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Tuesday 20 November 2001

Mardi 20 novembre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 November 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 novembre 2001

The House met at 1845.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't believe we have quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 125, An Act to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities and to make related amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 125, Loi visant à améliorer le repérage, l'élimination et la prévention des obstacles auxquels font face les personnes handicapées et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to allow me to complete the time remaining for the member from Oak Ridges.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mrs Munro: I'm pleased to join second reading debate on Bill 125, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. With this bill, the government is moving dramatically this fall to increase independence and opportunity for persons with disabilities. We are keeping our promise. Persons with disabilities will now have more of a say than ever in decisions which affect their very lives. It is a very proud moment all around.

The one aspect of the bill that has not attracted much comment is the way it has engaged and involved persons with disabilities at each and every stage of its development: through the consultations, through the drafting and refining, and, most importantly, through the content of the bill itself.

This bill asks something of everyone in Ontario, including persons with disabilities. In fact, it would be true to say that the bill gives persons with disabilities an unparalleled opportunity to shape and mould change. For the first time in Ontario's history, we're putting the disability community into the framework of the legislation and asking them to be our partner in driving it. No one can quarrel with the goal: an Ontario in which no new barriers to persons with disabilities are created, and where existing ones are removed. That's where we're headed. We're not starting from scratch. We've got a solid foundation of programs, services and involvement, and we're moving ahead.

1850

I ask members: why is it that this bill has received the support of so many prominent individuals and organizations representing persons with disabilities? Where is the almost universal opposition that greeted previous attempts to move the file forward? Why can't opposition groups get momentum? I would answer: because they have been outflanked and outworked by this government. From the beginning, Minister Jackson practised an engaging, inclusive form of consultation. He wanted to bring everyone along with him. He gave no guarantees, but he also said that nothing had been cast in stone. If someone was able to make his case for something being in the bill, then in all likelihood it would be in.

Let's look at the consultations. More than 100 groups and individuals met with Minister Jackson. Many of them were persons with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities and group leaders. This was a learning curve that began last February and hasn't stopped. The minister wanted to learn from individuals within the disability community across our province and from community leaders who had changed the lives of the disabled in a very meaningful way. Meeting these individuals and seeing first-hand the kinds of things that they had already done in their communities helped to formulate the framework that exists in this legislation. It is unique, but our model makes sense if you understand what we are witnessing across Ontario: the way the disability community in some municipalities has made some profound change.

We saw in the work that's been done an instrument to create permanent change and to elevate the very standard in every community in our province. We needed to engage the disability community and ask them how we would make that change and create a vision and a path from which we could develop the all-important legislation they have been awaiting patiently for many years. When the minister talked to these individuals and

listened to what they wanted to see happen in our province, it occurred to him that we all really share the same vision and the same goals. Simply put, people were asking for legislation that would do two things: create no new barriers in our province and create a plan whereby we would be able to systematically go back and remove all the existing barriers in our province.

There was another common thread that emerged from the consultations. Our stakeholders said, "You can't do this alone. You have to set up partnerships. You have to get different groups working with each other. You have to take advantage of the advances that are already taking place, spread the word, share best practices and build on that momentum."

For our part, we said: "Increasing accessibility is a priority. We're proud to lead, but we cannot do it alone. It's a big commitment, we're in it for the long haul and we're going to do this right. Let's learn from each other, because what we need is a coordinated, choreographed band of activity across several sectors to achieve the vision."

And thus was born the signature feature of the bill: the notion, accepted by all, that increasing independence and opportunity for persons with disabilities is a shared responsibility across all sectors and levels of society.

There are a number of municipalities and private sector organizations that have already been developing proactive approaches to ensuring that their communities are more inclusive and more accessible. This can only be done by engaging persons with disabilities.

The most valuable lesson learned was how powerful change could occur if the disabilities community was front and centre, was listened to, was asked for input and it was acknowledged and acted upon. Those communities that do it are doing a tremendous job and getting lasting results in which their entire community can take pride.

Look at our partners in the municipal sector. On their own, 16 councils have established accessibility advisory committees and 34 have passed resolutions calling on the province to make Ontario fully accessible.

Our legislation will work toward a barrier-free Ontario as soon as reasonably possible. That's what this legislation says. Do you know who is going to decide whether it's reasonable? The disabilities community who would sit on the Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario working on the regulations and meeting with the private sector to say, "You tell us how you're going to become compliant with this legislation." That's power.

In addition, the Accessibility Advisory Council, along with the creation of an accessibility directorate, would provide an oversight mechanism to review accessibility plans and ensure that barrier removal is taken very seriously in this province. The disability community has many members who deserve a voice. There are many people in this community who deserve a voice on these issues.

During our consultations, many businesses, municipalities and other organizations said repeatedly they wanted to do the right thing but that they didn't always

have the information and knowledge that enabled them to do so. As a result, good intentions often fell short of expectations; no longer.

Our bill proposes the creation of an Accessibility Advisory Council of Ontario which would report directly to the Minister of Citizenship. Entrenched in legislation, the new council would create a permanent, ongoing role for persons with disabilities. The council would bring together individuals, including persons with disabilities, who have the expertise, experience and knowledge to provide strategic advice to the minister. It would oversee implementation of the legislation. It would also be charged with the responsibility of monitoring and advancing the legislation and would provide annual reports on its activities.

The council would provide a long-term lens on accessibility issues to ensure continual progress toward an accessible Ontario over time. It would lever the support of all sectors, proactively encourage partnerships, advise the minister and government on disability issues and provide support for accessibility initiatives.

I can quote the March of Dimes president, "If we all work together, particularly governments and the private sector, persons with disabilities will no longer be on the sidelines but, rather, full participants."

I think from these few comments you can see why the passage of this legislation is important and certainly something that would be unparalleled in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I listened with interest to the comments made by the previous speaker. First, when I look at this legislation, I look at this government's track record when it comes to the disabled. I look at the promise of six and a half years ago that they were going to pass a meaningful piece of legislation within the first four years. Obviously they failed miserably to do that. They come in two and a half years into their second mandate and bring in what is really a woefully inadequate piece of legislation that barely starts the process.

I'm interested that the member across the floor quoted the March of Dimes. I wish she would maybe quote some of the other organizations, because since they have read the legislation, the vast majority of organizations that represent disabled people across Ontario have come out and slammed the legislation for its weaknesses, for what it doesn't do. This Legislature unanimously endorsed 11 principles of what an ODA should contain. Only one of those is in this bill. There's no real provision here for enforcement within the private sector, and then, as usual, instead of being serious and dealing with the real issues, what do they do? They go to the bumper sticker solutions: headlines, \$5,000 fines for parking in disabled spots. You know what? That's a bit of a problem in Ontario. If they're serious about that, put legislation in place—because most times I go to a mall, I don't see a problem with cars parked without stickers; what I see is those spots being full. Maybe bring legislation in that forces organizations and places to have more spaces

available for disabled people in Ontario. That's meaningful change, not simply this bumper sticker solution of a fine that a judge will never impose of \$5,000.

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Real change is needed. Real change is required. This government has failed miserably again when it comes to dealing with the disabled. Yes, they're going to ram this bill through against the opposition of the vast majority of organizations that represent disabled people in Ontario, but in two years we're going to take this bill, we're going to overhaul it, we're going to fix it and we're going to make sure Ontarians with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect, not with the contempt of this government.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I had an opportunity to listen to the remarks made by the member from York North. She started her remarks on this bill by talking about "moving dramatically" to deal with issues of people with disabilities, and I thought, "Moving dramatically, what does that mean?" I think she means that they are doing something extraordinary as it relates to people with disabilities, but we don't see that.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It's not in the bill.

Mr Marchese: I don't see it. People with disabilities who have had an opportunity to review this bill don't see this "moving dramatically" bill and so I wonder what bill we're speaking at, because it's not the same bill that we are looking at. It can't be. After six years of moving dramatically on a bill, you would think they would have had plenty of time to listen to the people who are affected; they're still listening. She's saying they're in a mode to still listen to people with disabilities, after six long years. You move dramatically to then create a bill that says, "We still need to listen to people."

As it relates to the private sector, she says they're instructing the private sector to tell us what they think they should do to deal with issues of accessibility as they relate to people with disabilities, and she said, "That's power." That's power? Julia, please. You're saying to the private sector, "There's nothing obligatory that you have to do," and you instruct them to look at their plans and tell you what it is they should do and you say, "Wow, that's power." Maybe it's me, but I don't get it. They're not moving dramatically; they've moved at a snail-like pace to arrive with a bill that doesn't speak to the issues that they have been consulting on, and it's pitiful, I've got to tell you.

Mr Christopherson: Typical. Typical and pitiful.

Mr Marchese: Typically pitiful.

Mr Christopherson: Exactly.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to congratulate the member from York North for her comments and obviously the minister for the bill. One of the very important hallmarks of this minister in this portfolio and others he's held is how consultative he is. He spent quite a bit of time around the province on workers' compensation reform back in 1995-96. He came to my riding and to many other ridings around the province to meet

with groups on this legislation and this package that comes forward today on Ontarians with disabilities. That's a hallmark of this minister, and that's why the day we introduced the legislation, the building was filled with people from the disabilities community, supportive of what the minister was bringing forward.

The members opposite want to neglect and want to forget all of the things that this government has done in the past six years for the disabled community. We've made huge increases in funding in people in the community living sector. We've continued to move folks out of institutions into community living—huge investments there. Children's treatment centres: we've dramatically increased their funding. Members of the NDP actually held them to the social contract and reduced their funding between 1990 and 1995. Mr Marchese laughs about that, but I don't think those children's treatment centres found that funny at the time; they found it difficult.

We've brought in tax incentives for businesses to make workplaces more accessible in Ontario. We've changed the building code several times to improve accessibility. I'm going to speak for 20 minutes in a few minutes and I'll continue to enumerate all of these things. But it's very important to note the long record we've had and I think the member did highlight some of those things, so I'll congratulate her on that.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Not only does this bill not meet the 11 principles that I think are the standard by which we must judge a truly effective and meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but the way the government has gone about this process is also extremely unseemly. As I think everyone in the Legislature knows and most people in Ontario know, it has taken six and a half years to even get to this point. There was a bill in 1999, I believe it was, Bill 83, which was a pure embarrassment. It was a pure fiasco and had to be withdrawn by the government. They have got to a point now where they are, it appears, putting forward a bill that is somewhat of an improvement over that piece of legislation, but still by no means meets the standard we think a true Ontarians with Disabilities Act should. What happens is that they then determine they are going to rush this bill through the Legislature, which I think is extremely unfortunate and extremely unkind.

The fact is that I have spoken to members of the disability community in my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North and they have made a couple of things clear to me. They want to have an opportunity to basically have public consultation. Yes, they actually will be coming to Thunder Bay, and I want to let the people in my community know that. I think it's Thursday, December 6. They want an opportunity to truly study this, to have an opportunity not to be rushed into it.

The government is absolutely determined to push this legislation through. They're actually going to do a time allocation motion, which will force us to end debate on second reading. They will then have the hearings, going out to a few communities in the province, and by mid-December they are going to basically push this through

third reading. There will be no real opportunity to put forward amendments. The Liberal opposition—I'm sure all three parties, but certainly the NDP as well—will want to put forward some amendments to the legislation. I can tell you for sure that the disability community does as well. Yet they're being forced to deal with this very truncated process, which I think is insulting to the disability community. In other words, six and a half years to get here and suddenly in three weeks we're going to push this legislation through. I think that's wrong; I think it's unfair.

The Acting Speaker: Response, the member for York North.

Mrs Munro: Thank you to the members for Hamilton East, Trinity-Spadina, Niagara Falls and Thunder Bay-Superior North. In listening to some of the comments that have been made, perhaps there has been a misunderstanding about the fact that when the minister undertook this, it was with the notion that it was important to be able to do the consultations, because of the complexity of the interests of the community, the recognition that there were best practices within the province.

One of the things I think is a hallmark of this piece of legislation is that it recognizes the need to bring everyone in a community together to work on creating accessible communities, that it isn't the work only of government or only of a particular group, but rather is a reflection of our community as a whole in its ability to be as fully accessible as possible. This legislation, then, provides that kind of framework, where everyone within the community understands and recognizes the role and the opportunity they have to make their community the very best it can be.

