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des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 17 October 2001

Mercredi 17 octobre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 17 October 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 17 octobre 2001

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): Mr Speaker, I understand there has been discussion among the House leaders' offices, and I would like to ask for unanimous consent to move a motion regarding the terms of this evening's debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: I move, that G109 be called as the first order of the day this evening;

That the remainder of the sessional day shall be spent debating the bill, at which time the Speaker shall put the question without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote may be deferred.

That, at the conclusion of the second reading stage of the bill, the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government;

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet in Toronto for up to two days for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

That the standing committee on general government shall report the bill back to the House not later than November 1, 2001.

The Acting Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed.

VITAL STATISTICS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT
(SECURITY OF DOCUMENTS), 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES STATISTIQUES DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL
(SÉCURITÉ DES DOCUMENTS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 16, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 109, An Act to enhance the security of vital statistics documents and to provide for certain administrative changes to the vital statistics registration system / Projet de loi 109, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des documents de l'état civil et prévoyant certaines modifications administratives au système d'enregistrement des statistiques de l'état civil.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): To bring you up to date, Mr Christopherson had just finished his debate. There would be comments and questions on that, but since he is not here, we'll dispense with that and we will move around in clockwise order to my right. Further debate?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I will be sharing my time this evening with the member from Ottawa Centre.

Bill 109, the Vital Statistics Statute Law Amendment Act, is a very important piece of legislation. I think it once again demonstrates that there are opportunities in this chamber where we can work together collectively as three parties. I think it's important to let the public know that there are certain issues we all recognize as being of prime importance to the citizens of Ontario, and that there are times when we need to act in a non-partisan way.

What we're seeing in front of us this evening is a piece of legislation that has come forward as a result of the tragic events that took place in New York and Washington on September 11. Out of that event and a heightened awareness on all our parts of concerns about security, our leader, Dalton McGuinty, raised the question of birth certificates. As every one of us in this Legislature knows, our offices are visited by constituents on a regular basis who, for whatever reason, have lost documents or had documents stolen. You need a birth certificate to begin the process of repatriating your documents.

All our constituency offices have provided the service of not only providing the forms, but in my own constituency office, as an example, we actually provided a service to ensure that every two weeks we would go and pick up birth certificates for individuals. We didn't question anybody when they came in. We would take it at face value. The individual would fill out the form, provide \$15 or \$30 if they required an immediate birth certificate, and we provided that service.

1850

At the time, following September 11, Dalton McGuinty asked a question of Mr Sterling and it became very evident that this was a process that required some change, a process that needed to have some loopholes closed. The government, in response to Dalton's questioning, acted quickly to implement the change. It's important to recognize that this change is a positive step. I'm going to comment in a few moments on some things that, on reading the legislation, weren't clear to me. I'm

hoping somebody from the government side or at least from the minister's office is listening to this debate this evening or will be reading the Hansard tomorrow and will clarify it or definitely deal with it at the committee level.

It's important to recognize that with the changes, an applicant for a birth certificate is going to require a guarantor to corroborate the identity of the applicant. This is one of the points I'd like to see not only clearly defined in the legislation, but hopefully clarified at the committee level because this is an important service that all 103 of our offices provide in ensuring that we help facilitate the acquisition of birth certificates for individuals.

Right now, with the requirement of a guarantor, every one of us in this room, all MPPs, are guarantors. It allows us the opportunity to witness documents. It allows us the opportunity to sign an individual's passport application if we know the individual. What we need clarified is that MPPs can continue to provide that service. If we know the individual in front of us, can we, as MPPs, act as guarantors?

Another question I would like to raise is that I'm sure many of my colleagues in this House this evening have individuals in their offices who are commissionaires. As we all know, we have a number of individuals who come into our office, be it a vehicle transfer, the certification of a true photocopy, and we as MPPs can witness that, but we also have individuals in our office—I do. Liz Haselbah in my office is a commissionaire. On those days when I'm not in my office and somebody comes in requiring a document to be witnessed, Liz can do that on my behalf. I think we need clarification with this legislation that an individual like Liz in my office can continue to provide that service. I hope that can be clarified in this legislation.

