nil unless we mandate this, and the chances of this resolution going anywhere are unlikely.

What I'm suggesting to you is that making a selection here is going to be very difficult. The workplaces that do have benefits are usually those that are involved in collective agreements, and those most likely to have benefits at the present time are larger firms that have those kinds of benefits in the first place. Most small businesses do not. Those are the concerns I have with respect to this resolution.

1720

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very happy to speak in support in principle of the resolution that is before us

today. I would like to make some comment about some of the statements that have been made.

I would like to refer to the comment made by the member for Northumberland. He so regularly stands and makes reference to what is said on this side of the House. Earlier today he suggested that members on this side of the House have a hidden agenda. I would just caution the member for Northumberland not to judge the members on this side of the House by his own standards. There is no hidden agenda on this side of the House. I think we are very clear in terms of our position on behalf of the people and the families of Ontario.

I find it interesting that the member from Northumberland is also very quick to stand and suggest that the minimum wage is sufficient for families in Ontario and that there's no need for an increase in the \$6.85-an-hour wage—this coming from the side of the House that wanted to give themselves a 42% increase in salary. Shame on you. You can stand and say to the people of Ontario that you're worth a 42% increase and someone who makes \$6.85 an hour doesn't deserve a raise? Do you know what \$6.85 means on an annual salary? It means \$12,700. You're saying that someone who makes \$12,700 a year doesn't deserve a raise, but you do. That's not the agenda on this side of the House, I'm proud to say. That's not what we're standing for here.

We are saying, in principle, that there should be an increase in the minimum wage. We believe that. We should consult with business and with the workers of Ontario to establish what that rate should be, and that rate should be phased in over four years. That's our agenda. We're very clear; we're very upfront. There is nothing hidden about it.

With regard to the reduction in the standard work-week, again, this is an issue we believe should be discussed with business and workers and should be phased in over four years.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the members to please calm down. I can't hear the speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Hamilton East, I can't hear your colleague.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I've touched a nerve on the other side of the House and created quite a reaction.

As critic for children, I think it's important to make a comment with regard to the part of the resolution that relates to the extension of parental leave. This is very much in keeping with the recommendation made by Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain in the Early Years Study. I commend the leadership that was taken by the federal government, which first acted to extend parental leave to 50 weeks. It's regrettable that this government had to be dragged kicking and screaming—

Interjection.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Yes, that's the government that was elected to a new majority, a significant majority, this week. But even before it was elected, it did demonstrate

the leadership to extend parental leave to 50 weeks. The Premier of this province had indicated in this House that he had not been made aware that it was a priority for the people of Ontario. I'm especially pleased that this opposition was able to have the Premier understand how very wrong he was in that statement, that indeed the people of Ontario do see it as a priority. I was deluged with calls in my office, and also with letters, that for working families in Ontario the extension of parental leave to 50 weeks is very important.

Also, with regard to that part of this resolution we're debating which makes reference to unpaid days of family responsibility, an issue I believe needs to be supported by this government, I'm not so sure I'm prepared to limit it to 10 days. I would suggest it's an issue that should be debated between an employee and an employer. Different employers are able to be flexible in different ways. When family members or loved ones are ill and workers have a need to be away from their place of work for perhaps an extended period of time, I think it's totally appropriate that there would be some accommodation made, that there would be some expectation within the labour laws that when possible an employer would be able to accommodate the family needs. That is very important and very supportable. I would just caution perhaps not to restrict it to 10 days. Perhaps there might be situations where more time would be required, especially if it were the case of a very near and dear loved one, a child especially, so a parent would have an opportunity to have time to spend with a sick child.

With regard to pro-rated benefits for part-time employees, again, I think it's totally appropriate that the government would make this accommodation—for those people in Ontario who find there is a need within their family situation or in their own personal situation that they engage in part-time work—so that they are also able to enjoy benefits. I think it's unfortunate that someone who may not have a full-time schedule would not be able to avail themselves of benefits. The reality in today's workplace as well is that there are fewer and fewer opportunities for full-time employment. More and more, the trend is toward part-time employment, and more and more families are not able to access benefits because, in some cases, both members of the family are working in a part-time situation. This is really most unfortunate for families, and also, I would suggest, for children, who sometimes are not able to be provided with the kind of medical or dental services or drug benefits that might be afforded because their parents work but they don't work full-time.