There are a number of communities across the province that have provided those kinds of best practices and opportunities to look at standards. That's what this piece of legislation is designed to do: to make sure that in Ontario we have that ability to bring everyone together to make sure that we create no new barriers and that we work on eliminating the others.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): May 24, 1995: Mike Harris promises in writing that within his first term of office he will enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Promise made, promise broken, promise not kept.

We saw a feeble attempt in December 1998 to introduce a disabilities act, a sham of three pages of legislation introduced by the minister of the time, Isabel Bassett. It was a joke. The government recognized it was a joke. When the House prorogued, that piece of legislation died on the order paper. The House, though, continued to press for this legislation.

I want to thank my leader, Dalton McGuinty, who in June 1999, soon after my election, called me up and named me as the critic responsible for disabilities issues. I can tell you, at that time, I had some prior experience dealing with individuals with disabilities from my experience on municipal council. As I started to delve into the

issue and started to consult, I found that there was a huge number of barriers facing persons with disabilities in this province, barriers that this government in no way was making any commitment to remove and, if anything, they were making it more difficult for persons with disabilities to live their day-to-day lives.

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As we progressed and became further involved in dealing with disabilities issues, on November 23, 1999—today is November 20—every one of us in this Legislature unanimously agreed to a resolution that I put forward: that a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act be enacted no later than November 23, 2001.

Well, what we've got in front of us tonight is again a broken promise by this government, because it's not a strong and effective piece of legislation that we have in front of us. It's a weak and ineffective piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that, if this government had any guts, they should withdraw, because the commitment that they should have made to consult with the disabled community in the development of this legislation was non-existent.

They hoodwinked the disabled community. The minister left many impressions that this was legislation that the disabled community was going to be able to get behind and support. This was a piece of legislation that would incorporate the 11 principles—again, 11 principles that were put forth in a resolution by my colleague Dwight Duncan, that again were unanimously endorsed and supported in this Legislature. Are those 11 principles included in this legislation that we have in front of us this evening? No, they're not. Only one of those 11 principles is in any way visible in this legislation. Again, this government has abandoned the disabled community.

It's very interesting. When I became the critic responsible for disabled individuals in this province, the number that everyone touted was 1.5 million persons living with a disability of some sort in this province. Now that the government has introduced this legislation, we're talking about 1.6 million people. So what we've seen is that since this Mike Harris government has taken office in 1995, we have another 100,000 persons in this province with a disability and another 100,000 persons who have been abandoned by this government.

We've got young children who weren't born when Mike Harris was elected in 1995, when Mike Harris made that promise on May 24, 1995. May 24 is a day that I'll always remember because that's my niece's birthday. My niece is growing up in this province right now with a government that has shown no commitment to the disabled community. I think that's a real shame.

One of the things that's touted in this legislation is the creation of advisory councils. It's a joke, because this government, like they did with a lot of things that they promised to do in 1995, including passing this legislation, also made some drastic cuts and changed the face of the way we do business in this province. One of the things that they cut that they're touting right now as part of this legislation is the advisory councils. There was

already a mechanism in place to advise the government and work with the government in dealing with issues facing persons with disabilities, but this government cut that out in 1995. Shame on them.

I'm going to deal with some of the specifics of the legislation, but do you want to know how committed this government is to full, open consultations and accessible consultations? Well, they're not committed.

This government is more concerned about dealing with Bill 81, which deals with the spreading of nutrients on agricultural land. They gave Bill 81 nine hearings across this province—province-wide hearings. The Minister of Agriculture, to his credit, made the commitment that individuals—the farming and agricultural community in this province—would have input into the development of the regulations. The government is prepared to do that for the agricultural community, but this government is not prepared to do it for the disabled community in this province. I say shame on you, because that same commitment you made to the agricultural community, you should be making to the disabled community in this province, and you're not doing it. Shame on you.

It's interesting, we hear the members stand up and tout that there's all kinds of wide-spread support for this legislation. That's a joke too, because they were all hood-winked. The various groups thought, when the minister was out doing his consultations, they firmly believed, "Finally. We've been through Minister Bassett and she abandoned us, neglected us and didn't bring anything forward. We went through Minister Johns. We thought Minister Johns was going to do something, and nothing happened." They looked to Minister Jackson. They thought Minister Jackson was going to come to the table with a piece of legislation that was going to deal with the issues that were facing the disabled community in this province. But do you know what? It didn't happen again.

They stand up and tout the March of Dimes's supporting this legislation. The March of Dimes is certainly in its right to do that. But what we're finding now is that there are organizations all across this province that have recognized the sham that is this piece of legislation, and organizations that aren't supporting this legislation. The one that I would have hoped the minister responsible for disabilities issues in this province would have worked closely with is the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee, ODAC, because this is the umbrella organization that represents persons with disabilities in this province. Has the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee endorsed this legislation? No, they haven't, because they've seen what it is. It's an empty shell of a piece of legislation, a piece of legislation that is, once again, abandoning persons with disabilities in this province.

As you start to delve into this legislation, this is where it becomes really distressing. You can look back at Bill 26, I think it was, that the government passed in the fall of 1995, maybe 1996. With that piece of legislation, Bill 26 gave various ministers the ability, with a stroke of the pen, to change the way things are done in this province. But you know what's happening, and it's hilarious? This

piece of legislation, Bill 125, that we've got in front of us this evening, talks very much and very strongly about the government—it talks about the Speaker—developing a plan for this building. It talks about the government ensuring, for any new buildings that are built, that the legislation is in place to ensure that they're built in a barrier-free manner. That's a joke because, again, with a stroke of the pen the Chair of Management Board and the Premier of this province could delegate that. "Why put it in legislation? Why not just do it?" They could do it and they're not doing it. They're talking about barriers in the future, that we're going to eliminate barriers in the future. We've had six years of this government. What about all the barriers they've created in the past six years? This piece of legislation does nothing to address those barriers.

I think what's worse yet is the fact that this legislation doesn't apply to the private sector. This is a piece of legislation that's dealing with government agencies and municipalities, hospitals and schools, but it doesn't deal with the private sector. This government has this silly mentality: they think that if this piece of legislation were enshrined with forcing the private sector to do something, then it's going to hurt the private sector. But what we've seen, and it can be demonstrated, is that it would be a win-win situation for having this legislation apply to the private sector. It's a win-win situation because it would break down barriers for persons with disabilities. More important, it would create new opportunities for business to bring new individuals into their stores and into their restaurants.

A lot of times we think about legislation such as we have in front of us tonight, and when we think about barriers, we think about the disabled community. A lot of the barriers that are in place out there right now don't just apply to the disabled community. It could be a young mother going down the street with her baby carriage who finds it extremely difficult to enter into a building. If those barriers were removed, we would all win.

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I'm glad the minister keeps this little book in his desk, because I had an opportunity to tour the province in the spring of 2000 and visit a number of cities. We toured more than this government likely will tour for their consultations with this legislation. We went from Windsor to Thunder Bay to North Bay to Ottawa.

Let's talk about some things. I hope every one of your constituency offices, including my own members' and the NDP members', is accessible. If it's not, shame on you. Mine is. I made sure that my office is accessible. I challenge any one of you to go visit the Premier's office in North Bay and find out if the Premier's office is accessible. You'll find that it's not. You know how you get the ramp put down at the Premier's constituency office in North Bay? You call ahead or you knock on the window: "Knock, knock, knock, please put the ramp out." Persons with disabilities don't want to be standing on the outside, knocking on the window to try and get in. They want to be able to get right in on their own. I hope

that every one of you will go back and look at your constituency office and make sure it is accessible.

As we toured the province, we heard of a wide variety of barriers. Barriers don't just exist in the physical barriers that we all think of: the lack of access to a wash-room, the lack of access to a building. There are a number of other barriers out there that need to be reviewed and looked at. Such things alone as the Ontario disability support program—this a program that is in place to help persons with disabilities, but are all the proper documents available for access in a wide range of formats? Has the government ensured, like they've done in the past, that when they hold a tribunal hearing, it's not held in an inaccessible location? I certainly hope so.

Some of the other issues, other barriers that we face in this province, include the Ontario building code. We've seen legislation introduced with changes to the building code. We need to ensure that there are no exemptions in the new building code regulations. I believe that under section 11 of the existing building code right now there are exemptions that exist. We can't allow those exemptions to exist, not for government, not for the private sector. Everybody should be doing their part to make buildings accessible.

Education: there's a wide variety of barriers in education. I would urge the minister to sit down with the Minister of Education and look at what's happened: the cuts we've seen to educational assistance, the barriers that exist in some of our schools. I went back and toured my old high school. That building is not accessible and that's a shame.

Transportation: there's a lot of talk in this legislation about transportation. We all know that transportation is now the sole responsibility of municipalities, that municipalities have to pick up 100% of the cost. One issue that isn't addressed in this legislation is rural Ontario. It's one thing to call the paratransit here in Toronto three days in advance to get a ride, but try living in Aylmer or in Massey and getting access to transportation. It's non-existent.

When the legislation was introduced, we saw the great headline: "\$5,000 Fine for Parking in a Disabled Parking Spot." If you go to the local mall, fire routes and disabled parking are not enforced at malls. The only way that disabled parking spot enforcement takes place, where a \$5,000 fine could kick in at your local mall, is if that local mall has appointed bylaw enforcement officers and has entered into an agreement with the municipality to enforce bylaws. So is this legislation going to ensure that mall parking lots are freed up and that people aren't abusing parking spots? No, it's not.

Another issue that we need to deal with in this, and the lack of acknowledgement by this government, is the question of education, employment and training. We need to do everything we can to help individuals with a disability to ensure that they are accommodated within their workplace, to ensure that if they are on a disability pension and they make the decision to try and go back to work, and if, for whatever reason, they can't perform

those tasks, they don't have to go back on welfare, that there's an automatic reinstatement for those individuals to go back on ODSP. Is that addressed in this legislation? No, it's not.

I think there are other issues too. There are a lot of individuals in this province, numbers of individuals, who have mental illness or invisible disabilities. Are their concerns addressed in this legislation? No, they're not.

Let's deal with the question of consultation. We know that this government is feeling the heat. They know that they made a promise on May 24, 1995. They know that promise wasn't fulfilled in Isabel Bassett's Bill 83 and that it's a promise that has not been fulfilled in this legislation we have in front of us this evening. But are they going to do the proper consultation to ensure that everybody has an opportunity to have some input into this legislation? No, they're not. They're going to do a small number of cities. They're not going to London. I represent London. There are four other representatives from London. There's a large disabled community in London, a very active local disabled community. But is this government going to London for its hearings? No, they're not. They don't care. I think that's a real shame.

Is this a piece of legislation that they're going to ensure is right, that they get it right the first time? No, they're not. They're going to ram it through. This House is going to rise either December 13 or December 20, and we're going to see it disappear, see this legislation passed, forced through, rammed through without the proper consultation. It's a real shame.

The minister likes to make the comment, "They didn't recommend in the members' disability tour support of a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act." Page 1: "We've heard loud and clearly Ontario needs effective and comprehensive legislation." This was what we heard when we toured around the province, and that's what was included in this legislation.

I had hoped that the minister—and I know he looked at this report and I appreciate that—would have used this, that he would have used the 11 principles, that he would have recognized that a resolution was passed for strong and effective legislation no later than November 23, 2001. It didn't happen. Instead of a strong and effective piece of legislation, we have a weak and ineffective piece of legislation. I truly hoped that this was an issue that we could have all—I would have loved, as we have endorsed unanimously various resolutions in the House, if all 103 of us would have been able to stand up and endorse this legislation unanimously. You know, it's not possible. It's a sad day for Ontario and a sad day for persons with disabilities in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions, comments?

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Mr Marchese: I just want to congratulate the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London for properly identifying the problems and relating to and expressing the disillusionment of people with disabilities as it relates to this particular bill. He mentioned something very dramatic. I believe he said it was Mike Harris's office that—

Mr Peters: Not accessible. Go to North Bay.

Mr Marchese: He points out that his office is not accessible and that people have to knock on the window and say, "Please let me in," assuming that somebody is accompanying the individual, because if you have a mobility disability, it may be even hard to reach the window possibly, but not entirely. The whole idea of having to knock on the door to be let in, without which they cannot enter, it's as if you have to plead before you can enter. Somebody has to come out to put an accessibility walkway for the person with the disability to get in. It's nuts. And this is the Premier of Ontario.