It's important that we recognize the provision in this that the registrar general be notified when a document is lost. I would hope that with other provincial documents, be it a health card, as an example, if that provision is not already in place with health cards, we do that. I hope we can work collaboratively to deal with issues, say a social insurance number, to ensure that the federal government is notified in the event of the loss of a SIN card.

I think too that this proposed legislation limits the number of birth certificates and certified copies of birth registration that may be issued, to one of each.

I would hope the committee or possibly the minister would clarify this question. We've seen over the past 25 years, since the movie *Roots*, a great interest in genealogy. A lot of people are interested in where they come from. An individual conducting genealogical research often goes to the registrar general's office to find particular documents, be they for birth, death or marriage. As part of their genealogical research, they want to have a copy of a birth certificate that they can include in their family history. So I hope there are provisions that somebody who is conducting genuine genealogical research

isn't in any way going to be prevented from gaining access to this information.

I want to point out another issue: many of us represent ridings that have community hospitals or regional hospitals where, on an annual basis, many young people are brought into this world. I just want to go on the record this evening that a number of constituents of my riding use the services of London hospitals and use the services of the London Health Sciences Centre if their child has become ill. Recently, the London Health Sciences Centre has announced a number of cuts—18 program cuts in all—to services that the hospital provides. One of those services is the pediatric cardiology program. I think this is an irresponsible decision that the hospital board has made, in taking away and cancelling this service in London and forcing young families to travel to Toronto or to Hamilton. We saw as recently as today, as reported in the *London Free Press*, a young family with a new child who required medical care, and that child was not able to get into a hospital in Toronto or a hospital in Hamilton. They had to come to London. So I would urge the board to reconsider the decisions they've made with pediatric services, the decisions they've made with the burn unit, the decisions they've made with the cardiology replacement program, the decisions they've made with the endovascular aneurysm program. Those are programs that are important to the citizens of southwestern Ontario.

I think it's important that we collectively support this legislation this evening, and I thank Dalton McGuinty for bringing this to the attention of the House so we can ensure we provide the best services for our citizens in Ontario.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm happy to share this time with my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London, who I thought made a few good points in terms of things that should be looked at in committee.

I would say at the outset that it took the September 11 experience for us to do a review and take a second look at things in a different light. As my colleague has pointed out, and as all members of the House will know, I would say pretty well on a weekly basis people come in for document changes, changes of name, verification of birth certificates. Our leader, Dalton McGuinty, raised this in the House, and rightly so. I don't say that in any partisan sense, except to say that Mr McGuinty, being the astute person he is, and having a sense of what is happening in Ontario, had identified something that was in need of change.

I will go through a few examples—and this, perhaps, would be representative, in some cases, of the diversity of Ontario. The *Windsor Star* commented on the improvement in security for birth certificates, and it goes on to explain the questions that were asked and the response by government, and finally the government—I shouldn't say "finally"—the government, the minister, came back in fairly short order to respond, "Yes, indeed, there is room related to our documents to improve the security of those by the measures that are outlined in Bill 109."

1900

The North Bay Nugget—I'm sure the Premier would be faithfully reading this paper every day—even talks about the issue of identification, and is in support. Most of these are editorial comments, so they represent the newspapers in different parts: the Windsor Star, the North Bay Nugget and the Peterborough Examiner have similar reports; the Chatham Daily News, the Toronto Star—which picks up a lot of ridings in this province, and of course the city—the Toronto Sun—I'm not surprised at that—the Ottawa Sun, the Standard-Freeholder in Cornwall, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record and the Hamilton Spectator, to name a few. I could go on and identify other newspapers throughout the province that are in support of the activities we are addressing here this evening. I just add some contextual background that people from a variety of communities in our fair province are in accord. Perhaps that's why, in essence, all three parties are in agreement with this piece of legislation that we have before us tonight: it being proposed by one party, the government picking it up and it being then supported by all three parties as we move ahead.

That is not to say, of course, that there should not be some basis for modification, because the point of debate and the point of committee is to listen to what people have to say. Of course, private citizens will be e-mailing or sending a letter suggesting that we provide certain safeguards.