The other thing, too, is that in many cases, parents work almost a full-time schedule but usually are short just enough hours to prevent them from accessing a benefits package. I think it's important that we respect that all families in Ontario where parents are working should have access to plans when at all possible.

I'm very happy to have had the opportunity to speak to this resolution and perhaps to have the government understand that there continue to be a number of avenues

for you to improve the work situation, not just for families, but in this particular resolution, particularly families in Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was looking at the resolution. I thought the most important part of the resolution may be the final part, because there's no question that we haven't had the kind of widespread consultation on labour laws in this province that is necessary before we move in a specific direction. The government certainly has not provided the kind of consultation that is necessary with all parties who are affected by labour legislation. The final portion of this resolution says "That this House calls on the government to consult the people of Ontario on further measures designed to help working Ontarians achieve a better balance between work and family responsibilities."

It also mentions, "That this House demands that the government rebuild the Ministry of Labour's enforcement capacity by hiring new officers to fill all the employment standards positions that have been cut since 1995." I can very much relate to the cuts that have taken place in the Ministry of Labour because they remind me of the cuts that have been taken in the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources and conservation authorities—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I should tell the member who is telling me to speak to the motion that the motion says, "That this House demands that the government rebuild the Ministry of Labour's enforcement capacity by hiring new officers to fill all the employment standards positions that have been cut since 1995." I'm talking about cuts to government ministries and comparing the cuts that have taken place in the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources and, of course, to conservation authorities.

We know the consequences. We drastically increase the risk of a tragedy happening, in this case in the workplace, by cutting the number of inspectors and the staff of the Ministry of Labour. We all know there have been cuts to the Office of the Worker Adviser. These are individuals who are there to assist people who have problems with what we used to call Workers' Compensation Board problems, now the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, WSIB. We recognized that help was necessary, particularly for people who are not able to be represented by union representation. Where there was union representation with people and expertise in that field, that was carried out in a responsible and thorough fashion, but there are a number of people who don't have that kind of representation because they're in non-union shops or non-union workplaces. The Office of the Worker Adviser was extremely important to those individuals and continues to be so.

1730

But if we look at the inspectors, we need inspectors to go around to workplaces to ensure there are not violations of safety considerations within that workplace. They're there to investigate complaints. They have to be

there to do surprise inspections from time to time. All of us gather on one day of the year, though we think about it all days of the year, to think about and commemorate those who have been killed in accidents in the workplace, and often there is a list of people who have been killed in the previous year in our specific jurisdictions or specific parts of the province that is read to us and the tragic circumstances surrounding them. That's why it's important to have Ministry of Labour staff available.

Also, we would all know that if you try to deal with your local Ministry of Labour office, there are fewer people today to deal with specific complaints. Whether they're coming from employees or employers, there simply isn't the staff there. My contention is that most Ontarians want those kinds of services which this government has removed and that they're prepared to forgo tax increases, particularly for the very rich people in the province, so that we continue to have those services available. We may not have to worry if they're very wealthy people, they're often not dealing with a Ministry of Labour office, but people who have lost their jobs, either they've been fired for some reason, there has been a layoff, the company has gone bankrupt or there's some reason they have a complaint that they need Ministry of Labour help with, they simply have to get into a very long lineup. I think that provision within this resolution is an important provision.

But I go back to the consultation that is called for in this resolution. We really need it. I can recall, having been a member of this House since 1977, that the Davis administration brought in some labour legislation. It was marked by fairness and balance. Yes, labour was not entirely happy with some of that legislation; nor were employers, management in other words, entirely happy with it. Bill Davis and his various labour ministers, generally speaking, tried to bring about balance in the workplace. That's what generally brings about peace and contentment in the workplace.

What has happened is that this government has moved substantially to the right; that is, taking away many provisions that have been beneficial to people who are in the workplace—I'm talking about employees now—and giving those to employers. What's needed is a widespread consultation where people sit down—people in the labour movement are very conscious of the need to be competitive. I know people on the other side don't always think that's true. They know when they're dealing with a collective agreement—watch the collective agreements that are reached in difficult economic times and those which are reached in booming economic times. I think you will recognize that the people negotiating on behalf of employees are cognizant of the ability of the employer to pay and tend to be much more moderate in their requests or their demands in those periods of time than they are when we're in a booming economy and they see profits increasing dramatically and they see others getting a substantial increase in compensation. So that's important.