You could understand perhaps some other members. Maybe they haven't been able to find a location where they can have an accessible office. Ten years ago—10 years ago, as soon as I got my office—I made sure we had a ramp. If you people don't have one, you should be asking yourselves why. You're not leading by not having an accessible office.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): Do you know why? Because I go to them.

Mr Marchese: Joe, that's a good one. He goes to them. No, they want to come to you. I'm convinced you don't go to them. You might go to some. But you need an office that's accessible, and that's one of the points he has made, including so many other points. But the Premier ought to look at that problem before he leaves his office, because it is shameful.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like, just in passing, to mention to the member for Trinity-Spadina that if he's that keen, he should have stood in the House and said that he has a TTY machine in his office. I know he doesn't. But if he really is that sincere, maybe he might consider that, making those services available to his constituents.

More importantly, I want to respond to the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. I've come to appreciate that this individual is a hard-working individual who understands the issues of the disability community, and I share with him the disappointment that his Liberal consultation tour report enunciated all the problems. We do not need any additional effort on enunciating the problems. What we need in this province are regulations and guidelines that will guide the rules of conduct for public and private businesses across this province, something that's been sadly lacking in this province, something that the federal government refuses to provide. As I've said on many occasions, you can win a case with the human rights tribunal only to lose it because there are no guidelines in this province or this country that can be upheld in a court of law. This legislation will do that.

The member opposite never once made a reference to the bill. But I will suggest to him that there is growing concern that the Liberal Party earlier today, their critic, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, formally stated to the media that it is your party's intention not to support this legislation. You made that decision before you participated in the public consultation. You prejudged and

prejudged this legislation on behalf of the disabled community and expressed an unwillingness to work to find resolutions. It was your own member Dwight Duncan who suggested that we get this legislation passed by November 23. We're extending the consultation period a further three-plus weeks in order to ensure that the disabled community has an—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'd like to commend the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London for a very fair analysis of the bill. I disagree with the minister. I thought the member concentrated totally on the bill and showed the inadequacies of the bill.

I would suggest to you that the disabled community at large is not very supportive of this legislation. In fact, they are quite concerned about the legislation. They understand that the 11 principles that this House unanimously passed are not included in the bill; only one of the principles is included.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Steve Peters, to thank Dwight Duncan, to thank Ernie Parsons and to thank Dalton McGuinty for the effort they've shown in trying to advise the government on how to do it the right way. The government, though, in its mindset, refuses to listen.

We can banter back and forth here in a partisan political way, but I want to take the last 49 seconds to mention an individual who tragically passed away last week. His name is Frank Marsh. He was the president of Cambrian College. The minister was supposed to come up and do a presentation and rightfully chose not to because of the death. We in Sudbury appreciate that.

But I have to tell you that two nights before he died, we talked about various bills. One of them was the colleges act. The second one was the disabilities act, and he articulated his personal concerns about the act extremely well. I would suggest to you that it would be very appropriate for this government to ensure that they listen to what the opposition is saying.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I also thought the remarks of the member were most appropriate. I should share with members of the House, because Mr Peters himself is going to be too modest to talk about the significant role that he played, that he visited the city of St Catharines and listened with a good deal of interest as people gathered from across the Niagara Peninsula to make representations in regard to the problems that are encountered by disabled people in our province and what they believed would be some of the parts they would like to see in a piece of legislation that would finally pass in this House. They had hoped it would be unanimous.

They were very clear in sharing with Mr Peters; I had an opportunity to sit in on the hearings on that day. With his particular public forum, we had that opportunity for disabled people to make those representations. There were a lot of things that came forward that you wouldn't normally think would have been problems; that is, the general public would not have recognized those as prob-

lems. I thought that's why it was particularly useful. They had an opportunity to make those representations.

Some were disabled as a result of accidents that had happened in the workplace or elsewhere, some had a disability from birth, and some were disabled as a result of disease of some kind. Each one brought a different perspective to that public forum. I know in his speech this evening, Mr Peters has shared with the House some of the observations which were made to him and some of the conclusions which were reached at those meetings.

So I want to take this opportunity to thank Steve Peters for the work that he did. I know that other members of the House have as well, but he was the speaker tonight, and I want to thank him for that representation.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Peters: I want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina, because the symbol for leadership in this province is the Premier. When the symbol for leadership doesn't show that commitment to the disabled community, either in ensuring the legislation is put in place or ensuring that his office is accessible, I think that sends a very clear message to the disabled community in this province.

I want to comment on the member for Burlington, the minister. He talked about TTY machines and not having them in our offices. Why doesn't the minister advocate so that every one of us could have a TTY in our offices? Why doesn't the minister advocate that there's proper funding given to us for our constituency offices to make our constituency offices accessible? Because you know what? When I had to make my constituency office barrier-free, I had to take that out of my global budget. Make that commitment, Mr Minister.

You talk about making a decision before the consultations have taken place. You know what, Minister? You have made the decision. You have made the decision before the consultations have taken place that this bill is right, and that's wrong.

I want to thank the member for Sudbury, because his is a community that has shown a commitment. You should go and tour Cambrian College. Go have a look at what they've done at Cambrian College and the programs that they've implemented in that college and the efforts that they've made to make it barrier-free at minimal cost; less than 1% additional cost to make that a barrier-free facility. I commend Cambrian College for what they have done.

I want to thank the member for St Catharines, too, for his comments.

There are so many areas where this government has continued to abandon the disabled community dealing with health care. Has this government implemented the Eldridge decision? The Eldridge decision in British Columbia guaranteed that persons deaf or hard of hearing would have access to medical care and access to an ASL interpreter. Has that happened? No.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Marchese: I welcome the viewers of Ontario who regularly watch this political channel. I said the other day

that they have a special obligation. Because they are keen in knowing what we do in this place, we expect that they will become a little more politically active than the rest who are not watching what we're doing. So I welcome you this evening as we debate the Minister of Citizenship's bill around the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Bill 125.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): Mr Jackson.

Mr Marchese: "The minister," because when I use their names the Speaker of the House says you can't use names in this place—if that's OK with you, Cam.

I want to take off from where the member from Elgin-Middlesex started and just remind the Ontarians watching that the Premier, yes, has a ramp but you've got to knock on his window to get in.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know Billy the maverick doesn't like what I'm saying, or he's just being contrary. I don't know.

But for the Premier of this province not to have a ramp and that you've got to knock to get in doesn't sound right, does it? He's got a whole lot of money. He's the Premier, for God's sake. Usually Premiers lead. In this particular issue, who would you expect to lead the province except the Premier of Ontario?

Mr Murdoch: Have you been in his office?

Mr Marchese: Billy, I'm just saying that I'm taking off from where the member from Elgin-Middlesex—and I trust the member from Elgin-Middlesex.

Mr Murdoch: But you have not been in his office?

Mr Marchese: I personally have not been in his office. But if Bill the maverick is saying that I haven't been there and he has, and he knows that the Premier has a ramp, why doesn't he tell me he's got a ramp? Clearly, Bill Murdoch hasn't been there; otherwise, he would have said, "Marchese, he's got a ramp." All he's saying is, "Marchese, have you been there?" No, I haven't. Have you?

Mr Murdoch: No.

Mr Marchese: You haven't either. Well, don't say anything if you don't know anything. I trust the member from Elgin-Middlesex when he says when people with disabilities go to the office of the Premier, they've got to knock and someone comes out. I don't know how they do it, but presumably someone comes out and they bring the ramp. Because if the ramp is wood, it's heavy, or if it's metal, it's heavier, I'm assuming the Premier has more than one staff who are able-bodied and are able to bring the ramp out when someone knocks, "Please let me in. We want to come in and talk to you."

Mr Christopherson: It's easier in the snow.

Mr Marchese: You think? If there's snow, it would be complicated for the staff. I don't know who the staff are; I hope they're able-bodied. If there is snow and lots of it, I think it's hard to lay it, but presumably they shovel it neatly and nicely so that they could put out the ramp. But I envision problems.

Cam, what do you think? I don't know. Let me know. I'm just sharing this with you and I'm actually sharing it with the Ontarians here. I think they're probably amused by this subject, because when the member from York North says, "We are moving dramatically," I wonder how dramatically they're moving. I don't think they've moved dramatically. They have moved dramatically slow; this is true. It took them six years since you got elected, and said, "We're going to bring in Ontarians with Disabilities Act"—six long, painful, slow years—to listen to people with disabilities, only to bring in a bill that the member from York North says, "We've moved dramatically."

People with disabilities are saying, "Hold it a moment. What have you moved to?" Where have you moved to, only to be introducing a bill where people with disabilities are saying "Billy, there's nothing in this bill"? I wonder what Murdoch is saying to those people when they're saying, "We don't see a bill here that addresses all those years of complaints that we've had against your government, who promised in 1995 to bring an Ontarians with Disabilities Act—1995." Do you recall how fast they moved to repeal the Employment Equity Act that we had introduced? Do you remember how fast they moved? And do you remember Mr Stockwell at this end of the room—somewhere around where you are, David—screaming every day, with bulging eyes, saying, "We need to repeal this bill"? He didn't call it the employment equity bill. Do you remember what he called it? The "quota bill," he would say, with his eyes popping out, reminding Ontarians that this bill is something scary to behold. When they got into power, they wasted no time in repealing the employment equity bill, which would have brought some fairness to people with disabilities after they had fought so long for some fairness to get into the workplaces, not just in terms of accessibility but to be able to be employed by those workplaces. We said, "We will establish targets so that those employers and those workplaces will reflect the community we have in Ontario." Private employers were obliged to comply with targets, which Stockwell and others called the quota bill, as if to suggest, "The aliens are coming." They repealed it in a matter of weeks, as soon as they got elected.

You have the minister et al saying, "We've moved dramatically. This is visionary. Never has any other political party done so much for people with disabilities as Cam Jackson, the Minister of Citizenship." Honest to God. They repealed the only thing about which they could have said they were building on. If they had kept the employment equity bill, they could have said, "We're building on what you started." But no, they killed it, and then they have the nerve and the fortitude to come into this place saying, "We have done so much." After six years of listening to people, they're going to listen some more, because that's what this bill is all about. They're going to keep listening to people with disabilities. It's pitiful. You guys are truly remarkably pitiful.

They're gong to have hearings in four cities. David, I don't know how you guys can sit there and just think it's

OK. You're going to have hearings while we're in session, four days on a bill that presumably you're so proud of—four days.

Hon Mr Jackson: It's six days.

Mr Marchese: Oh, six. OK, six. Four cities?

Hon Mr Jackson: Five cities.

Mr Marchese: Oh, it's five cities. I thought it was four. That's good—an extra day. Beautiful. And an extra day for clause-by-clause, presumably, right?

Hon Mr Jackson: Two.

Mr Marchese: Two days? Wow. Two days for clause-by-clause. That'll make some changes. With a committee that constantly rejects any suggestions the opposition has to make, two days is great. I suggest you put that extra day in the cities out there so people can come and tell you what they feel, and not give us two days of clause-by-clause where you will reject all the amendments that will be proposed by the opposition. Give the people with disabilities more time. You know what, Cam? I say to you, Minister, if you're really so proud—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Billy, quiet now. You're just loud now.

Give the people a chance to tell you what they think if you're so proud, because you moved so dramatically. Give the public an opportunity to come to you. By the way, perhaps you should think about how to provide for people who might have a difficult time coming to your meetings. While it is true that in Toronto it might be easier than in some other places, Billy, in your part of the world it will probably be very tough to get to. I suggest you go talk to Cam—he's right there—and say, "Cam, when we have meetings in the vicinity my community might be close to, if people from my community want to get to those committees, are you going to provide for assistance? Will you tell them they can go and, 'By the way, don't you worry. We will provide all the necessary assistance you will need to get there so you can tell us what you think about this bill'?" Bill has stopped listening now.

That's what I would do. I would, if I were the minister and proud of this bill, not rush it through now, during the session, with the four days that now Cam Jackson says is five days, but rather during the intersession when we're free and we've got time. We could spend all of January to make sure that everyone across Ontario has an opportunity to tell you what they think, if you're proud of it. If I were proud of something, man, would I give a whole lot of time. Your government has wasted no effort, when they thought a bill was popular, to make sure it was out there for weeks and weeks and weeks. When it's unpopular, you give us a day, you give the opposition a day, when you realize there's a bill you've presented that people don't like. When you like it, you go on for weeks, you consult for weeks. So we've got a problem in terms of consultation.