I must point out, to reinforce, lest there are those—and I'm sure there are, and indeed there should be—who worry about contraventions of private information and confidentiality, which of course is a fundamental principle not only of our province, but within the Canadian context as well: what kind of information is gathered, what kind of information is kept, who has it, who has access to it and what rights people have with the gathering of that information. With this bill those questions must and need to be asked. I am pleased to hear that the integrity commissioner has provided some kind of response, and I hope the information commissioner likewise will comment related to the use of information. Because in these times of fear, people are prepared to give up certain things that perhaps before they would have thought twice about, because they feel the state may need certain authorities in order to provide us with the security that most people are seeking at this particular time.

However, it seems to me that it is incumbent upon us, every legislator in this place, that while there may be a tightening of controls, a tightening of security procedures, we must guard very carefully our historical strength, as a country and as a province, related to our human rights. I, for one, will certainly look at this and examine this very carefully in that light, and I suspect I would not—indeed, I hope I would not—be alone. I'm sure that I wouldn't be.

I would like, as the critic for science and technology, to add to the considerations at committee that not only in some of the areas that were identified by the bill could

we sharpen up by guarantors and the requirement that someone must know someone for a two-year period before they would sign their name, and they needed to be professionals or they needed to be different people who are identified in the bill. As a commissioner of oaths, that would be fine with me because those people would be held accountable for who they would be signing for. I hate to end my sentence with a preposition, however I will try to improve in the future.

I would suggest that we do have the technologies, which I've looked at and examined very carefully. The technologies of security and the technologies of identification are there right now. I know the government is looking at the whole issue of the smart card. The concept of a smart card is that it's an identification card that provides a database, with a chip in a particular card, for a variety of purposes. You may have information related to your driver's licence, your health card, a birth certificate, a marriage certificate or other sources of data.

That sounds great when you begin to introduce the concept, except I'll raise the issue that I get somewhat worried when I see the centralization of confidential and personal information into one bank where we do not have, I think, the kinds of safeguards we had. The government has a variety of ministries that sell confidential information, I am told, or at least sell to the business community lists of people—I understand the Ministry of Transportation does this—while citizens of Ontario do not know that this is going on. I don't think that's acceptable, and it certainly should not be in this particular case.

However, as we have already said, all parties support the essence of the bill. I hope that when we get to committee there will not be the limitation of a time allocation there, that there will be an opportunity for good exploration, that there will be an opportunity for people indeed to present views and testimony as to their thinking. This is something that we should proceed on, but we should proceed with our eye on our code of ethics and our human rights codes, both federally and provincially.

With that, I will wind up my comments and look forward to proceeding with this particular bill in the interests of the people of Ontario.

1910

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the debate this evening and would indicate at the outset that, as has already been mentioned by our critic, we will be supporting the legislation. I thought what I would do, though, in the time that's been allocated to me this evening, is raise a couple of concerns, or reinforce a couple of concerns, which two of my colleagues have already raised. I do that because the minister, in his opening remarks on this bill on Monday night, said the following: "I want to say to the opposition that I am open for reasonable amendment. If they want to come forward with constructive ideas about how we can make this a better law, I have an open ear with respect to their suggestions."

So I take the minister at his word that indeed he is looking for unanimous approval of this particular bill, and I also take him at his word that, as a result, he has allowed for committee time and there will be an opportunity for both public hearings and for amendments to be placed.

I'd ask the minister and the ministry staff to consider a couple of points. The first has to do with the issue of the guarantor. It has been clearly stated by the minister and by others that there are two possible conditions to be met for a guarantor. I took a copy of the Request for Birth Certificate off the Internet earlier this evening and note that there is a wide range of individuals who are in a position to act as a guarantor. It is clear that the applicant must know the guarantor for at least two years in order for the same to actually sign.

What's interesting is that, although the minister spoke about the ability of MPPs to act as guarantor in his remarks on Monday evening, in fact if you look at the Request for Birth Certificate, MPPs are not specifically noted as those individuals who could be guarantors. So it seems to me that if it is the intention of the ministry to allow us to do what some of us now do with respect to passports, act as guarantors, I think it would be wise for the ministry, in making changes, to amend it so the document itself, the application form, clearly lists MPPs as guarantors.

Having said that, there may be another provision under which we already have an ability to act in terms of a signatory. There may be another piece of legislation that automatically guarantees us the right to fill in a birth certificate, and perhaps that's why it doesn't appear specifically in the application. But I think even if that is the case, we might as well make it clear to everyone who wants to apply that as MPPs we can do that too, along with signing as guarantors to passports, which I know a number of us already do.