We have proposed, as a party, that there be an opportunity for people to have medical leave. For instance,

someone in the family may be a terminal patient. Families are much smaller today. There was a time when you had a very large family and some of the people in the family may not have been in the workplace, so it was easier—it was never easy, but it was easier for those individuals to look after often a parent or another person in the family who might be seriously ill or even a terminal patient. We think it would be wise to have that provision for a leave in that regard. Suggested in this resolution, similar to what the government has suggested in one of its labour bills, is that there be 10 unpaid days of family responsibility leave for all employees, because there are emergency circumstances. Notice it says “unpaid.” But there are circumstances that arise where people have to look after families.

Take a look at the size of the families of most members in this House. They’re significantly larger than families that are coming up today. It used to be that it was nothing to have four and five and six kids in a family. Today it is normal to have one or two children in a family. Not that it’s abnormal to have more or fewer, but that’s the norm today; that’s the average today that we see. That means there are fewer people within the family itself to look after folks who have an unfortunate circumstance arising, be it an illness of some kind or an emergency of some kind. That affects most families out there, so I think that provision is good.

We haven’t had an increase in the minimum wage for a long period of time. The resolution by the third party says “an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.50 per hour.” It doesn’t say “tomorrow”; it doesn’t say “next week.” It’s a suggestion that we go to \$7.50 an hour. Presumably there could be a phase-in of that amount. But what we haven’t seen is an increase. We have not seen an increase. I don’t know whether the member for Hamilton West forgot to put in or he was contemplating a phasing-in period of time, but I just look at what it says. I’m trying to read exactly what it says in here.

I think the member would agree with me that many others have had an increase, people who have had representation in the workplace or people who have the power to increase their own pay. One of our members suggested that Premier Harris wanted a 42% increase for members of the Ontario Legislature. When they look at that, you see, they compare it to what has happened with the minimum wage and say there’s a need for significant movement in that regard.

I think what is suggested in this resolution, although some members may not agree with everything in it, is certainly acceptable to me.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I’m pleased to participate in this debate because I think this is the debate that should be happening in Ontario today, rather than the government forcing through what is in effect a 60-hour workweek.

I just want to comment on the government’s proposal for a 60-hour workweek. Let me say that those of us out there in the real world of work know that’s what this is about. We know that workers who work in non-unionized

workplaces can now essentially be told, “You’re working a 60-hour workweek, and if you’re not prepared to work 60 hours, goodbye.” That’s what this means. Employers know that’s what this means, and employers are going to act on it and implement it in exactly that way. This is, in effect, a government rolling back the clock at least 50 years. In fact, the only other government in the world right now which is moving toward a 60-hour workweek is the government in Russia. The current government in Russia is moving, in effect, from a 40-hour workweek to a 56-hour workweek, putting Russia back in the condition that it was in under the czar. I can only conclude that the Premier and his colleagues here and the government believe that moving back to working conditions that existed under the czar in Russia 100 years ago is somehow progressive and positive. Well, it’s not. It is moving in exactly the wrong direction.

What this package is all about is to recognize what’s really happening out there in the so-called new economy. We know that in the so-called new economy the one factor which makes it all work, makes it all turn around, is the talent of people. We now have an economy which depends upon the skill, the ability, the knowledge of people more than it depends upon cheap natural resources or more than it depends upon nearness to a market or more than it depends upon having your own captive pool of capital. We’re now in an economy where the most important, central ingredient is people. Therefore what we should be doing, as a society, is putting in place the supportive tools which will help people access better training, which will help people to become more productive, which will help people to make more thoughtful decisions in terms of the workplace and which will help people to meet their other responsibilities in terms of being parents and citizens.

1740

But you can’t do that with a 60-hour workweek. It means you can’t look after your family responsibilities. It takes time away from being a citizen. It means that you essentially become the next thing to a slave to the workplace. A 60-hour workweek is not supportive of a more productive society; it is not supportive of a more productive new economy; it is in fact an idea out of the old economy. And that’s truly where this government’s head is at: in a low-wage, low-productivity economy.

If people are going to be productive, then they need things like adequate parental leave. Then things like emergency time off to take care of family crises or family problems should be extended to all workers, not just workers in workplaces with more than 50 employees. Child care, so that you know that your children are going to be adequately cared for while you’re at work, has to be on the agenda as well.

The minimum wage has now been frozen in this province for six years. We’ve had six years of incredible rent increases. We’ve had six years of increases in the price of heating fuel and gasoline. We’ve had increases in the cost of food. We’ve had a government that has hit working families with more user fees, higher user fees, hidden

user fees, and yet the minimum wage has been frozen for six years.