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We've got so many problems with this bill. One other aspect of the bill says that "the reform of the Social

Housing Act will ensure that any future social housing is fully accessible.” That’s cute, because it says that any future social housing that is built must be accessible. Isn’t that cute? They haven’t built any affordable housing. There is no social housing to be seen anywhere in this province. There are only condominiums, not accessible to people with disabilities, I don’t think. I don’t believe people with disabilities can afford the condominiums that are at the bottom of my riding here by the lake, at Queen’s Quay. They’re very expensive, those condos, you understand. I’m sure there are people with disabilities who might be wealthy, who might have inherited some wealth, possibly, but I suspect the majority of people haven’t had employment opportunities that employment equity that we introduced as NDPers would have given them. I don’t believe they have a lot of deep pockets to be able to get to those condominiums, and I’m not quite sure those condominiums are built for persons with disabilities.

So what’s left? Social housing. Who’s building social housing? No one. They’re going to make future social housing accessible, except there is none, and it’s not likely to be built by them. And the private sector, which Billy promised would build it, and Cam Jackson and the former Minister of Housing, M. Leach—he’s gone, mercifully, but he said, “When we change the Rent Control Act and bring in the Tenant Protection Act, we will have 10,000 units being built by the private sector.” He meant 10,000 social housing units—10,000 units. Speaker, I know you’re a patient man, but have you seen any—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: What are you talking about, Billy? Follow with me, stay with me. Don’t ramble somewhere else. Stay with me. I want you to interrupt me with the flow of my speech, not take me to some other tangent that has no meaning. Please work with me.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound would recognize that the member for Trinity-Spadina has the floor and that only one speaker at a time is permitted.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I like intelligent interventions, even dumb ones from time to time, I do, but I like interventions that relate to what I’m saying, because otherwise he’ll distract me into all sorts of things. I don’t mind that from time to time, but I don’t have enough time. I’ve got seven minutes left. Billy, please.

In terms of social housing, that was very good, Cam. You’re now forcing all new development that the former Minister of Housing, Mr Clement, was going to be able to build—he wasn’t able to because he was moved to another portfolio, but hopefully some minister will come in the next little while who will build social housing, and we’ll have it accessible. God bless you.

Moving on to other issues, this government has also been generous enough to download the responsibility for accessibility, for barrier-free workplaces, to the cities, the

municipalities, universities and colleges, boards of education. They all will have to draw up plans, and that’s the extent of it. As far as I know, there are no timelines, no enforcement mechanisms, no obligations on these institutions to provide barrier-free workplaces, none. But to download the responsibility to municipalities—they’ve been broken and are broke because of the policies this government has instituted in terms of downloading so many social responsibilities on the cities, whose sole revenue source is property taxes. How can you obligate municipalities to come up with plans? Presumably, once they’ve done so, hopefully they’ve got money to create barrier-free workplaces. If some municipalities do, it’s wonderful that they create plans and move toward creating barrier-free workplaces. But some won’t have the money, so what we’ll have is uneven development across Ontario. Some cities might have the money to be able to provide ramps or barrier-free workplaces. Colleges and universities certainly don’t have the money. Maybe some will have the money to be able to create barrier-free workplaces, but I’m not convinced they’re going to have the money. So isn’t it wonderful for Cam Jackson, the minister, to download this responsibility to those institutions without giving them the money it takes to make sure those things get done?

Apart from that, there are no mechanisms for timelines in terms of how fast you want to see that done and certainly no enforcement mechanisms. Finally, as I indicated earlier, there’s no money.

You have created guidelines which have no power unto themselves because we don’t know whether they will get into regulations and we don’t know whether they will be obligatory; at any rate we don’t think they will. We have the creation through this bill of accessibility councils that have no power. They will be powerless to do anything. We have the municipalities creating accessibility plans, but as I say, that’s about the extent of it. There’s no mechanism to ensure that happens because there’s no money.

We certainly have some good things this bill has proposed. What are they? Well, they’ll increase the fines for those who park in the space that is for the person with a disability. Isn’t that great? That’s big, Cam. That’s a good thing. You’re going to increase the fines for someone who takes a space that properly belongs to a person with a disability. Oh, amen, that’s moving dramatically. That’s good.

Mr Murdoch: Are you happy?

Mr Marchese: Yes, well, listen, I had to talk about something that’s good about the bill. The other good measure, as I understand it, is that you have changed the Human Rights Code, David, to remove the language that was a bit outdated and rather negative in content, and that is that they used to be referred to as handicapped individuals. That term has been obliterated by the new bill that has been presented here, with the modernized language, much more progressive language that refers to people with disabilities as such, people with disabilities; less negative, obviously, a term that people have obviously

come to agree on. You did that. Good for you. Thank God that at least you've brought in some measures that some people are going to agree with you on.

But there's so much in this bill that people with disabilities are telling you that it's a weak bill. After six years, it's a weak bill. They were hoping for so much more; so was I. So were all New Democrats, hoping for so much more, because you promised, after six years, you would introduce something that everybody would be so happy with.

Those in the private sector have no obligation to provide barrier-free workplaces. How could you introduce a bill that doesn't touch the private sector? I know it reflects your ideology. Oh, I know you folks have no ideology, especially once Ernie has come back, because Ernie said, "I'm neither left nor right. I'm just a fiscal conservative with a big heart." We'll see how big his heart is going to be when he comes back, because when you people start taking \$5 billion dollars away from everything from education to social services to environment to labour to natural resources, when five billion bucks gets taken away, I want to see how big Ernie's heart is going to be. I think it's going to shrink awfully fast when he comes back.

Mr Murdoch: He may not get back. He may not get to do that.

Mr Marchese: No, but I suspect Ernie will do well, God bless him. But if Clement gets elected—there's Tony. Tony says, "No, we haven't done enough of radical cutbacks in income taxes. We've got to do more." Tony, I couldn't believe you. You've got to cut \$5 billion and you want more income taxes cut so you can cut more services by yet another \$5 billion? Tony, please.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The guy from Niagara Falls is going to speak next. I always like it when—you've got to speak before I do so I have something to talk to you about.

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This bill is unacceptable to people with disabilities, by and large. They think you can reform this. I don't believe it, because you won't accept the changes that we will recommend. So I think it's a bad bill that needs to be defeated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael Gravelle): Questions or comments?

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to acknowledge my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. He's always filled with colourful language, and tonight was no exception. I was fascinated by his comments. I had hoped that he would perhaps have had a more thoughtful examination of the legislation and, for people watching tonight, an opportunity to actually reference sections.

He said it doesn't include the private sector, and yet he knows that it includes private sector transit operators. He knows it gives the government regulatory authority through the access council, something that will be predominated by persons with disabilities, something that even the ADA doesn't do and no other jurisdiction in North America does. This opportunity is rather unique in

Ontario, for the disabilities community to set the regulations for the private sector. But the fact is we have no guidelines in this province to establish what the thresholds, what the standards should be for accessibility, whether it's in employment, whether it's in education or whether it's in accessibility, and we have much work to do in order to get this done.

He made reference to his government and party. I have a copy of Bill 168, the equal access to post-secondary education, transportation and other services and facilities for persons with disabilities, something his colleague Gary Malkowski presented. You know, they had an access committee under the NDP; it met once a year. And you know what they said? "You can't discuss Bill 168, because that's from a government member and it's not government policy, and therefore we don't want you discussing it."

In fact, this legislation before the House today goes further than anything that was even tabled by the NDP in the past history of this province. You chalked up a \$50-billion deficit in this province and didn't do one thing for the disabled community.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): This is a very important issue. I can remember, back in the 1980s when there was a different government in power, we did everything humanly possible at that time to get disabled people on the job, where they could work and make a living like anyone else. For my constituency office, I looked high and low to get a location where wheelchairs and people with crutches and everything could get in, at ground level, and I know they really appreciate that.

I just want to tell you another little story about what happened to me on Sunday. A gentleman used to be an OPP officer and is retired now, and they just took his second leg off at the Ottawa Civic Hospital, where he is right now. He was always active, driving his van—he had it equipped and everything—and he wanted to be part of the community, driving other people who he thought were worse off than him. Government has got a big role to play there, getting him back on the job and getting him working, and that's what he wants to do.

I've been involved in my lifetime in many lifts and many different types of buildings over the years to get accessibility for wheelchairs. In our community there's a lot of that, but they're having a difficult time now to find the funds to do that.

I don't think you realize how serious it is until you're in those people's position. They can't get around and they have to have a family member take them, and most times family members are working on the job. It's very difficult.

Anyway, I hope cooler heads will prevail here and all parties will work together and will come up with something that will be suitable for our less fortunate. It could happen to any one of us at any minute.

Mr Christopherson: Let me say at the outset that there really can't be any doubt about the oration skills of my colleague from Trinity-Spadina. I think that's evi-

denced by the fact that even members of the government were applauding, I suspect not so much content but certainly delivery and a respect for talent when you see talent. My colleague is without doubt one of the most fascinating speakers in this place, and it's always a delight to listen to him.

If you'll allow me, Speaker, I want to take a little bit of exception to some of the comments the minister made about the remarks of my colleague. He first of all seems to refuse to accept the fact that in 1995—guess what, Minister? You won. Take yes for an answer. Arguing the 1995 election over again does absolutely nothing for the disabled. It might make you feel better, but it does nothing. And not only that, you're wrong. You're wrong when you say we did nothing for the disabled.

One of the things my colleague from Trinity-Spadina talked about was the fact that you've now changed the social housing act to require that they have to be accessible, and as he pointed out, you aren't building any. You haven't built one, not one, since you came to power over half a decade ago. We built close to 50,000, and among those 50,000 were dedicated units where, as we speak right now, this very instant, there are individuals who can live a life of dignity.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: There are people who live a life of dignity because we honoured a commitment to build social housing and in there we provided for accessibility. For all your taking pride in heckling, that's not doing anything for the disabled either, just like this bill.

Mr Maves: I just want to quickly say on the member opposite's comments that the Minister of Citizenship is right. I also have a copy of the same bill brought in, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 1994. It was brought in by the NDP government at the time, received first reading, which is just basically being introduced into the House, and never again saw the light of day. Debate tonight is on an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. They had five years to bring one in and never did. One was introduced by one of their own members but wasn't given the light of day, so the Minister of Citizenship is right about that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes to respond.

Mr Marchese: I thank my friend from Hamilton West, and then I want to respond to the other two Tories.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, John commented on something else.

The member from Niagara Falls is the biggest booster of this government. He's always up there with that nice voice, calm and very reassuring, almost like David Johnson, the former minister who was here, very reassuring. He said in the 30 seconds he spoke, "What did the NDP government do when they were in government? They did nothing." We talk about the employment equity bill. He doesn't know because he wasn't here, I guess. But Cam knows; Cam was here. We introduced an employment equity bill that would bring fairness to people with disabilities.

The member from Niagara Falls said, "What did the NDP do? They had five years." In five years we did the Employment Equity Act. In a couple of weeks, the Tories got rid of it. They just axed it. It was very easy. They just said no to the quota bill. Do you remember that, Billy? The member from Niagara Falls should learn about these things. I know you're so reassuring to the public that listens to you about how great you folks are.

The Minister of Citizenship, with respect to the content of the bill, said the private sector is included. Oh? Point that out to me, because they are excluded. Then he said they created advisory councils that will have people with disabilities on it. Oh? What power do these advisory councils have? Will they be able to obligate cities, municipalities, colleges and universities to actually do the plans they are obliged to do? No. The member said that we had access committees in the past and what did we do? We did nothing. We had the employment equity bill and they killed it.

Minister, I tell you, you've got to reform this bill if you want the support of the NDP. Otherwise, it's a dead bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

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Mr Maves: It's a pleasure to stand and rise and contribute to the debate on Bill 125. Before I get into my own remarks, I do want to respond to some of the remarks of the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London. When he did his speech, I unfortunately didn't have an opportunity to do a response. One of the things—I sincerely hope that Mr Peters, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, returns to the Legislature at some point this evening and apologizes for the insult he delivered to the disabled people in Ontario. When he stands in his place and says that disabled people in Ontario were hoodwinked by this government, he insults them. He says, very paternalistically, very arrogantly, that those people can't think for themselves. I think that is an ultimate insult. I hope that Mr Peters really didn't mean that and I hope he can come back and retract that statement. It was shocking that he would use that language to talk about the disabled community in this province.