We have a situation where you have to know someone for two years in order to sign as a guarantor and there is an extensive list of people who can participate. If you cannot meet that requirement—and I submit to you that there would be a number of new Canadians, I think, who in coming to this country may not be able to meet that criterion. They may not know someone who is essentially in a business or professional capacity who has known them for two years who could act as a guarantor. The second criterion that appears in the application is that if you don't know anyone on the list, as long as you've known someone for at least five years who is not a relative, that individual can sign. I submit to you that if you can't meet the first criterion, that is, you've been here for two years and there is not someone in that select list who can vouch for you in that regard, you're probably not going to meet the second criterion, which is that you've known someone other than a relative for the last five years.

I think that the current application system does provide a bar, particularly to new Canadians seeking birth certificates perhaps for infants. There may be a provision

that if you have a registration of live birth, you can automatically get that; I don't know the answer to that. But I think we need to find a mechanism for individuals who can't meet either of the criteria—the two years, and knowing someone from the select list or knowing someone other than a relative for five years. We need to find a way to accommodate those people.

The ministry has clearly told us that the registrar does have the discretion to look at these on a case-by-case basis, and if someone can come forward and present evidence that they have lived here etc, they could probably get a birth certificate. The problem is that if you were to look at the application form just on the face of it, you would conclude that you are immediately disqualified. As far as I can tell, on the form itself it does not make specific reference to the fact that you can have the registrar general look at your case and make a decision. I don't see that anywhere on the form and I regret that it's not on the form. I think in order to ensure that we are not barring people outright from even applying, because they believe they can't qualify after they read the form, it would be fairly simple for the government to amend the Request for Birth Certificate in the section under the guarantor to have a specific provision that will say clearly to people, if you cannot meet either of these requirements for signature by a guarantor, please write to the registrar general about your situation and he or she will review it; or alternatively, we could say to please approach your nearest land registry office and make your concerns known to the staff there and they will, on your behalf, undertake to let the registrar general know that your case should be dealt with on an individual basis, that there are some specific circumstances that should be taken into account and the registrar general should do that.

I think, as I look at the form, that it would be easy enough for the ministry, in the section on page 2, under information about the form, "Statement of Guarantor," at the very bottom, to very clearly write in a proviso that says specifically to people, "If you do not feel you qualify under these two sections because you cannot meet these guarantor requirements, please write to the registrar general at this address and ask for an individual review of your case or, alternatively, go to your land registry office, where you would take the application form in any case, if you wanted to have it processed, and talk to staff there about what you have to do." That way, I think the form would clearly not act as a bar to any number of people who, looking at it on the face of it, would not have any knowledge that they can take their case somewhere else and would feel that they are immediately disqualified and would leave it at that. That's a simple change to the form.

On a broader basis, I do not see in the legislation where there exists a mechanism for appeal if the registrar general determines that you do not qualify for a birth certificate. I think that in all fairness, we need to find a way to have a mechanism for appeal. I wouldn't presume to know what that particular mechanism might be. I hope

that might be an issue that would be dealt with at committee. But with respect to most other important decisions about people receiving access to information, for example, under FIPPA, people receiving other documents etc, people who are appealing the denial of benefits, for example, through the social assistance system or through the WSIB system, we do traditionally, normally have some kind of mechanism for appeal of those said decisions. I think it's incumbent upon the ministry at this point, with respect to birth certificates, to make the same change, to develop a mechanism for appeal and to put that into the law.

I say that specifically because the minister spent some balance of his time talking about the importance of having a birth certificate. We know he has structured that around many of the concerns that have arisen as a result of the circumstances of September 11. So if it is becoming more important, more critical for individuals to have birth certificates, then I suggest it becomes as important and as valuable for them to have an appeal mechanism when the registrar general has denied them access to the same. So I hope the government at the public hearings and through the clause-by-clause will consider that proposal.

The third area that I want to deal with goes directly to the legislation in section 53.1, which outlines the following: the duty of the registrar general to collect information, the duty of others to assist in the collection of that, the duty of the registrar general to disclose, and then the definition that is provided with respect to what "institution" means in this section. Let me raise a couple of concerns.