The government would say, "This is a good thing." They would say, "It's a good thing to have a low-wage economy." I challenge anybody in the Conservative benches to show that the low-wage economies in Central America or the low-wage economies in Africa or the low-wage economies in what used to be part of the Soviet Union or the Eastern bloc have in any way been productive. Low-wage economies cannot allow you, do not allow you to develop the kinds of productive institutions and productive relationships that need to happen. Low-wage economies don't allow you to have a good health care system, but you need a good health care system if people are going to be productive. Low-wage economies don't allow you to have a good education system, but you can't take part in the new economy unless you have a good education system.

But we have a government that is ideologically wedded to freezing the wages of the lowest-paid people in the province. For a government that often refers to the United States, I wish they'd follow their own ideological argument. The Americans have raised the minimum wage at the federal level twice in the last four years by substantial amounts, and the studies that have been done on the effect of increasing the minimum wage in the United States all show that it's had a positive effect. It hasn't contributed to inflation—inflation numbers continue to be very low, despite the substantial increases in the minimum wage—nor has it contributed to what the Conservatives always trot out: "Oh, it will result in job losses." In fact, it's had the opposite effect.

Putting more money in the pockets of the lowest-paid workers means that they have more money to spend in the local community on the essentials like paying the rent, like purchasing food, like purchasing other essentials that make the local economy go around. Increasing the minimum wage would in fact be of great benefit to the small business operators in all kinds of local economies. If you think about it, it is only logical. People who work for the minimum wage can't afford to take a vacation in Florida. They can't afford to own a time-share in California. In fact, in many cases they can't afford to go to the next community over, whether it's 50 kilometres away or 100 kilometres away, to do their shopping. They make their purchases in the local community and any money that they get in their pockets, they spend. They can't save it. They don't have an adequate income to save. They spend it almost immediately in the local economy. So if you want to help the local economy, if you want to be more supportive of small business in the local economy, if you want to ensure that there are more people going into the food store, more people going into the furniture store, more people purchasing clothing and the other necessities of life, increase the minimum wage.

There is a huge disconnect between what this government says and what is actually happening out there. This government says that providing for a maximum 60-hour

workweek won't result in a 60-hour workweek, but it will. There are employers out there who will immediately jump on it and say, "You're working 60 hours," and that competitive positioning will force other employers to do the same or to do similar. Freezing the minimum wage means that the lowest-paid workers in the province, of which there are at least 300,000, cannot fully participate and cannot fully contribute to the economy or to the community.

What we have put forward here is a package which looks at minimum wage, which says that the standard workweek should be 40 hours and beyond that should be overtime, which provides adequate parental leave, which provides adequate family crisis leave, and which also looks toward the other essentials of a modern economy: access to training, access to adequate child care, access to the other employment opportunities which help us all to become more productive. We're very pleased to be able to put this initiative forward because we believe these kinds of initiatives for the real world of work are long overdue in the province now.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Christopherson moves "That, in the opinion of this House, the government should stop its attacks on the hard-won achievements of working Ontarians, and instead amend the Employment Standards Act to include the following steps toward creating family-friendly workplaces."

Mr Gill: Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense?

Interjections: No.

The Speaker: "—an increase in the minimum wage to \$7.50 per hour;

"—a reduction of the standard workweek, after which overtime premiums apply, from 44 to 40 hours and the right to refuse overtime in excess of the new standard workweek;

"—one full year of combined pregnancy and parental leave, with full job protection during the leave period;

"—10 unpaid days of family responsibility leave for all employees;

"—pro-rated benefits for part-time workers; and

"That this House demands that the government rebuild the Ministry of Labour's enforcement capacity by hiring new officers to fill all the employment standards positions that have been cut since 1995; and

"That this House calls on the government to consult the people of Ontario on further measures designed to help working Ontarians achieve a better balance between work and family responsibilities."

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Speaker: Mr Christopherson has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Pupatello, Sandra
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Christopherson, David	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley	

Chudleigh, Ted	Kells, Morley
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John

Spina, Joseph
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

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

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 29; the nays are 46.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm.

The House adjourned at 1801.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		
Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough South / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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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COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

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Gilles Bisson, Alvin Curling, Gerard Kennedy,
Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole, Steve Peters,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
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Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

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Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Steve Gilchrist, Dave Levac,
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Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tasca, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
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**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, Bill Murdoch
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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