Second, that same member claimed, when he spoke, that no member of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee supported this legislation. That is a falsehood. How do I know this? Well, here's a quote from Dean LaBute of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee: "I believe in moving forward with purpose and working together to reach a common end. The proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act incorporates this philosophy and offers a level of commitment that is unprecedented in Canada. I believe that, working with all levels of government in every sector, we will effect change and move steadily toward achieving a barrier-free society in Ontario. This will enable Ontarians with disabilities to participate in all aspects of community life to the best of their individual abilities." That's an endorsement from a member of the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. The member opposite was wrong to say what he said.

Third, I say to the member opposite, the NDP government through 1990 to 1995 did not enact an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. They had one of their own members introduce it, but they didn't even let it come back to the House beyond first reading. We also know that between 1985 and 1990 the Liberals, who governed Ontario, did not introduce an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. They didn't even talk about it. Between 1990 and 1995, when the Liberal Party was in opposition, they could have taken the Americans with Disabilities Act, which they purport to support, changed the title and introduced it in this Legislature as a private member's bill. Did they do that? No. Never once did they do that between 1990 and 1995. In 1995 to 1999, again they had an opportunity. Both parties opposite had an opportunity. If they believe so much that we should have an Americans with Disabilities Act here in Ontario, all they had to do was get that bill, make sure it complied with the way we write our bills here in Ontario, change the name and introduce it in this Legislature. Did they do that? No, they did not.

We move now to the next government, the current government, 1999-2001. Have the Liberals done that yet? No. They've brought a resolution into this House which was endorsed unanimously. They could have brought in a private member's bill. I've just gone through 16 years of government: five years when they were the government, 11 years when they had an opportunity. Just change the title and introduce it. They never did it. Not only that, but Mr Peters from Elgin-Middlesex-London—and the members in his party talked about how he went out and toured and consulted with the disabled community. Good for him. That was excellent. He wrote a report. Do you know, if you read that report, they didn't make one recommendation? Not one. They weren't willing to make one solid recommendation. What did they say about the Americans with Disabilities Act? Did they commit in that document that that was what they were going to introduce? No.

The NDP and the Tories are often at opposite sides of the spectrum in the Legislature. We take a position and they take one that's totally opposite. They've jumped around on tax cuts recently, but for the most part we have opposite views. But we take a stand. We take a position. The Liberals are refusing to take a position once again. This history just continues with them. I wish Mr Peters in his report had made a recommendation, had said, "This is Liberal policy. We keep talking about the Americans with Disabilities Act. That's our policy." Introduce it in the House. It gets frustrating for us on this side of the aisle.

The other thing I have to say about the Liberal Party opposite is that not only did they insult, in my view, with a very paternalistic and arrogant statement some of the people in the disabled community who have said they support this bill, but I think they insulted taxpayers. There are quotes from Mr Parsons, Mr Peters and several people on the opposite side saying we've done nothing for the disabled community, that we've turned our backs on the disabled community over six and a half years.

One thing that we as a Conservative government believe in is that we don't have money. There's only the taxpayers' money. We spend taxpayers' money. If you're going to say that we do nothing, you're basically saying that taxpayers do nothing for the disabled in Ontario. That is an insult to the taxpayers of Ontario, because you know what? They reach into their pockets year after year and spend more than \$6 billion annually to help the disabled in Ontario. For them to insult taxpayers and say, "You don't do anything for the disabled in the province of Ontario," to say to taxpayers, "You all turn your backs on the disabled in this community," is an insult. It is another one that I think they should apologize for.

I want to expand a little bit on this. Bill Adair from the Canadian Paraplegic Association said, in a letter to Minister Jackson dated November 9, 2001, with regard to this bill—now listen carefully please, Speaker, and the members opposite—"We view the introduction of this bill as a continuation of your past record of increasing support for people with disabilities in Ontario." That's right.

I can go through every ministry. I can go through the Ministry of Citizenship and give you a litany of programs that this government has introduced, continued and expanded over the years. I can do it with the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance. The bottom line is that we spend over \$6 billion annually to help people with disabilities in Ontario. Let me just talk about a few. First of all, with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, where I was once a parliamentary assistant, we campaigned in 1995 to take people with permanent disabilities out of the welfare system to give them their own system with richer benefits and different rules and regulations. We did that in 1995. We kept that promise to them. The ODSP is a separate program from Ontario Works and is a better program for those folks.

When I was at the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the minister, John Baird, had a great deal of interest in adults with developmental disabilities. He went out on the road all across Ontario and met with community living associations, with adults with developmental disabilities and with the parents of adults with developmental disabilities, and he has expanded greatly our investment in that area. He sent me out one summer to do a 15-city tour to consult with people in the developmental disabilities community. We continued the program of getting rid of institutions in Ontario. We are down to three institutions where adults with developmental disabilities reside. We moved them all into the community living sector. That is something that was started by the NDP. We agreed with that. We continued it. That cost money. On behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario, that was a better way of life for those folks. We agreed. We continued that. The taxpayers of Ontario did.

I remember meeting with one fellow who had been in an institution since he was a youngster. He'd been there 15 years. He left the institution. He moved into a community living facility. At that point in time he had two full-time jobs.

Interjection.

Mr Maves: No, he was in his 30s. He had two full-time jobs and was about to get married. His wish to me was, "I'd like to see some more of my friends who are in the institution out of the institution and into community living." We're doing that.

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The ministry is putting an additional \$55 million this year, growing to \$197 million annually, into revitalizing developmental services, improving respite services, improving wages for community living and providing more spaces for these folks. There's a \$2-million partnership between community and social services and the Ontario March of Dimes to financially assist adults with physical disabilities to modify their homes and vehicles to enhance independent living and mobility. With the social contract under the NDP, children's treatment centres as well as children's mental health facilities had expenditures reduced. When we came in in 1995 we ended the social contract. We ended it for teachers. We ended it for everyone in the public sector with the exception of MPPs. For kids with spina bifida, with autism, with severe disabilities in these children's treatment centres around Ontario, we ended the social contract and we gave them their first large increase in funding in many years.

In the most recent budget, the Minister of Finance added a \$20-million increase in the budgets of the children's treatment centres. This is a major accomplishment, something they worked hard for. Mr Bradley, Mr Kormos and myself visited the children's treatment centre in Niagara and listened to their request. I brought it forward to the finance minister and he acted on it.

What are some of the other programs in other ministries? The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ontario building code: over the last six years we've made improvements to the Ontario building code that made lives better for folks with disabilities. At the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the ministry I'm currently involved in as parliamentary assistant, we continue to have the assistive devices program, which helps Ontario residents with long-term disabilities to pay for devices such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, and vision and communication aids. The 1999-2000 budget for this program alone was \$98 million. That's not my money; that's taxpayer's money. They spend a lot of money assisting their fellow Ontarians, those with disabilities.

Brian's Law is another mental health reform we brought in. These changes, with Brian's Law, will permit community treatment orders to be issued for persons with serious mental illnesses who pose a danger to themselves or others, something the community asked for for many years. This is something Mr Patten, across the way with the Liberals, wanted to see. We brought that in. Last year \$15.8 million in new funding was provided to help implement community care treatment options under Brian's Law, another financial investment the members opposite don't want to talk about.

The ministry has put millions of dollars into supportive housing for persons with disabilities, and early

screening for infants with hearing problems and pre-school speech and language services.

There are a lot of things in the Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities last year provided \$4 million to train qualified assessors to test and identify learning disabilities in young francophones. In 1997 it allocated \$30 million over five years to four pilot projects to help students with learning disabilities make the transition from high school to post-secondary education.

Last year the Ministry of Education announced a \$155-million increase in special-education funding for services for students with high needs. This government has brought in the highest ever special-education budget in the province of Ontario. With the funding formula in 1997, which the members opposite opposed, we sealed the special-education funding envelope in Ontario so that boards that got money for special ed could not take that money and spend it in any other area, could not spend it on administration or on building a new administrative building. They could only spend that money on special ed. We sealed that envelope, and we've continually raised that envelope and the money within it.

Like all of us, persons with disabilities pay their share of taxes and service charges and levies and so on, but the Ministry of Finance has been instrumental in lightening that load over the last few years in recognition of how unfairly these expenses can burden persons with disabilities on a daily basis. The Minister of Finance, in the May budget, announced that 10% of the property assessment for a new residence that accommodates persons with disabilities or seniors who would otherwise require care in an institution would be exempt from taxation. The 2000 budget included amendments to the Municipal Act to require municipalities to provide tax relief on a permanent basis to low-income seniors and persons with disabilities for all types of property tax increases. We expanded the retail sales tax rebate for personal-use vehicles purchased for transporting people with physical disabilities to include additional family members and non-family caregivers. For getting around the community, we fund 75% of the cost of low-floor buses—there's \$240 million—and we subsidize specialized transit services for a total of \$134 million between 1995 and 1997.

My municipality has a committee for the disabled. I've had several meetings with them. I've had Minister Jackson meet with that same group and some others from St Catharines and other areas. I had Brenda Elliott, when she was doing some consultations, meet with a similar group. One of the things they always talk about is that they would like—they did not necessarily always talk about an ODA; they talked about expanded services. One of those services was transit, so the government has said, "We are going to get back into transit in a big way." We've challenged the federal government to come along.

I've noticed the Ontario Liberals have not taken up that challenge. I understand there's a bit of a fear factor in a lot of things there. They don't want to stand up to the federal cousins on how much they're underfunding health

care. They're now at 14 cents: 14 cents out of every health care dollar in Ontario comes from the federal government. Initially that was supposed to be a 50-50 split. Every province—and Ontario—has asked the federal government to live up to their end of the bargain and their responsibility.

The NDP has supported us in that call for them to live up to their responsibilities, but not the Ontario Liberals. I think that at a lot of their fundraisers nowadays, federal Liberals come out and support them and that helps them get some people to their fundraisers. Maybe they don't want to upset the applecart. That's a sad commentary, because they should be standing up for Ontario citizens. They did that today, actually. In a resolution on the police, they finally stood up to their federal cousins, but I think it was a pretty easy thing for them to stand up to. I wish the Liberals would do that. I wish the Liberals would stop insulting taxpayers.

I've spoken about just a very small number of the programs we've introduced or expanded in Ontario. There are all kinds of housing subsidies for the disabled. There is all kinds of income support through the ODSP program. There are billions of dollars, over \$6 billion a year, that Ontario taxpayers spend on helping Ontarians with disabilities in this province. For Mr Parsons or members opposite to say that taxpayers are turning their backs on government is untrue. I just explained and showed you a raft of reasons why they're not turning their backs. For the member opposite, Mr Peters, to say that members of the disabled community have been hoodwinked, I hope he comes back and apologizes for that comment because it's insulting. It says that they can't think for themselves, that they couldn't read this legislation, that they couldn't look at the program Minister Jackson laid before them. They decided they liked it. To say they were hoodwinked says they're not capable of making up their own minds and their own decisions, and I think he should come back and apologize.

So I support this legislation. As Mr LaBute from the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee says, "I believe in moving forward with the purpose and working together to reach a common goal. The proposed Ontarians with Disabilities Act incorporates this philosophy and offers a level of commitment that is unprecedented in Canada." Unless you're going to stand up and put your money where your mouth is, come up with a big thick report, actually take a stand on an issue and make a recommendation, maybe introduce a bill of your own, unless you're going to do that, sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Before we go to questions and comments, I've been greatly disturbed this evening. We are using members' names constantly when we should be using their ridings. As you know, the standing orders and our traditions call for that. Let's just remind ourselves that using the riding name is the proper way to address each other.

Questions and comments?

2030

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker; a good point.

I would like to respond to the member from Niagara Falls, who is, I think, one of the more considerate and thoughtful members in this House.

Mr Bradley: He'll put that in his literature. I wouldn't say that. Take it back.

Mr Patten: No, I've been on committee with him and I've seen him at work and I think he does his homework on a variety of things. Of course, he has his own bias. He talks about feeling strongly about an insult to taxpayers. Of course, I don't feel the same way; I don't think there is an insult to taxpayers. But I would suggest to him that the rhetoric of his party is always "taxpayers." It seems to me that it's important to talk about the people of Ontario, because when he talks about taxpayers, how do you think seniors feel, who may now be retired—they may be paying tax, they may not be; they may be on a fixed income, they may not be—people who are disabled, people on welfare for a temporary period of time etc? So the rhetoric of the member from Niagara Falls, who I think is frankly a very interesting member, who works hard, continues to use an economic category of analysis or description for people in this jurisdiction.