Firstly, the duty to collect information: it says very clearly that "If the registrar general considers it necessary to verify information," with respect to what's on the application form itself, "the registrar general shall collect, directly or indirectly, such information as he or she considers necessary from such persons and institutions as he or she considers appropriate." I understand that. I accept that. I appreciate that, from time to time, there will be a need in the mind of the registrar general to confirm information that appears on the application form. I assume that the registrar general would be looking at this, for example, trying to confirm information, for example, of a birth. So perhaps they would be calling a specific hospital or requesting information from a specific hospital about the registration of a birth. Alternately, in order to avoid fraud by someone having a birth certificate of someone who's dead, they may well want to collect information, for example, from a funeral home, if that's where you get such information, with respect to death certificates and confirmation that indeed someone has died, so you stop right there any fraud with respect to someone trying to get a birth certificate of someone who is already deceased. So I accept that any number of institutions might be contacted and they have an obligation to disclose information.

It is the duty to disclose information, which appears as section 53.1(3), which I have some serious concerns

with, because I don't understand what the government is trying to address. That particular section says, "For the purpose of verifying information or determining if any document issued or that may be issued under this act is being, or may be, improperly used, the registrar general shall disclose such information as he or she considers appropriate to such persons or institutions as he or she considers appropriate."

1920

My concern is that, for the purposes of disclosing information, there seems to be quite a broad category of institutions and bodies to whom information that I consider to be confidential can be disclosed.

If you look under section 4, "institution" certainly refers to institutions that are defined under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and part (c)—and this is the one I have the most concern with—"any agency, board, commission, corporation or other body, inside or outside Canada, designated as an institution in the regulations."

If I go back to both FIPPA and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, "institution" is defined in most cases as a ministry of the government, agency, board, commission, corporation etc. But section (c) of the government's bill is quite broader, as I read it, than the provisions that are already outlined in the other two acts. I don't know why the government would want to have a broader definition of "institution" for the purposes of the registrar general disclosing information to those bodies.

For example, I see no need for the government to have the registrar general disclosing, sharing, distributing or giving information to a body inside or specifically outside of Canada. Whom are we referring to? Is this a private corporation, a private company? Why would they have any right to have such information? Why would we be requesting that the registrar general disclose the same to those companies? If the government could come forward and give me some good idea as to why it feels it has to have such a broad definition, specifically with respect to bodies or organizations outside of the country, I would surely like to hear it. If there is a logical, reasonable and good explanation, then let's have it.

On the face of it, as I read this section, it gives pretty broad and sweeping powers to the registrar general to disclose to just about anyone, and I can't see the reason for that. I looked very carefully through the minister's remarks. He didn't reference this section at all, so I don't know what his thinking was, but I certainly hope the government will come forward and outline why they think such disclosure to such a broad range of institutions, bodies, inside and outside the country is necessary. On the face of it I'm opposed to that. I don't think there's a reason for that, and the government hasn't given me a good enough reason to support the inclusion of that particular section.

I raise that because there are a number organizations, bodies, private corporations etc that in fact are trying to

get information from the government, information that up to this point the government, I think in most cases—not others, which someone might talk about tonight—has been relatively good at making sure that information is not disclosed.

I go back to a particular case that was dealt with by the Information and Privacy Commissioner. It is true it does go back to 1992, but it makes the point that there are any number of groups and bodies out there that do want access to information and that make specific requests for that. It was only because of the provisions in the current Vital Statistics Act that information with respect to this case was not disclosed.

Very briefly, the story is as follows. There was an appeal made to the privacy commissioner in 1992. It was the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations that initially denied access to the company that was making a request for information. The company making the request for information marketed baby food. The company wanted information with respect to a list of the names, dates of birth and addresses of all babies born in Ontario in 1991 so that the particular company could then send detailed information out to the parents “to help them make an informed choice about baby nutrition and the nutritional products available.” But when they first made the request, they wanted—and let me just repeat it—the names, dates of birth and addresses of all babies born in Ontario in 1991. The request was for continuing access on a weekly basis over the next two years. The Deputy Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations of course denied access. The matter went to an inquiry before the commissioner, and the commissioner declined the request only on the grounds of what was already provided for in the current Vital Statistics Act.

The assistant commissioner, Tom Mitchinson, said the following: “The Vital Statistics Act has historically been a confidentiality statute, predating FIPPA.” Basically, he said that parents at the time of providing information with respect to their child under the Vital Statistics Act would have assumed that it would be kept confidential and would not be disclosed to the public for commercial purposes. In his view, it would be reasonable for a parent to infer from this statement that the information on the form would be kept confidential except in the circumstances outlined on the form. “In my view, the names and dates of birth of the babies and addresses of the mothers were otherwise provided to the institution”—that being the ministry—“implicitly in confidence.” But it was only on that one particular section of the Vital Statistics Act that the assistant commissioner was able to support the ministry decision to refuse to disclose the information.

My concern is that the changes the government envisions now will somehow weaken, take away from or make less stringent those same requirements. I don’t want to find us in a position whereby it becomes that much easier for information that should be confidential to be exchanged, to be disclosed or, as it appears in this particular bill, to actually be, in terms of the registrar

general, disclosed to persons or institutions as he or she considers appropriate, those institutions again being agencies, boards, commissions, corporations or other bodies inside or outside of Canada. So we do know there are any number of people who would like to get their hands on a lot more of people’s confidential information and we need to be doing everything we can to make sure that doesn’t happen.

I raise this also because right now those institutions will be designated in regulation, and we all know that the regulation process will be done behind closed doors. It will be done by cabinet. There will be no debate about the form and the shape and the contents of those regulations; they will just appear in the gazette when they have been passed by cabinet. It seems to me, with respect to whom we are disclosing information to, that ought to be a debate that we have in this assembly. The range of whom we disclose information to, in terms of what kinds of bodies, certainly inside and outside of Canada, is a matter that this assembly should be dealing with. It should not be dealt with at all by regulation. I trust that during the committee process, if the ministry has some very, very good reason as to why this provision is in place, they had better share it with us, because right now it would be the option of the New Democrats that that is not a provision that we find acceptable, and it should be stricken from this particular bill.

In conclusion, I say that we support the legislation. We are happy that it is going to committee. I hope some of the concerns I have raised tonight will be dealt with then.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate, the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Is this his maiden speech?

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): I gave that one a long time ago. My friend from Don Valley East questions whether this is my maiden speech. In fact, I regret that I’m taking up the time of the House tonight to say just a few words on this bill. I have not yet had an opportunity during this Parliament to speak on any legislation, but back on June 28, as I recall, the voters of Vaughan-King-Aurora invited me back down to this House to represent them and now and again to make comments on the business of the province.

We, of course, support this bill. In fact, as has been mentioned by other members, this bill arose as a result of issues raised by the member from Ottawa South, our leader, on the ease with which one could obtain a birth certificate in Ontario. In these times of heightened security, wasn’t this something, he asked, that the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations—if that’s still what the ministry is—should be dealing with? I congratulate the minister for moving rather quickly to examine the matter, to respond and to bring legislation in the House to deal with the matter and to make it quite a bit more difficult and add very significant security measures to the simple process of acquiring a birth certificate in Ontario.

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While we of course support this bill and support the new system that will be implemented, I guess my perspective on it is somewhat different. My perspective is that I really lament that we have to do this at this time. I liked the Ontario in which you could come to this government building down here and give them a little bit of identification and get your birth certificate. I liked the Ontario where in a matter of two days you could go to the passport office and give them the documentation and get your passport.

I sat in this Legislature from 1985 to 1995, and I liked the Ontario Legislature in which any citizen, any visitor, could walk unobstructed into this building, have a look around, go to an office, visit their MPP, go downstairs and have a meal in the restaurant, come and sit up in the gallery. Certainly, the thing that has changed most for me between my time in 1985 to 1995 and this Parliament is the added security—for me, a very heightened degree of security, just to get into the people's Parliament Building. I liked the way it was in 1985. I liked the Ontario in which most of us never locked our doors at night. I like it better than the Ontario in which most of us spend a lot of time examining the qualities of home alarm systems and having the latest degree of security. I went to visit my dad in the hospital the other night and I noticed on the elevator it said, "Premises subject to video surveillance." I liked the Ontario in which we were not constantly subject to video surveillance.