I would suggest to you that perhaps talking about the people of Ontario, all the people of Ontario, may be the most appropriate thing to have them all consider, to listen, to be able to respond in their own way to what might be appropriate in this House as we deal with those who may be less fortunate because of disabilities or one thing or another. I did want to make that final point.

Mr Christopherson: In responding to the comments of the member from Niagara Falls, I found it interesting if not actually gutsy for him to be accusing or challenging the Liberals to "put their money where their mouth is"—a direct quote from his comments—given the fact that there's not a nickel attached to this bill. At the end of the day, removing barriers is going to cost money. It's going to cost somebody money to give 1.5 million Ontarians the rights that they're entitled to. Either new construction is going to pay the price, or on retrofits or on public buildings, and whether it's private money or public money or a combination thereof, it's going to cost money. I thought it took an awful lot of guts for the member to accuse the official opposition of not putting their money where their mouth is. Where's yours? Not a nickel here. In fact, the bit of courage he had in setting himself up for this by making this comment is about the only courageous thing about this bill.

If you go from the point of view that an Ontarian is an Ontarian, that if you have a right to access buildings in Thunder Bay, you ought to have exactly that same right in Windsor, Hamilton, Toronto and everywhere in between. Yet what have you done that's so courageous? You're going to allow municipalities to require new businesses. I've sat on city council. I see former city councillors sitting here. We know the heat they're going to take. You don't have the guts to take the heat. You put it on to municipalities. If you had any courage and conviction, you'd have said point blank, "All new buildings must ... every city, period." Take the initiative. Take the responsibility. It's not here.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was intrigued by listening to the member from Niagara Falls. I know the amount of commitment that he personally has taken in his role as parliamentary assistant to Minister Baird in his former role.

I think Minister Jackson deserves to be recognized as taking—although it's a very limited step, I might admit, the most important thing is to recognize that the problem is there and take that first step. If I was to look at Bill 125, which we're discussing, I can't help but think of Minister Baird more recently this summer visiting the Central Seven, which is the homes for the special care group. He was there to make a commitment in capital to provide homes. I think of this in real terms; I think of families with children with special needs. As they grow older and their children grow older, they're no longer able to support them on an ongoing basis. John Baird was there to make sure that Central Seven had the capital to have a home for people with special and attendant care.

More recently, Minister Flaherty, in the budget, also recognized that there was an issue with respect to pay which was somewhat addressed and is addressed, as the member from Niagara Falls said. I also think of Grandview children's treatment centre and the number of children I believe—they put a request in the pre-budget for additional funding for children with special needs. I think it was as much as 20%, and that funding has flowed in the last budget.

If you look again at Bill 125, another thing it really does take action on, more importantly perhaps, is in section 13 of the bill. It says the minister responsible for the administration of the bill is required to establish an accessibility advisory committee.

Mr Peters: I accepted the challenge from the member from Niagara to come back into the House. I went back to my office and I watched with interest his comments this evening. I'll tell you that if anybody should stand up and apologize to 1.5 million persons with disabilities in this province, it's the Mike Harris government. Because you have abandoned them and you did hoodwink them. Your government and your minister, Minister Jackson over there, left the impression with the disabled community that this was going to be a piece of legislation that would be in the best interests of persons with disabilities in this province. He left the impression with individuals in this province that those 11 principles that were unanimously endorsed in this Legislature were going to be included in this legislation.

So if anybody should stand up and apologize to 1.5 million individuals in this province, it's you, it's the Harris government, because you've abandoned persons with disabilities in this province. You can stand up all you want and talk about all the wonderful things you've done with money. We hear about the dollars for individuals with special needs in this province, with developmental disabilities. Do you know that money that the minister announced? I think it would be really good to have the auditor go out and do an audit, and look at where that money went, and go have a look at John

Baird's riding and see how much money went into his riding, and see how much money went to London. Do you know how much money? Four new spaces.

You're telling me you're committed to persons with disabilities across this province? That's a joke. You have abandoned them. The honourable member talked in his comments about his own advisory committee that exists within the community of Niagara Falls. You go sit down and talk to those individuals and you find out, now that they've had an opportunity to read this legislation and look at what's not in this legislation, they do see how you have abandoned them and they do see how you've hoodwinked them.

I think you should be ashamed of that, because this was a piece of legislation that obviously had unanimous support all around this Legislature for the past six years, and you stood back and abandoned 1.5 million persons in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Maves: I'd like to thank all the members for responding to my comments.

To the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, I was hopeful when you came back in that you would indeed apologize. You said a lot; you spoke really fast. I listened closely. You still didn't.

To the member from Hamilton West, put your money where your mouth is. My whole entire speech was about the \$6 billion that taxpayers spend annually on helping Ontarians with disabilities, including retail sales tax breaks, the \$100-million assistive devices programs and the tax incentives for businesses to make their workplaces more accessible.

To the member from Ottawa Centre, who said, "I wish the member opposite, the member for Niagara Falls, would consider the people, not just the economics and all the money that you've invested in this area for people with disabilities in the province of Ontario," I would just say, I think I did speak about the people. I did speak from first-hand knowledge, for instance, of my tour of about 15 cities, meeting with adults with developmental disabilities, their parents, their caregivers in community living facilities, day programs, respite programs, work experience programs. They came and said we needed an investment again. I went back to John Baird and said, "John, they do need an investment," and John went to the Minister of Finance and said, "They do need an investment." The Minister of Finance, in the last budget, did come through with a large investment for that sector. That was about people. That was about going out, seeing people, asking them what their needs were, realizing that they had those needs and responding.

That has happened again and again. It happened with adults with physical disabilities. Children's treatment centres was another example I gave.

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The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Prescott-Russell.

In my first remarks, I would like to indicate that I am at least relieved to find that we have some kind of legislation before the House to debate. We had a promise from the Premier of this province, made in 1995, that we would have a meaningful Ontario act dealing with people with disabilities. You know how you always hear the Conservatives say, "A promise made, a promise kept," and there's a certain segment of the media who buy that. I must say, they've been quite successful in perpetrating that myth upon the people of this province. When you're in politics, you have a little bit of I guess envy of that ability to perpetrate a myth of that kind on the people of this province. They have said it on many occasions. If you keep saying it enough, then when you read a national columnist who doesn't cover this Legislature, even the national columnist will then continue to perpetrate that myth, in this case not only perpetrate but perpetuate that myth to the people of this province.

That was a promise that was broken. We had a sham of an act brought forward by the honourable Isabel Bassett, then the member for St Paul's, who was not allowed to bring forward a bill which had teeth in it. People with disabilities in this province, or indeed in any other jurisdiction, are deserving of the right to live their lives as others do. This is not a privilege we grant to them. This instead is a right, surely, that people have as human beings. They had to fight for this for a long time.

I can recall my days on St Catharines city council where, when it was proposed by people with disabilities that the curbs be cut so that wheelchairs could go down or up when you reach the sidewalk, there were many people who said at that time, "We can't do that because vehicles will be jumping the curb, then, and causing great problems." Arguments were made in that silly a fashion against what people with disabilities were proposing.

Around the world, particularly where there are the financial resources to implement it, we have wanted to see people with disabilities have the same rights as others. I think of it in education, where there are many physical barriers to people accessing the kind of education they would like to have and are deserving of.

We have in the field of transportation the same situation. One need only look at the subway system in Toronto to see that it's certainly not accessible to people with disabilities. A little complaint here on the other side is that very often the escalator is going the wrong way. I could never figure out an escalator going down, for instance, in a subway. It should virtually always be going up. But for people with disabilities, they would appreciate having a way to access the subway system.

Our buses now are equipped to deal with people who have physical disabilities. We have a service that, while it is better than what used to be the case, is not what people with disabilities would like it to be. I'm talking about a special transit service for people with disabilities, the paratransit, as it's called. I thank the people within our communities who have made a financial contribution to the capital cost. There are many organizations, just to mention one, such as the Royal Canadian Legion and so

many others in our communities who've made that contribution, but that has had to come from the volunteer sector, along with the transit commission locally. We would like to see that service enhanced and expanded, and indeed what many people with disabilities would say is, "We would even prefer if you would make the so-called regular service accessible to those of us who have physical disabilities."

I think it's important to do it right when we bring forward a bill of this kind. Perhaps somewhere along the line the government will significantly modify the bill to make it acceptable to people who, upon reflection, have found the bill wanting in many ways. Certainly there are those out there who are so desperate for some kind of legislation that is a start that they might be prepared to endorse this piece of legislation as a beginning, but many find it, as I say, wanting in many different ways.

I want to thank my colleagues—and you'll forgive me, because you just told the House that we should be using ridings. The problem is, the riding names keep changing, so I'll ask for your forgiveness in this particular case, Mr Speaker, when I mention my colleague Mr Peters and my colleague Mr Duncan, who brought forward a resolution in this House. I remember because I gave up my spot in the time for private members' public business to allow him to present the resolution because I thought it was timely and important that we do so. And Mr Parsons—so we've had three. I thank you for your forbearance. I know members of the House, like myself, sometimes have to scramble to look at the specific names of the new ridings.

I would like to thank my own colleagues. There are probably people on the government side who should be thanked. That's why we have government speakers, to thank themselves.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): We don't do that on this side.

Mr Bradley: To my friend from Brockville, Leeds-Grenville or whatever the new name of the riding is, when I get asked by the news media, who will sometimes say, "Don't you say anything good about the government, or do you not have a good comment on the budget?" I say, "Well, phone Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls. He will tell you why the budget is good, and I will find perhaps the deficiencies in it." I may find certain aspects of the budget to be acceptable or supportable, but I know that in the limited amount of time I have, my role as a member of the opposition is to explain where I think it's deficient, where it might be better, and a member of the government has the role of extolling the virtues of that budget.

I know that other members have mentioned, with justification, the fact that municipalities, at least municipalities of over 10,000 people, have certain obligations that they must meet. This is a classic case of downloading, not because the government is requiring that municipalities undertake certain activities to make themselves much more acceptable in terms of the quality of life for people with disabilities but because they do so

without providing the financial resources. We know that municipalities largely depend upon the property tax, which does not take into account a person's ability to pay. They require that property tax to fund what they are doing outside of the now skyrocketing user fees they're forced to impose on people in the municipalities because of the downloading of responsibility from this province to municipalities.

I'll tell you, the people on the front line take all the flak, and that is as it has been, I suppose, for some time, because they're the people you can get at. For instance, in my riding this week there are discussions taking place about the closing of community schools, schools within neighbourhoods. It's easy to get at the local trustees and blame the local trustees, and indeed they have to make the final decision. But it's really the funding formula imposed upon boards of education for keeping local schools, neighbourhood schools, open that is the villain in the piece. I draw that as an analogy with the requirement being imposed upon municipalities, justifiably, in this legislation; but what they require, then, is assistance with the financial resources. Where are they going to get the money?

The provincial government in this province has decided that instead of investing in matters of this kind, in the implementation of this piece of legislation, they are going to give a tax cut to the rich in the province: a \$2.2-billion tax cut for the corporations; an at least \$300-million tax break for voucher education, that is, for people sending their kids to private schools; and then yet another income tax cut in the province.

2050

If you knock on doors and ask people, "Would you like a tax cut?" the immediate reaction most people will give is, "Sure, I'd love it," until you explain the consequences of that tax cut. Nobody today, outside of a few genuine and ardent supporters of this government, believes this theory about, "If only you cut these corporation taxes, we are going to get much more back in revenue." Nobody believes that, even the most conservative economists.

I've quoted many times my friend Dr Joseph Kushner, who has been called by columnists in a local newspaper Dr Negative and Professor No, or Dr No and Professor Negative—I can't decide which—and Frosty the No-man and so on because in his 26 years on St Catharines city council he has been the voice of frugality when it comes to local taxpayers. He has been the voice of caution. He has indicated clearly—he once said this at council when they were talking about the tax cut previously—that the combination of tax cuts and expenditure cuts by the government is in fact contractionary. He said that any economist worth his salt will tell you that.

Yet this government tries to, again, perpetrate upon the people of this province the myth that somehow all these tax cuts are going to bring back more revenues. The Minister of Finance will get up and say, "Well, look, over the last six years it has brought in all this additional revenue." That was the booming economy in the United

States. There would have been even more revenue, so that we would not have had to put the province in over \$20 billion in additional debt under the Conservatives, which we did, if indeed they had awaited the implementation of their tax cuts until such time as they had the budget balanced.

I see my friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, my friend Bill Murdoch here. I'm not supposed to use the names. I know that. I'm going to be reprimanded for that. I think it was that member and the now Minister of Labour, the now Speaker, the member for Oakville, and I think Mr Arnott—again, I break the rule, but it is Waterloo-Wellington, I'm sure, in this case. I know you want me to—

The Acting Speaker: You've been pushing this for quite a while. No more.

Mr Bradley: They've been members a longer time. They said, "Look, wait until you've got the budget balanced; then implement your tax cuts." But instead this government borrowed money to give tax cuts. What happened was that the debt of the province went way up. If you said that to the national commentators, they would stare at you blankly and say, "Surely the debt of the province didn't go up under the Conservatives." It went up \$22 billion under the Conservatives because they did not listen to the cautioning of at least four members—maybe more I don't know about—who said, "OK. We're in favour of tax cuts, but wait till you've got the budget balanced. Then we don't add to the debt. It doesn't make sense." Also, they recognized that if you're going to do that, you'd have to cut these budgets.

The Minister of the Environment is here. She had to accept the consequences of all these cuts when she took over the ministry. She has now been able to secure, as a result of the pressure of the opposition I'm sure, more funding for her ministry. But she now recognizes that the Minister of Finance will be wielding an axe at the Ministry of the Environment again.

Why do I mention all these things in the context of this particular piece of legislation? It's because there are some provisions in this legislation that are good, and it is wanting in many ways. I say that because the implementation is going to be rather interesting without the necessary provincial funding.

I would think that we could find that money, for instance, if the government quit its blatant political advertising. I appeared on a Global television show back when Robert Fisher was on Global. The member for Oakville, who is now the Speaker, was—I won't say defending the government position; he was there to explain the government position. He was honest enough to say on that occasion that even he found it hard to accept the kind of government advertising we were seeing. What do we hear now? There's more advertising. They're advertising the advertising. They're saying, with their television ads, "Wait till you get On, this magazine that's coming to you with a picture of the Premier." It won't be the one of his golfing in Florida that the Toronto Star got; it will be a very favourable-looking

photograph of the Premier. I'm saying that if you took the money you were going to give away to the richest people in the province in tax cuts, and if you took the money you're going to spend on government advertising and invested part of it in the implementation of this bill, I think the applause for the bill would be much louder and much more sincere. So I urge that on the government.

I want to pick one aspect of the bill to deal with, and that is the implementation of its provisions. I also lament the fact that it leaves the private sector almost untouched, unlike the American bill that deals with people with disabilities, because I think the private sector has an obligation as well.

I promised that I would share with my colleague from Prescott-Russell some of the time this evening to talk about this bill, so I'm going to yield the floor at this time to my good friend.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Prescott-Russell.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : Je voudrais juste apporter une correction : c'est Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. It used to be Prescott and Russell; now it is Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. I want to make sure that this region is not forgotten.

C'est toujours un plaisir de prendre la parole et débattre un projet de loi. La raison pour laquelle nous débattons un projet de loi de la sorte, c'est afin d'informer le public le mieux possible sur le contenu du projet de loi.

Ce projet de loi est intitulé Loi visant à améliorer le repérage, l'élimination et la prévention des obstacles auxquels font face les personnes handicapées et apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois. Ce projet de loi est attendu depuis plus de six ans. C'est une des promesses qui faisaient partie de la plate-forme électorale du gouvernement Harris en 1995. Je peux dire que voilà déjà six ans et quatre mois, aujourd'hui nous arrivons avec ce projet de loi qui a été déposé parce qu'un membre du Parti libéral de l'Ontario, le député de Windsor-St Clair, a mis des pressions sur le gouvernement afin qu'on vienne avec ce projet de loi-là.

Lorsque nous regardons le projet de loi, on peut dire que ce projet de loi n'a pas de dents. We say in English that this bill has no teeth. The reason I say this bill has no teeth is that we refer too often—je vais lire quelques passages dans ce projet de loi : « Le gouvernement ... en consultation. » En consultation ? Il faut dire que le gouvernement donnera les responsabilités aux conseils municipaux de mettre sur pied un comité, mais je passais à travers le projet de loi et je me demande, quels seront les critères que ce comité-là doit avoir en place ? Je continue : « ... lorsque cela est techniquement possible. » Techniquement possible ? Quelle est la définition de « techniquement » lorsque je demande à une personne handicapée, « lorsque cela est techniquement possible », encore une fois ? « Le gouvernement peut inclure des exigences... » Encore là, on dit « peut inclure ». Je dis toujours que c'est un projet de loi qui n'a pas de dents.

Je continue encore. À l'article 11 : « Le lieutenant-gouverneur en conseil peut, par règlement, désigner des

organisations, ou des catégories d'organisations, à ajouter à l'annexe ou à l'en retirer. » Donc, encore une fois, c'est autant dire qu'on peut faire ça, mais le tout sera décidé par le comité qui sera mis en place.

Lorsque je regarde le projet de loi dans son entier, je peux voir que oui, à quelques endroits tels que l'article numéro 3, nous référons à des amendes qui vont au-delà de 300 \$ à 5 000 \$, qui auparavant étaient de 60 \$ et non plus de 500 \$. Mais dans plusieurs endroits, lorsque nous regardons le moment où il s'agit des stationnements pour les personnes handicapées, on réfère seulement à 300 \$. On ne réfère jamais aux 5 000 \$.

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Je peux dire que oui, ce gouvernement a l'habitude de présenter des projets de loi mais ne met jamais en place la loi telle que prescrite dans le projet de loi. Je parlais cet après-midi à Manon Le Paven, qui est la présidente du comité des services en français à Toronto. Elle me disait qu'au 85, L'Esplanade ici même à Toronto, nous avons un bloc appartements de 130 logis. Seulement 16 en sont conçus pour les handicapés. Nous regardons le centre d'accueil Héritage : un appartement sur 135 logis. Où sont les critères déjà établis, qu'on nous disait, pour la protection de nos handicapés ?

Je parlais aussi, la semaine dernière, avec la ministre responsable pour les services de longue durée dans nos résidences de personnes âgées. Elle nous disait que la consultation avait été faite. J'ai traversé pour lui demander, où avons-nous fait les consultations ? Il est rare que nous prenons le temps de nous rendre dans le secteur rural pour connaître les besoins des personnes qui sont prises dans des situations comme celles-ci dans le secteur rural.

The Acting Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity this evening to follow on what I thought were very good presentations by the member for St Catharines and the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. The member for St Catharines focused on the issue of implementation. It's interesting, because this morning there was a very important press conference in this building by a number of groups that represent the disabled in Ontario. They had a very simple and yet clear message for the government, and it was primarily around the question of implementation, because they want this bill to work. They want things in this bill that indicate to them a seriousness, which they've yet to detect, that this government will make sure that those things they set out for municipalities and other government organizations to do are enforceable, that there are penalties in place if that in fact doesn't happen.

One of the issues they raised as well that I think is important to put on the table here tonight in terms of implementation is that it seems to be focused almost solely on issues of mobility and access for people with mobility challenges. They're saying that they hope this government is going to be willing to expand this legislation to guarantee that it will deal with and provide opportunity for every form of disability in this province,

whether it be a mental disability, a physical disability, a disability of hearing or seeing or whatever, that it takes in the whole realm. They don't see at this point that in fact this bill does that. So the minister perhaps, in his opportunity to talk to us for two minutes, may want to comment on that. They said that.

They also hope that the government is going to be willing to accept significant amendments to the bill and that they will be willing to go out across the province and listen to people in the recess, the January, February, March period when the House is not sitting.

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all I want to acknowledge the comments by the member for St Catharines and the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. At the outset, I would like to commend the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell because he's the first member in this House who actually held the bill in his hand and made reference to it. It is particularly important, given the fact that the critic for the Liberal Party has consumed one hour of this House's time without ever once specifically referencing the bill, and yet the member, in the brief time that was presented to him, whether he was critical of it or not, at least was dealing with the substance of this bill.

We have indicated very clearly that this bill creates some unprecedented opportunities in Ontario. Particularly, nowhere in North America can we find any legislation which specifically empowers the disabilities community to set regulations. The member opposite alluded to that, and I appreciate his bringing that to our attention. He has expressed legitimate concerns about whether or not the legislation is clear enough about the authority that the disabilities community has. I commend the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell because he understands—and he's been one of the first members to acknowledge that in fact this legislation does empower them to do that. We will welcome any friendly amendments that help clarify that point if it gives additional comfort and satisfaction to those people. But the fundamental principle is that this legislation contains the opportunity for the disabilities community to make those decisions. The ADA in the United States doesn't include it. There is no legislation in Canada and there's no legislation in the United States that includes this important opportunity, and I want to commend the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Gravelle: I want to compliment the member for St Catharines and the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for their thoughtful remarks. I think it is important to state that one of the concerns we all have is that we've all been quite desperate to have this legislation brought forward. There have been many remarks made in the House throughout the evening trying to compare who did what, when or who didn't do what, when in terms of bringing forward legislation. Indeed, this government did make a commitment back in 1995, and it took this long to bring forward this legislation. It has taken six and a half years to get to this point.

Yes, there are some organizations that want to move forward with this legislation. I will acknowledge that.

But the concerns that are being expressed by many people are exacerbated by the fact that now we are seeing a process whereby the next time this bill is called, it will be for a time allocation measure. The debate will be cut off. We will have an immediate vote on second reading and we will then be going to public hearings. We are glad we are going to public hearings, but it is happening awfully quickly. We are not going to enough communities. I don't think we are giving the disabilities community enough time. They've made that very clear to me. They would like to have more time to examine the bill and more time to put forward their presentations.

By December 7, the public hearings will be concluded. By December 11, we will have clause-by-clause discussion and amendments will come forward. I would really hope that the minister—I appreciate his being in the House tonight—will genuinely listen to some of the amendments, because there are some important amendments that very much need to be made. What we all fear is that these amendments will not be accepted because, as has been referenced by several members, this bill in and of itself deals more strictly with disability issues related to mobility. I had a meeting last week in Thunder Bay with the disabilities community, and the deaf community came out in large numbers, very concerned about the legislation. We have these suspicions and we have these concerns, and I do think this is being put through the Legislature way too quickly.

Mr Christopherson: The member from St Catharines underscored and talked about the requirements of municipalities under the bill. The minister, just a few minutes ago, said he was so impressed when people stood up and held the bill and pointed to it. Well, here you go: I'm holding it, I'm pointing to it and I'm making reference to sections 15, 16 and the attached schedule. The attached schedule, of course, is a list of everybody whom you are telling to do the job that, quite frankly, you ought to be doing with this bill. This is in the schedule, Minister. I'm actually holding the bill. Remember, the thing that impresses you so much? You tell every district school board, every hospital, every board of governors of a college and every university in Ontario that they are required to present accessibility plans to this government. Where are the timelines? Where are the goals? Most importantly, where's the money going to come from? You're not putting up a dime.

When I challenged the member from Niagara Falls earlier, he rattled off a whole list of other line items, but nothing attached to this bill. I said earlier, and no government member has refuted it, that at the end of the day this is a measure that costs money. Giving disabled persons their rights costs money, much like democracy itself costs money. You're not providing it, but you are really good at dictating what everybody else has to do. Given the downloading that you've dropped on every district school board, every hospital, every college and every university, how are they supposed to pay for it? What other programs will the disabled and the general population not be able to access because they've got to divert

money—except that you don't force anybody to do anything anyway. There you go, Minister; I pointed to the bill, but it is still empty.

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The Acting Speaker: Response.

Mr Bradley: On behalf of the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell and myself, I appreciate the remarks that were made by members of the House. I want to say that the member for Hamilton West again identifies and underlines the important part of the implementation, and that is the funding. He has schools in his community that are closing at the present time because of another funding formula. Now those boards are going to be asked to find money to implement the provisions of this bill, so it's going to make things even worse unless they get financial assistance from the province.