As we debate here in this Legislature tonight, in the federal Parliament, the federal Minister of Justice has presented a bill—talk about security—a sweeping bill to really change the security issues in Canada and refocus the debate. For the first time in a very long time in Canada, we will have arbitrary powers of arrest. The issue up there will be, how close to violating the charter is the bill that the federal Minister of Justice has presented to her counterparts in the federal Parliament? I liked the Canada in which we didn't have to have arbitrary powers of arrest and detention. I liked that Canada better. Although we have to debate and pass this bill to make the acquisition of a birth certificate more difficult and more secure, I would like for one or two days in this Parliament for us to debate what it is that is happening to us as a people that we find ourselves in these circumstances.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister of the country was in Halifax seeing off troops that were going to fight a war on terrorism. I liked it better when young men and women in Canada were not going off to fight a war on terrorism.

I liked it better when the nightly news was not led off with an update on an enormous assault on Afghanistan. I liked it better when we didn't have to do that, and I would like it if one day we could consider in this Legislature what is happening to us as a people in Ontario, in Canada, in North America and around the world.

My first day in this Legislature, we had a two-minute opportunity to say our piece on the tragic circumstances

that have befallen us since the events of September 11. I liked what we were talking about here and around the province and around the country before September 11 better than I like what we have to talk about now. But these events are upon us, and yet we have not yet begun to talk about how we get to the place where it's easy again to get a birth certificate, where it's easy again to get on a plane and go through customs and go to our destination without fear and without video surveillance and security that make our lives lives of fear. I liked that kind of life better.

But we're confronted with these circumstances, and even here in Ontario, I don't think we've begun a debate, at least in this Legislature, about how to accommodate ourselves to the new world we find ourselves in. It's trite now to say that everything has changed. Things are changing very rapidly in Ontario, and it's not just about how we are going to get a birth certificate. The events that have befallen us over the past while change a lot of things, including how well we are going to do economically as a province and how many thousands of people will no longer have work because we're not travelling any more and we're not visiting any more and we're not doing business any more.

If that's what we have to deal with, I would like the Minister of Finance to come into this Legislature one of these days and let us, the people of Ontario, know what our real circumstances are. I wasn't here, but certainly I paid attention to the budget he presented—what was it?—seven or eight months ago. Well, you might bring that budget home to the grandkids to crayon on because it has no further meaning. I would like it if the Minister of Finance would come here and speak to us openly and honestly and without a whole bunch of political rhetoric about what circumstances we find ourselves in economically.

Certainly all of us are going to have a more difficult time getting our birth certificates. We agree that we have to do that, at least for now. But we don't know whether or not in the coming months we're looking at economic growth of 1% or maybe "negative growth"—a foolish phrase—or shrinkage of the economy because of the circumstances that have befallen us since September 11. I would like it if the Minister of Finance would simply do that. I would like it, notwithstanding the announcement by the Premier yesterday of his search for a quieter, gentler life, if the government would not indulge too much in the leadership and convention politics that are going to occupy them over the course of the next six months and would pay some attention to this province's business.

It's not just going to be about how many guarantors you need to get a birth certificate. It's going to be about whether or not we can develop creative ways to combat an economy that is slowing down, whether or not there are going to be some creative ways to replace the shortfalls in some sectors of the economy with public initiatives—oh my God, public initiatives, government actually doing something, government actually investing.

I would like to hear whether the government has any ideas in that regard.

We're going to pass this bill here and we're going to send it out to committee. It's going to get third reading and royal assent and there will be regulations, and all of us will learn about the forms with guarantors to get birth certificates so that we can identify ourselves. We are going to grow accustomed in Canada to the notion that, now and again, people will be arrested and detained and held without charge in our fight against terrorism. But I would like it if we, as the representatives of 12 million Ontarians, can pretty soon start to talk about how we reshape ourselves and how we start to grow the peace that will allow us the freedom and the luxury of an "insecure" life of the kind that most of us remember, and certainly long for, since September 11.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the motion earlier this afternoon, I shall put the question without further debate or amendment.

On October 15, 2001, Mr Sterling moved second reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to the motion this afternoon, at the conclusion of the second reading stage of the bill, which is now, the bill shall be referred to the standing committee on general government. So be it. The standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet in Toronto for up to two days for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill. Further, the standing committee on general government shall report back to the House not later than November 1, 2001.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): Sadly, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Minister Johns moves adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1943.

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