The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North talked about, I think wisely, the amount of consultation now that the bill is before us and the need for people to be able to evaluate it and its implications and make recommendations on how it can be improved. The member for Burlington talked about those of us who have not held the bill in our hands. I hold the bill in my hand once again and I would say—

Hon Mr Jackson: But you haven't read it.

Mr Bradley: He makes accusations, as he did against the Liberal critic in this field in this Legislature. This comes from my good friend, who is very objective in these matters. He doesn't have a vested interest. The member for Sault Ste Marie told me this evening that the Liberal critic in this case dissected this bill section by section, totally contrary to what the minister just told this House. He has no vested interest in making Liberals look good. He's a fair-minded member who wanted to contradict what the minister had to say. I respect the member for Sault Ste Marie for saying that and for talking about its enforceability and its implementation, as he should.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I am pleased tonight to be able to participate in the discussion of Bill 125, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001.

I want to first start by congratulating the minister, Cam Jackson, for bringing this bill forward, because it's in essence a bill that will benefit all Ontarians with disabilities across the province. So I want to congratulate him for all of the work that he's done in the consultation process in bringing this bill forward and putting it together.

With this bill, the government is moving dramatically to increase independence and opportunity for persons with disabilities. We are, again, keeping our promise, and persons with disabilities will now have more of a say than ever in decisions which affect their lives. We have embarked on a journey whose destination is a society where old barriers are removed and no new barriers will ever be created. We will not rest until we arrive at this destination. Our government has made a special commitment to persons with disabilities, a commitment that builds and has gone forward.

Ontario is recognized as a leader in services for persons with disabilities. Our foundation of legislation and services for persons with disabilities, including the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code, is considered the strongest in North America. But barriers do remain. We must finish the job.

Ontario can no longer afford to deny persons with disabilities the fullness of citizenship and human experience. What do I really mean when I say that?

It means getting in and around a community safely. It means the right to get into the local library or the local recreation centre. The right to attend and participate in town hall meetings, in council meetings. The right to go to the local mall or Main Street and shop for essentials. The right to participate as any other individual in Ontario can. It means being able to eat in a restaurant of choice, getting a job that nurtures your skill, travelling to the next community and getting around there safely. The right to live as independently as possible.

Those are the things that so many people in society enjoy every day, the real and tangible things that make a life full.

The people of Ontario are fair and inclusive. Their attitudes have been shifting for some time now. They know there is a problem and that the time has come to set it right. Our government believes Ontario must build on this momentum to move forward with the province, to move forward with this legislation.

Persons with disabilities represent a significant and growing part of our population. Today, according to Statistics Canada, more than 1.6 million Ontarians have disabilities. As our population ages, the proportion of persons with disabilities increases. Two decades from now, it's estimated that nearly 20% of the population will have a disability. That's one in every five people. And that's just persons with disabilities. Accessibility challenges also affect the millions of parents, grandparents, families, friends, neighbours, co-workers and professionals who are involved with disabled persons on a daily basis.

When you look at these figures, it becomes clear that enhancing the ability of persons with disabilities to have equal access to opportunity, to live an independent life and to make a contribution to their community will have a significant positive impact on the province's future prosperity.

It has been estimated, for example, that the potential spending power of Canadians with disabilities is as much as \$20 billion to \$25 billion per year. Measures that improve accessibility and opportunity are consequently bound to generate significant economic benefits for all Ontarians.

But you and I know that the moral argument supersedes all other arguments here. The values that attract people to Ontario—tolerance and fairness, equality and justice—are those values most strongly offended by a continued failure to act on behalf of persons with disabilities. If our words are to have meaning, then we should act.

The minister did act. On November 1 the Minister of Citizenship unveiled Independence and Opportunity: Ontario's Framework for Change for Persons with Disabilities. The vision statement affirms our society's determination to work for an Ontario where old barriers are removed and no new ones are created, to work for that future of independence and opportunity that persons with disabilities so richly deserve.

Let me read a portion from it:

"The people of Ontario support the right of every person with a disability to live as independently as possible, to enjoy equal opportunity and to participate fully in every aspect of life in our province.

"We believe that the dignity and worth of all Ontarians should be respected and valued.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that persons with disabilities share the same rights, freedoms and obligations as every Ontarian. This is a responsibility which rests with every government, every region, every institution, every association, every sector and every person in Ontario....

"The government of Ontario pledges to work in partnership with Ontarians to build on what we have already achieved together. We will move steadily towards a province in which no new barriers to persons with disabilities are created and existing ones are removed."

That's from Independence and Opportunity: The Vision We Share. It is signed by the Premier and the Minister of Citizenship.

The vision is going to be widely displayed. It will be framed and you will find it in government buildings, schools, hospitals, municipal buildings, hotels and thousands of other places.

Our government consulted with more than 100 individuals and groups, persons with disabilities, municipalities, the broader public sector and the private sector. I hosted a consultation in my own riding, a round table that dealt with Ontarians with disabilities. I'm proud to say that some of the ideas that came out of the round table in Thornhill are incorporated in this legislation today. So I can tell my constituents of Thornhill that not only am I listening as their representative, I'm bringing the issues forward to the minister and the minister has incorporated them into this bill.

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One of the issues that came out of the Thornhill consultation was the issue around handicapped parking. That is addressed in this bill. The municipalities should be more involved in how persons with disabilities are put into society, so they are integrated and able to have access to all the things that everyone else can access.

We believe that a gradual but steady commitment to increasing accessibility is the responsible choice. We believe in moving forward together while remaining flexible, sharing what works and breaking new ground.

We believe these days will be looked back on decades from now as being pivotal in the drive for full accessibility, opportunity and independence for persons with disabilities, and for their many friends and families and

caregivers. We have a clear, sensible strategy here that sets reachable objectives. We have embarked on a coordinated, concentrated effort to bring real and tangible change to the daily lives of millions of people.

I urge this House to vote in favour of this legislation, because this legislation has had clear consultation from people across the province. I encourage those in this House to read the legislation and see how inclusive it is, how all the municipalities will be working toward finding ways to include, each in their own municipalities, something that is not standard province-wide; it has to be looked at on an individual municipality basis. I was pleased to be able to host it in my riding with some of my constituents who have disabilities.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I appreciate the commitment the member for Thornhill has expressed in the remarks she has made on this bill tonight. I accept that her commitment is very real and genuine. I would suspect, given the depth of concern she's demonstrated in her remarks tonight, that she must, if she could be honest about it, be somewhat disappointed that her own government has not reflected the same degree of commitment in its legislation that she has spoken to tonight. I am sure she wishes that the kind of commitment she has spoken to as being the government's commitment was in fact reflected in substantive differences that would be made for the disabled community through this bill. But I can't find it.

I suspect the member for Thornhill was embarrassed with the first iteration of this government's disability bill, the long-promised disability bill. It was, as I recall, two pages of absolutely nothing, no commitment, no substance, no real direction even.

I look at this new bill, and as I reference the bill and hold it up for the minister who is still in the House to see, I see that it is somewhat more substantive in terms of the number of pages it contains, but is significantly lacking in any real substance in terms of clearly stated goals, in terms of measurable outcomes for any level of government, and most particularly the provincial level of government is completely devoid of any commitment to the resources that would be necessary to ensure that the non-goals could be achieved, if they were goals, and is absolutely devoid of any enforcement, because what is there here to enforce?

I will use one example. If I had more time in my two minutes I could refer to specific parts of the legislation. I have in my riding—I think it's probably true throughout a good part of northwestern Ontario—a significant hard-of-hearing and deaf population. There is one interpreter. I ask the member opposite and I ask the minister to tell me what in this legislation will compel the government to provide additional interpretation for the deaf in my community.

Mr Christopherson: I'm pleased to respond to the remarks of the member for Thornhill. Actually I thought the beginning of her speech was well written. Certainly they were nice words and they were strung together well.

I jotted down a couple of the thoughts that were there in the early part of her comments. She talked about the desire and the laudable goal—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Would the Minister of Citizenship stop?

She said that people should have the right to the fullness of citizenship—very laudable, absolutely—that people should be able to eat the meal of their choice at the business of their choice. I'm probably paraphrasing that a bit, but that was the essence of it. The same with shopping. They should be able to shop for what they choose at the business of their choosing. The reason I mention these very lofty words at the beginning of her speech is that I wasn't sure what bill she was referring to. When I listen to the speech and I look at the bill, the two don't fit. It's again more of saying one thing but legislating quite another. There's very little in the goals she described that I or anybody else would disagree with, but if you look to the bill, that doesn't happen.

The fullness of citizenship: there is no new requirement that new buildings have to be accessible. You told municipalities that they can be the heavies with their local business, but you won't do it as a government. And if municipalities choose not to, for whatever reason, it means it's not going to happen. I would ask the member how, without insisting that new buildings are accessible, you're providing the fullness of citizenship to citizens who will be denied access to some new buildings that aren't accessible?

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill 125, the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2001. I want to compliment the member for Thornhill for her comments. She's done a phenomenal job as the member from that area. I'd also like to compliment the Minister of Citizenship, Minister Jackson, for his work on this for a long period of time and for his foresight.

When we look back over many decades, this bill is long overdue. I can understand, opposition members here this evening, that you don't like good news. This bill complements what Ontarians for many years have expected of a government.

Today we have this bill in front of us. There's some good debate on it. I understand the positive and negative comments I've heard from all members of the House. But the fact of the matter is that it's long overdue; it's something we expect of our government. Maybe there should be some massaging or some amendments; I don't know. The fact of the matter is that it's here, and it's healthy that we have the opportunity to debate this evening.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for the fact that he amended a bill this afternoon for Mr McGuinty. I thought that it was positive. I compliment Mr McGuinty for coming forward with the bill, but I'm glad that my Minister of Citizenship, Minister Jackson, saw the opportunity to complete that resolution,

to make that motion more complete and more positive for the ratepayers of our province.

In closing and taking a few words, I'd like to thank everybody for supporting this bill, and I fully expect everyone will support this Ontarians with Disability Act, 2001.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I too am prepared to offer some comments on the statements made by the member for Thornhill. As well, the member for Barrie has made some statements that I think need to be referenced tonight.

The member said that this bill is long overdue, and I couldn't agree with you more. In fact, in 1995 your leader, Mike Harris, promised the people of Ontario that he would introduce an Ontarians with Disabilities Act and make it a law in his first term. That concluded in 1999 and there was no law. I certainly know, within the community of people who have disabilities, how profoundly disappointed they were when Mike Harris broke that promise to them. So I agree that this bill is long overdue.

What I'm so very disappointed with, however, is that while again we see a bill from the government that has a wonderful title—if one were to read the titles of the bills that have been introduced by this government, one would think that we lived in Utopia. This bill is entitled An Act to improve the identification, removal and prevention of barriers faced by persons with disabilities and to make related amendments to other Acts, and it strikes me as strange. I would suggest to members of the government who think this is such a great piece of legislation to talk about the stakeholder groups that you know, persons with disabilities in Ontario who think this bill should be supported, because we're hearing from them and they're saying that it is not good legislation and that you need to improve it. That's what we're here to tell you tonight.

The Acting Speaker: We'll have response from the member from Thornhill.

Mrs Molinari: I'm pleased to respond to the members for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Hamilton West, Simcoe North and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Thank you very much for contributing in the debate here this evening.

Just to clarify some of the points that were made: one was commitment to resources. I just want to put on the record that the commitment to resources from this government to persons with disabilities has been very consistent. As a matter of fact, I can talk about Thornhill. We have the arena centre; there is now an elder home for persons aging with disabilities supported by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. We also have a home for youth with autism and there's been money invested in that. So there definitely have been contributions for persons with disabilities. It doesn't necessarily have to be in a piece of legislation that's the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The commitment is there, and it has been from this government for a long time. The member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington talked about

a promise. Well, we did make a promise and it's here. This is what we promised, with all due respect to the member.

This bill also talks about the municipalities and their involvement, because one size does not fit all. We need to have the municipalities involved in breaking down barriers for persons with disabilities. They will develop an accessibility plan. The accessibility plan shall address the identification, removal and prevention of barriers to

persons with disabilities in their municipal bylaws. There is also in the legislation a report on the measures the municipality has taken to identify, remove and prevent barriers to persons with disabilities. Clearly, the municipalities have to take a partnership in this.

The Acting Speaker: It being well past 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2133.

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